

Marchmont Farm, Hemel Hempstead

Landscape Appraisal
29 August 2012

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Appendix 1: Extracts and Summaries of Local Plan policies relevant to landscape matters

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This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2000.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1. Appointment and Brief

LDA Design was originally appointed in August 2004 by Gleeson Homes to undertake an initial landscape appraisal of an area of land at Marchmont Farm, located on the north-western edge of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

The study was commissioned to assess the landscape and visual context of land at Marchmont Farm and surrounding area, describe the suitability of the site for housing development, and provide initial masterplanning guidance. The report was based on desk and field study undertaken between August and November 2004.

Gleeson Homes are continuing to promote land at Marchmont Farm and LDA Design has recently been appointed to refresh the landscape appraisal and provide on-going masterplan support. The 2004 landscape appraisal report has therefore been updated following further desk and field study.

1.2. Other Consultants Reports

This report addresses landscape and visual issues related to the potential development of the site and should be read in conjunction with the Updated Phase 1 Habitat Survey report, prepared by LDA Ecology.

1.3. Figures

A list of figures is provided below:

- 2003LO/01 – Site Location and Topography
- 2003LO/02 – Planning Context
- 2003LO/03 – Landscape Survey and Analysis
- 2003LO/04 – Site Survey
- 2003LO/05 – Approximate Zone of Visual Influence
- 2003LO/06 – Location of Photograph Viewpoints
- 3380_LA_01 – Application Site Boundary
- 3380_LA_02 A – G – Updated Photograph Panels
- 3380_02 – Constraints and Opportunities
- P_11_509_A – Key Landscape and Development Principles

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1.4. The Site and Study Area

In the following section the immediate site and the wider study area are introduced. Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/01 Site Location & Topography.

1.4.1. The Site

The land at Marchmont Farm ('the site') is approximately 19.0 hectares of farmland. The site lies north west of the town of Hemel Hempstead, on the south-facing valley side of the River Gade and is situated between the south western edge of the Grovehill area of Hemel Hempstead and the A4147 Link Road.

The north western site boundary is defined by hedgerow and an adjacent public footpath that links Dodds Lane with Piccotts End Lane. The north eastern and south eastern site boundaries are defined by the urban edge of Grovehill. The eastern site boundary is defined by a woodland belt that separates the site from Grove Hill Park (Margaret Lloyd Park). The southern site boundary is defined by the A4147 Link Road that links northern and eastern areas of Hemel Hempstead to the A4146 Leighton Buzzard Road. The south-western site boundary is defined by a field boundary that follows a ridgeline running from north to south from Piccotts End Lane towards the A4147 Link Road.

1.4.2. The Study Area

The area of study extends beyond the site boundary to enable an initial appraisal of the site context and to allow an approximate zone of visual influence to be determined.

The boundaries of the study area are broadly defined by the urban edges of Grovehill, Highfield and Warners End to the east, south east and south west of the site respectively, the outskirts of the settlements of Potten End and Ashridge to the west and north west respectively and Dodds Lane to the north. The site is dissected by Piccotts End Lane, a public route that links Grovehill with Piccotts End.

Views from a ridgeline situated to the south west of the study area are also considered in order to evaluate the visibility of the site from this elevated location.

The broader landscape character context is also considered in this report, with reference to National Character Areas and the Dacorum Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment.

1.5. Methodology

The study comprised:

- A desk top review of statutory and non-statutory documents relevant to the site area.
- The identification of designations of relevance to the landscape and visual context.
- Site visits in 2004 and 2012.
- A local landscape assessment of the study area, with reference to national and borough landscape character assessments.

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- A survey and analysis of the key landscape features of the site and its immediate context, including vegetation cover, landform, agricultural land quality, settlement edges and structure.
- A visual appraisal of the site in its wider setting and its zone of visual influence.
- The identification of site development opportunities and constraints.
- The establishment of masterplan principles.
- A Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site, bound as a separate report.

Documents and websites reviewed and organizations consulted in compiling this study comprised the following:

1.5.1. Key Documents

- Dacorum Pre Submission Core Strategy, October 2011
- Dacorum Assessment of Local Allocations and Strategic Sites, October 2010
- Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011, Adopted April 2004
- Dacorum Local Plan Inquiry, Inspector's Report, August 2002

1.5.2. Other Documents/Web Sites

- Area Based Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance, May 2004
- Environmental Guidelines, Supplementary Planning Guidance, May 2004
- Hertfordshire Landscape Strategy: Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum, Supplementary Planning Guidance, May 2004
- Chilterns Building Design Guide
- Current Ordnance Survey Maps
- Tree Preservation Orders - Woodlands Unit, Dacorum Borough Council
- Rights of Way - Rights of Way Unit, Hertfordshire County Council and Highways Division, Hertfordshire County Council
- Listed Buildings Schedules – Listed Building Office, Department of Culture, Media & Sport
- <http://enquire/hertscc.gov.uk/landscsh/Volume1.htm> (A Landscape Strategy for Hertfordshire Volume 1: Background Information, Special Edition, Oct 2001)
- <http://hertsdirect.org/ycouncil/hcc/env/enjoy/care/landscape/genland/sus> (Sustainable Landscapes)
- <http://enquire.hertscc.gov.uk/cms/explore/walk/dacorum/gadebridge.pdf> (Gadebridge & Highfield Local Countryside 5km walking guide leaflet)
- <http://totaltravel.co.uk/travel/london/chilterns/hemel Hempstead/guide/guide> (Hemel Hempstead local heritage & scenic attractions guide)

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- <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/planning/index.htm> (Dacorum Borough Council Development Plan)
- <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/> (Historical maps of the area)
- <http://www.magic.gov.uk/> (Agricultural Land Classification for the area)

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2.0 Landscape Planning Context

2.1. Introduction

This section briefly outlines planning issues relevant to landscape matters in the general study area and also reviews land use within the site and surrounding study area and reviews planning history. Specific reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/02 Planning Context.

2.1 Dacorum Pre Submission Core Strategy (October 2011)

As described below in section 2.2, the Local Plan provides the adopted planning policy framework for Dacorum Borough Council. However, Chapter 7: Hemel Hempstead Place Strategy of the Dacorum Pre Submission Core Strategy (October 2011) identifies 3 ‘local allocations’ for new housing. It states:

“New housing will be spread across the town, with particular concentrations at the town centre, East Hemel Hempstead and the Local Allocations at West Hemel Hempstead, Marchmont Farm and the Old Town.”

The Local Allocation of Marchmont farm is provided below:

Location reference	LA1
Site location	Marchmont Farm
Proposals	Around 300 new homes. Extend Margaret Lloyd Park
Principles	<p>A mix of two storey and three storey housing including around 40% affordable homes.</p> <p>A contribution must be made towards educational and community facilities.</p> <p>The layout, design, density and landscaping must create a soft edge with the adjoining Green Belt boundary.</p> <p>New strategic landscaping to mitigate impact of new development on the Gade Valley and help ensure its separation from Piccotts End.</p> <p>Impact on the local road network mitigated through the promotion of sustainable travel options, including pedestrian links to the local centre.</p>
Delivery	The proposal will be delivered as an allocation in the Site Allocations DPD where detailed planning requirements will be established

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2.3 Dacorum Assessment of Local Allocations and Strategic Sites (October 2010)

As part of the Core Strategy evidence base, Dacorum Borough Council prepared an Assessment of Local Allocations and Strategic Sites. This specifically identifies housing sites within the Green Belt and presents a 3 stage assessment approach in order to reduce the number of sites and reject inappropriate sites. The assessment incorporates advice from the Council's independent sustainability adviser, the Highway Authority and County Archaeologist; reflects guidance from PPG2: Green Belts; and includes Officer conclusions regarding preferred locations.

Specifically in relation to Green Belt loss, Page 9 of the document states that:

“This current methodology has a stronger environmental emphasis than the approach used to assess large-scale growth locations at Hemel Hempstead. This is because the primary issue when assessing most sites is justifying the loss of Green Belt and minimising the impact of this loss (as required by PPG2: Green Belts).”

Furthermore, Page 11 states that:

“The general expectation is that the broad extent of the Green Belt should be maintained. Any reviews (be they strategic or local) must accord with national policy set out in PPG2: Green Belts PPG2 identifies five purposes of including land within the Green Belt:

- 1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- 2. to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;*
- 3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- 4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- 5. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

Consideration will therefore be given to the ability of the Green Belt to continue to meet these objectives in the context of each option, on the assumption that the land is removed from the Green Belt once its precise boundaries have been established through the Site Allocations DPD. Options not in-keeping with the scale of the settlement will be discounted.

Other relevant extracts from the document are provided below:

The need for an assessment

“The estimated capacity of existing urban areas within Dacorum may not be sufficient to accommodate the level of housing provision required for the Borough. Some Green Belt housing sites may therefore need to be identified for development in the latter stages of the Plan period. The precise scale of this greenfield need will depend upon decisions about the need to maintain local populations or accommodate low level growth of settlements.”

The need for flexibility

“Where Green Belt boundaries are reviewed, the aim should be to release sufficient land to avoid further reviews before 2031. An important factor that will affect the quantity of Green Belt land that needs to be released for development is the density at which housing land within the existing urban areas is developed. This will vary across the Borough, depending upon a variety of factors. It is therefore too soon to state with any certainty the precise amount of land that will need to be released

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from the Green Belt. Government also requires the Council to consider appropriate contingencies, should sites within the urban areas fail to come forward, or not deliver the anticipated number of units. It is for these reasons that the Council must give itself breathing space by building in a sufficient degree of flexibility into its Local Development Framework.”

Locations included within the assessment

“Part 1 of this report considers local allocations.

There are obviously choices to be made regarding where any Green Belt development sites could be located and these decisions have yet to be made. However, the Council’s ‘Emerging Core Strategy’ (June 2009) suggested a number of potential locations for growth as part of the draft Place Strategies.

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The growth options for each place have been identified in one of two ways:

- 1) Promoted by the landowner or their agent through the Issues and Options stage of the Core Strategy or Site Allocations DPD; or*
- 2) Identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).*

Each location is assessed using a three-stage approach, with the number of options reduced at each stage, as locations failing to meet the specified criteria are rejected. The 2 locations and the reason for their inclusion in the assessment are set out below. Appendix 2 contains maps of all options considered.

This approach allows a transparent and politically neutral assessment of options, which reflects the independent site assessments carried out by the Council’s sustainability consultants. This will in turn enable robust and informed decisions to be made within the Core Strategy and subsequent Site Allocations DPD. Figure 1 shows how this methodology links with the wider site assessment process being undertaken as part of the LDF.”

8 sites are identified in and around Hemel Hempstead, including Marchmont Farm, Old Town and West Hemel Hempstead. The conclusions for Marchmont Farm are as follows:

“The conclusion of the sustainability assessment is that this option is the most sustainable of the greenfield sites considered. It is also assessed to be a deliverable option, which does not require significant new infrastructure. For these reasons it should be given further consideration as a housing site.”

2.4 Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (Adopted April 2004)

The Dacorum Local Plan provides the planning framework to Dacorum Borough Council up to 2011.

Under Planning Regulations, policies in the Local Plan were due to expire on 27 September 2007 unless the Council requested their extension from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

By direction of the Secretary of State all the policies in the Adopted Local Plan (except policy 27, Gypsy Sites) have been saved i.e. they continue to apply.

Landscape and planning policies relevant to landscape appraisal and Schematic Masterplan are highlighted below. Relevant extracts and summaries are detailed in Appendix A.

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- Policy 21 – Density of Residential Development
- Policy 76 – Leisure Space in New Residential Developments
- Environmental Policy 96 – Landscape Strategy
- Environmental Policy 97 – Chilterns AONB
- Environmental Policy 98 – Landscape Regions
- Environmental Policy 99 – Preservation of Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands
- Environmental Policy 100 – Tree and Woodland Planting
- Environmental Policy 102 – Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation
- Environmental Policy 111 – Height of buildings
- Environmental Policy 116 – Open Land in Towns and Large Villages
- Appendix 3: Layout and Design of Residential Areas
- Appendix 6 – Open Space and Play Provision
- Area Based Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance, May 2004
- Environmental Guidelines, Supplementary Planning Guidance, May 2004

2.2. Local Plan Inquiry, Inspector’s Report, August 2002

The Deposit Draft of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan was published in October 1998. Objections to the Deposit Draft were the subject of a Public Local Inquiry held between 28 March 2000 and 25 May 2001.

In the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector’s Report, August 2002, the Inspector states that the Council should seriously consider allocating additional land for housing at Marchmont Farm. Relevant extracts and summaries are detailed below:

- 7.57.1 The Council accepts that the land is not productive in agricultural terms.
- 7.57.2 The Inspector points out that the area is separated from Piccotts End by a noticeable ridge in the topography and there is therefore little visual interconnection between the two areas. *“Providing any housing was sited to the east of this ridge I do not consider that it would result in a visual or physical coalescence with Piccotts End”*
- 7.57.3 In the Inspector’s view, development at Marchmont Farm would not result in unrestricted sprawl of Hemel Hempstead or lead to neighbouring towns merging. *“Providing a reasonable gap was maintained between the new housing and Piccotts End I do not consider that it would effect the setting or special character of that settlement. I judge therefore that development of housing in this location would have a limited impact on the purposes of the Green Belt”.*
- 7.57.4 The Inspector notes that there are footpaths in the area that lead out into the open countryside therefore the development of this land would not significantly diminish the opportunities for access to the open countryside, nor would it have any impact on the opportunities for outdoor sport, particularly if Grovehill Park were extended as part of the development.

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Also, as the adjacent housing in Grovehill visually dominates this part of the Landscape Conservation Area (as designated in the Draft Deposit Local Plan), the Inspector is not convinced that this part of the area is of substantial importance to the character of the Gade Valley.

- 7.57.5 The Inspector notes that the existing lack of a clearly defensible boundary at Marchmont Farm could be addressed over time by the introduction of a substantial landscape buffer.
- 7.57.9 The Inspector suggests that *“careful design and landscaping of any new development could help to soften the stark appearance of the existing development at Grovehill West. Similarly in my view careful attention to the scale and siting of any development could help to round off the urban form in this location”*.
- 7.57.10 While the Council argues that development of Marchmont Farm would cut off the green wedge to the Grove Hill Park, the Inspector notes that the site does not form an important visual extension of the adjoining open countryside as the western park boundary is heavily wooded. Instead, he suggests that there is no reason why consideration should not be given to extending the park into the new housing area to provide the necessary recreational facilities for the new residents.

An area of land covering 13.2 ha is illustrated in the report (Figure 11, p. 698). However topographic appraisal of the site shows that an area lying to the west of the boundary defined by Inspector more obviously aligns with the local ridge that we assume that the Inspector is referring to. If development is considered appropriate on land west of the boundary, as inferred in the Inspector’s report, then this produces a total potential site area of 19.01 ha. Reference should be made to Figure 3380_LA_01_Application Site Boundary.

2.3. Other Planning Matters

2.3.1. Landscape Designations

The site and most of the surrounding study area lie within the Green Belt of Hemel Hempstead.

The site lies 1km to the south of an area designated as a Rural Area in the Local Plan. Appraisal confirms that the site is not visible from the Rural Area.

The site is situated 1.5 km to the south of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Appraisal confirms that the site is not visible from the AONB.

2.3.2. Tree Preservation Orders

Following discussions with Dacorum Borough Council (2004), they have confirmed that hedge trees (including all trees within the hedgerow itself) along Piccotts End Lane, both within and beyond the site, are protected by a TPO. These hedgerows are owned and managed by Dacorum Borough Council. Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/02 Planning Context.

The woodland belt that runs along the north eastern site boundary, separating the site from Grove Hill Park is also protected by a TPO.

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Many trees to the north west of the site that lie along Piccotts End Lane and border onto Grove Hill Park are protected by TPOs.

2.3.3. Nature Conservation Designations

The site does not lie within or contain an area designated for nature conservation.

Howe Grove is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and is located to the south of the site on the opposite side of the A4147 Link Road. Howe Grove comprises approximately 8.3 hectares of semi-natural and ancient broad leaved woodland. It is a grade A site for wildlife and supports warblers, tawny owls, great spotted woodpeckers, tree creepers, nuthatches and sparrowhawks. Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/02 Planning Context.

2.3.4. Conservation Areas

The site does not lie within a Conservation Area.

The historic hamlet of Piccotts End is situated to the south west of the site and is designated as a Conservation Area. Some of the more elevated areas within the site are visible from parts of the southern end of the Conservation Area, although the ridgeline provides a sense of separation.

Dacorum Borough Council have not issued a Character Statement for Piccotts End as Supplementary Planning Guidance or Supplementary Planning Document.

The Conservation Area of Hemel Hempstead Old Town lies in the south of the study area. The site is not visible from this part of the study area.

2.3.5. Listed Buildings

Seven listed buildings are located to the south west of the site in the vicinity of the Piccotts End Conservation Area. Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/02 Planning Context. These listed buildings comprise:

- 95 & 97 Piccott's End , late 18th Century pair of 2 storey cottages - Grade II
- Little Marchmont, Piccott's End, late 18th Century, 2 storey small country house - Grade II*
- Outbuilding (Former Stables)to the north east of Little Marchmont, late 18th Century, 2 storey – Grade II
- Gate Piers of Marchmont House, 18th Century – Grade II
- Piccott's End House, early 19th Century, 2 and 3 storeys– Grade II
- Piccott's End Farm House, 16th or early 17th Century, timber framed, 2 storey – Grade II
- Piccott's End Mill House, late 18th Century red brick 3 storey house – Grade II

Provisional analysis suggests that the site might be visible from the 1st floor of Little Marchmont, the Gate Piers of Marchmont House and the 1st floor of the outbuilding to the north east of Little Marchmont.

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Gaddesden Hall is situated to the north west of the site within the study area. The Hall dates from the 13th Century and is a Grade II * listed building. Appraisal confirms that the site is not visible from this building or the area immediately surrounding the Hall.

2.3.6. Areas of Archaeological Significance

There are no areas of archaeological significance within the site area.

The Local Plan indicates that there are three Areas of Archaeological Significance located within the study area:

- Gadebridge Park is located to the south west of the site. The exposed eastern portion of the site is visible from this part of the study area.
- Piccotts End is located to the south west of the site. The south eastern portion of the site is visible from southern end of this area.
- High Street, Hemel Hempstead Area of Archaeological Significance is located to the south of the site. The site is not visible from this part of the study area

2.3.7. Scheduled Ancient Monuments

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments located within the site area.

The Local Plan indicates that there are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments located within the study area:

- A roman settlement situated in Gadebridge Park lying to the south west of the site. The exposed eastern portion of the site is visible from this part of the study area
- The Charter House tower and ruins lying to the south of the site. The site is not visible from this part of the study area

2.4. Land Use Context

2.4.1. Open Space

Grove Hill Park lies adjacent to the north western boundary of the site and is designated as open land in the Local Plan. Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/02 Planning Context.

Within the study area there are numerous other areas designated as open land throughout the north western and western suburban areas of Hemel Hempstead.

2.4.2. Public Rights of Way

The public highway of Piccotts End Lane bisects the site, extending from the north eastern to south western site boundary and connects the Grovehill area of Hemel Hempstead with the settlement of Piccotts End. A Traffic Regulation Order applies to the lane limiting access to pedestrians, bicycles and horse riders only from the gate north of Marchmont Farm up to the settlement of Grovehill.

A surfaced public footpath extends along the eastern boundary of the site as part of a circular route that follows the perimeter of Grove Hill Park.

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As noted earlier, an unmade Public Footpath connecting Dodds Lane with Piccotts End Lane extends along the western boundary of the site.

2.4.3. Land Use of the Site

The site comprises a mixture of improved grassland and fallow arable farmland. Local Residents use informal footpaths extending through fields adjacent to the Grovehill housing area for dog-walking and horse riding.

Piccotts End Lane is a popular recreational route for walking, cycling and dog-walking.

The field adjacent to Piccotts Lane in the north eastern portion of the site is used for horse-grazing.

Some fields in the southern portion of the site are occasionally used for car boot sales.

2.4.4. Land Use of the Study Area

To the north east of the site lies Grovehill housing area, comprising medium-high density housing and areas of open land.

To the south of the site lies Highfied housing area, comprising medium-high density housing bordering onto areas of woodland.

To the south west of the site lies Gadebridge Park, bordering onto the Gadebridge housing area, which comprises medium density housing.

To the west of the site lies a mixture of pasture and arable fields and small clusters of housing. This combination of land uses reflects a widespread transition from pasture to arable agriculture in the area around Piccotts End.

To the north west and north of the site lies arable fields defined by a strong pattern of hedgerows.

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3.0 Landscape Survey

3.1. Topography and Drainage

The study area encompasses land within the River Gade Valley comprising a broad v-shaped valley with steep valley sides. The valley sides are sub-divided by a series of dry valleys and associated local ridgelines and the valley sides rise and give way to areas of chalk plateau either side of the valley.

The site is situated on the south western-facing valley slope of the Gade Valley and is characterised by two local ridges. The first extends across the site from 135m AOD in the north falling 25m to 110m AOD in the south. The second extends along and forms the western boundary of the site falling 30m from 135m AOD in the north to 105m AOD in the south. As a consequence the western portion of the site and the south-eastern extreme of the site are relatively enclosed and visually contained, while the northern and eastern portions of the site are exposed to views from the surrounding landscape.

The site comprises well-drained calcareous, fine silty soils and contains no visible areas of standing water.

3.2. Vegetation

Significant vegetation cover within the study area comprises:

- Woodland belt separating the site from Grove Hill Park. Prominent species include Sycamore, Hawthorn, Field Maple and Elder.
- The parkland landscapes of Grove Hill Park and Gadebridge Park, both comprising single standing mature & semi-mature trees in a mown grass setting.
- The broad-leaved semi-mature and ancient woodland of Howe Grove. The woodland has a very dense shrub layer. Prominent species include Hawthorn, Hazel, Ash, Rowan, Elder and Oak. The woodland contains 0.8 hectares of active coppice.
- Unclipped hedgerows extending along old field boundaries in the wider agricultural landscapes to the north and west. Hedge trees are also common.

Vegetation within the site comprises:

- Mixed unclipped hedgerows extending along old and existing field boundaries within and bordering the site. These hedgerows include Hawthorn and Hazel and reach a height of 2-3m.
- A number of semi-mature hedge trees, particularly along the boundary of the north western portion of the site
- Mixed unclipped hedgerow, steeply embanked in parts, extending along both sides of Piccotts End Lane. Species include Blackthorn, Dog Rose, Field Maple, Old Man's Beard and Blackberry.

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3.3. Agricultural Land Quality

From existing data it is understood that the agricultural land quality of the study area and within the site is grade 3.

The Local Plan Inquiry, Inspector's Report, August 2002 notes that the council accepts that the land within the site is not productive in agricultural terms.

An agricultural land quality classification survey is to be undertaken.

3.4. Settlements

The site is located directly adjacent to the urban edge of the Grovehill housing area, to the north west of Hemel Hempstead. Grovehill borders the north eastern and south eastern edges of the site. The settlement is characterised by a mixture of post-war 2 storey detached, semi-detached and terraced housing with some 3 storey flats. The housing density varies from high for areas with flat developments to low for detached housing in relatively large plots. Houses at the southern end of Washington Road back onto the site with a network of informal footpaths extending between back gardens and the site. Houses along Laidon Square front onto the site with an access path running between the front of houses and the site boundary.

The hamlet of Piccotts End is situated to the west of the site on the valley bottom, approximately 400m from the western site boundary. Piccotts End is one of a series of small settlements located along the floor of the Gade valley. It is a linear settlement that has grown organically over time and includes a mixed range of housing styles and ages including several medieval cottages, a number of Georgian and Regency villas as well as post-war housing.

It is likely that there is a historical link between the hamlet of Piccotts End and Hemel Hempstead Old Town further down the valley as Piccotts End is the first settlement along the old Leighton Buzzard road leaving Hemel Hempstead to the east.

The district area of Gadebridge, Hemel Hempstead is located on the north-facing side of the Gade valley, opposite to and facing the site. This settlement area comprises a large residential neighbourhood originating from the 1950's. The housing is medium in density and consists of a mixture of 2 storey terraced, semi-detached and detached housing with some 3 storey flats.

The village of Potten End lies on the western edge of the study area. The village shares many characteristics typical of other plateau settlements in the 'Chilterns' area and includes a village green as the main focal point of the settlement.

Isolated houses, hamlets and farms are scattered throughout the agricultural landscape to the north and west of the site.

3.5. Boundaries

The southern edge of the site comprises a wooden post and rail fence, bordering onto mown grass verge, aligned with the A4147 link road. A public footpath extends along the adjacent side of the Link Road opposite the site boundary. The A4147 is a source of noise and is audible throughout the site.

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The south-eastern edge of the site comprises a post and wire fence bordering onto an informal footpath. This informal footpath aligns with hedges and back garden fences of adjacent housing on Severnmead.

The north-eastern edge of the site comprises a gappy hedgerow and post and wire fence that borders onto a small footpath and front gardens of the adjacent Grovehill neighbourhood. (Figure 3380_LA_02A, Viewpoint 1). Just north of Piccotts End Lane, this edge is defined by a small number of dwellings that are orientated with the back garden fences towards the site, screened by large trees and adjoined by an informal path.

The eastern edge of the site comprises a semi-mature woodland belt adjoining Grove Hill Park that contains a public footpath, which extends parallel to the site boundary.

The south-western site boundary is defined by a staggered field boundary comprising a gappy hedgerow of mixed quality and post & wire fence that runs parallel to a local ridgeline, extending from north to south from Piccotts End Lane towards the A4147 Link Road. (Figure 3380_LA_02A, Viewpoint 2).

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4.0 Landscape Appraisal

4.1. Introduction

The key findings of the landscape appraisal are described in this section. The appraisal has been undertaken to a level sufficient to inform initial masterplanning guidance for the site.

Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/03 Landscape Survey & Analysis, Figure 2003LO/04 Site Survey, Figure 2003LO/05 Zone of Visual Influence, Figure 2003LO/06 Location of Photographic Viewpoints and Figures 3380_LA_02 Photograph Panels A-G.

4.2. National Landscape Character Context

At the national scale, significant work was undertaken in the mid to late 1990s by the Countryside Agency and English Nature (now Natural England) to map and describe the broad variations in character that can be identified across England. The assessment identifies 159 National Character Areas (also known as Countryside Character Areas) and the findings are presented across several regional volumes. Natural England are in the process of updating the National Character Areas, although the current descriptions remain relevant.

One National Character Area was found to be of importance to understanding the landscape context of the Site; NCA 110 The Chilterns. The main characteristics of this character area comprise:

- 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.
- Many surviving areas of semi-open common land on the plateau.
- 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.
- Frequent grand country houses and designed landscapes occupying prominent positions on sloping valley sides.

The study area is representative of the 'Chilterns' character region. The undulating farmland lying to the north and west of Hemel Hempstead reflects many of the key features of the dip slopes as described in the landscape character of the 'Chilterns'.

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The assessment outlines guidelines to ensure the character of the area is conserved including the following:

- The character of the transitional landscape between town and countryside needs attention.
- Appropriate management would improve the quality of existing woodlands.
- Landscape features which are remnants of ancient countryside including characteristic hedgerow patterns, old trees and lanes need positive management and conservation.
- The design of future development should reflect and help restore and reinforce a typical Chilterns character.
- Public transport, green lanes and quiet ways might be promoted to encourage people to visit the countryside without their cars.

4.3. Borough-wide Landscape Character Context

Dacorum Borough Council has undertaken a borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment, which provides the basis for supplementary planning guidance for the Borough.

A review of the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum confirms the general characteristics of the area identified by Natural England. The study area is identified in further detail within the context of the borough as part of the 'High Gade Valley' (Area 123) Landscape Character Area.

The High Gade Valley Landscape Character Area is characterised by a broad, pronounced v-shaped valley with steep valley sides in places and a broad, gently undulating valley bottom. Most valley slope grasslands have been improved or converted to arable cultivation with an organic medium scale field pattern with boundaries marked by mixed hedgerows. The valley slopes are punctuated with occasional discreet woodland blocks of beech, ash or hawthorn as well as fragments of chalk downland and beech hangar. The parkland landscapes of Gaddesden Place and Gadebridge Park form a strong visual influence on some valley slopes. Grazing pasture can be found along the valley floor where post & wire fencing forms a more common boundary treatment. The course of the meandering River Gade is bordered in most places by water meadows and pasture creating a sub area with wet woodlands, meres and relic watercress beds.

Intervention by built development within the valley is generally low with the principle areas of settlement following the historic pattern of a settled valley floor with high settlement situated on many surrounding plateaus. The busy A4146 Leighton Buzzard road runs along the valley floor but the remainder of the transport pattern largely comprises tracks and lanes that are generally sinuous and slightly sunken where they rise up the valley sides.

Overall the High Gade Valley Landscape Character Area is considered to be in 'good' condition and 'moderate' strength of character.

The Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum includes guidance to ensure that the character of the High Gade Valley is conserved and strengthened. Guidelines relevant to the study area, the site and potential development include:

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- Protect surface and ground water quality and the availability of water resources in order to maintain the natural flow in all surface rivers and streams sufficient to support the full range of river corridor habitats.
- Promote integrated land use, management and development within catchments in order to conserve and enhance river corridors as important and characteristic open landscapes.
- Maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource. Where development is likely to affect verges and damage is unavoidable, development should include details of protection of remaining verge and replacement of its nature conservation value within the proposed scheme. This is particularly important where verges include hedgebanks, sunken lanes, ditches and hedges.
- Encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors.
- Encourage landowners and developers to retain and increase ponds and wetland areas to enhance their visual and wildlife functions.
- Promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, using ancient hedge and field boundaries as the most appropriate location for woodland and expansion.
- Promote hedgerow restoration through locally appropriate measures including: coppicing, layering and replanting/gapping up.
- Ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity.
- Encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland particularly along the valley floor.
- Native tree species only should be planted on boundaries with exotic/ornamental species only in close proximity to dwellings.
- Restrict further built development within the valley and develop a strategy for mitigating existing impacts.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of traditional 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.

The above guidelines inform the masterplanning guidelines for the site and the recommendations will shape the development concept and detailed masterplanning, as explained in section 5.3.1 Masterplan Guidelines.

4.4. Local Landscape Character

Although the site is identified as lying within the High Gade Valley Character Area, further detailed analysis of the immediate area surrounding the site is described below to assist in understanding the character and structure of the landscape surrounding the site. Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/03 Landscape Survey & Analysis.

Six areas of landscape surrounding the site have been identified and are separately described below:

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4.4.1. Area 1

This landscape tract lies to the east of the site and comprises the urban edge of north-west Hemel Hempstead. This settlement area occupies a plateau overlooking the Gade Valley. The edge of this settlement consists of 2 storey terraced housing with either front gardens or back fences forming the boundary of the urban edge. This edge is relatively exposed and forms a dominant ridgeline along the plateau edge and is highly visible from across the valley. The woodland belt separating Grove Hill Park from the site softens this urban edge to the north-east of the site screening a substantial portion of the Grove Hill district.

4.4.2. Area 2

This landscape tract lies to the south of the site and comprises the Local Nature Reserve of Howe Grove woodland and the adjacent urban settlement of Bellgate, Hemel Hempstead. The woodland occupies a steep north-facing valley side inclined sharply away from the A4147 Link Road. The woodland contains a series of informal paths extending through dense woodland, with a dominant shrub layer. The wood has been recently extended with new tree planting established to the west of the main woodland area. The woodland screens settlement in views to and from the site and provides an important setting to the A4147.

4.4.3. Area 3

This landscape tract lies to the south west of the site and comprises the parkland landscape of Gadebridge Park and the urban settlement of Gadebridge, Hemel Hempstead. The park occupies the steep north-facing valley side of the River Gade and the opposite valley side is highly visible from the elevated areas of the park. The park originates from the 18th Century and formerly belonged to the now destroyed Regency house of the same name. The park is now a dedicated public space and still retains many mature parkland trees. The park also contains the remains of a roman settlement with Scheduled Ancient Monument designation. The area forms a dominant part of views south from the site and a context for the A4146 Leighton Buzzard road.

4.4.4. Area 4

This landscape tract encompasses the site and the land west of the site, including Piccotts End. Piccotts End is designated as a Conservation Area and contains a number of listed buildings. The settlement lies on low ground and forms an attractive built element in the local landscape with roofscapes forming part of the view from the east along the A4147. The settlement itself is linear and fragmented, with not all the built form apparent in one view. The main road extending through the settlement interfaces with the A4147 and A4146 and used to form the main road connecting Old Hemel Hempstead to Leighton Buzzard. The area immediately surrounding Piccotts End comprises wet woodlands and grazing meadows along the valley floor and also includes remnants of river valley grassland. From Piccotts End there are outward views across the surrounding arable farmland, although views are partially interrupted by the local ridge line to west. Piccotts End lies 0.6km from Grovehill and has a sense of separateness from Hemel Hempstead due to extent of surrounding farmland and variations in local topography.

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4.4.5. Area 5

This landscape tract lies to the west of the site beyond the Conservation Area of Piccotts End and comprises open undulating mixed farmland. The area occupies the north-facing side of the River Gade valley and the valley side is characterised by steeply incised dry valleys. Pasture land use is more common on lower slopes with arable agriculture predominating on the upper area of the valley side. The field pattern is predominantly regular with field sizes ranging in size from small to large. Hedgerows are a boundary treatment and there are occasional pockets of deciduous woodland. The area forms an attractive distant and wooded farmland landscape in views from the site and a rural extension to the 'soft' road character of the A4146 at Gadebridge Park.

4.4.6. Area 6

This landscape tract lies to the north of the site and comprises open rolling arable farmland. The field pattern is medium to large in scale and is defined by mixed hedgerows with prominent mature hedge trees. The field pattern is interrupted by occasional deciduous copses, isolated vernacular houses and farm buildings. Elevated views from this landscape include expansive distant views across the Gade Valley. The area is largely rural in character and does not contain any significant settlement.

4.5. Landscape Features

The key landscape features which determine the character of the study area are illustrated in Figure 2003LO/03 Landscape Survey & Analysis. The key landscape features comprise:

- Steep undulating valley slopes with local ridgelines
- Long views across the open valley
- Clustered historic settlement along the watercourse
- Rolling, expansive farmland
- Mixed hedgerow field boundaries with hedge trees and occasional woodland
- Ancient settlement
- Attractive areas of parkland landscape
- Visible urban edges of Hemel Hempstead

4.6. Landscape Quality

Landscape quality can be defined using a number of general parameters including strength of character, how representative of the given landscape type an area may be, scenic quality, unspoilt character, sense of place and other essentially non-visual features such as conservation or heritage interest and cultural links. Land use and the quality of management, the intrusive nature of development, perception or proximity of urban influences of pylons, roads and a visible built edge and the dominance of detracting features all contribute to the assessment.

Overall, the High Gade Valley Landscape Character Area is considered to be in 'good' condition and 'moderate' strength of character. It displays a distinct continuity of character,

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with the floodplain being used for grazing and arable agriculture, open space and parkland on the valley sides. Visual unity is strong and cohesive throughout. Also, the general character of the area is quite unusual within the county due to the combination of estates and parklands overlooking and at some points extending down into the valley. The essentially undisturbed wetlands, floodplain vegetation and open space in the valley floor, together with the relic watercress beds and scattered roadside settlement, adds to the distinctiveness of the area.

However, it is considered that the condition and strength of this landscape character area is diminished within the study area due to its close proximity and intervisibility with the urban area of Hemel Hempstead. For example, the general character of Piccotts End is affected by its position at the edge of Hemel Hempstead. Similarly, the parkland landscape of Gadebridge Park is influenced by suburban settlement that has developed around it.

4.7. Landscape Analysis of Site

The site comprises open undulating farmland with small-medium field sizes with an irregular, organic field pattern. Mixed unclipped hedgerows of 2-3m in height demarcate old field boundaries. Hedge trees are present in the north-western portion of the site. The hedgerows are generally continuous, but some have become gappy in places. A few old field boundaries have been replaced by post & wire fences. Two fields within the old field system have been sub-divided by post & wire fences.

The undulating nature of the landform gives rise to prominent local ridges and associated pockets of enclosure within the site.

Access to fields is gained by informal farm tracks and there is a network of informal footpaths that give access to the site from the Grovehill settlement area to the north east.

Piccotts End Lane is a narrow lane dissecting the site. The lane rolls over the undulating topography of the site and 2-3m hedgerows extend along most of its length on either side. The resulting sense of enclosure within the lane is further increased in the top portion of the lane where the hedgerows are steeply embanked.

The southern fringe of the site forms part of views to Piccotts End from the A4147 Link Road. The more exposed ridge areas within the site can also be glimpsed in views towards Piccotts End from the west.

4.8. Zone of Visual Influence

Due to the elevated position of the site views are possible from a number of locations within the study area. The more elevated northern and eastern portions of the site are visible as distant views from some parts of the opposite side of the River Gade Valley. (Figure 3380_LA_02B, Viewpoint 3).

Views towards the site from further down the Gade Valley are limited by the brow of the Bellgate/Highfield plateau, Howe Grove woodland and the urban area of Hemel Hempstead.

Views towards the site from further up the Gade Valley and from the valley floor are obscured by a local ridgeline to the west of the site and local vegetation.

The key viewpoints into and out of the site are illustrated in Figure 2003LO/06 Location of Photographic Viewpoints.

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4.8.1. Views out from the site

- Attractive distant views out to the opposite side of the Gade valley, including Gadebridge Park and the settlement of Gadebridge, Hemel Hempstead, can be seen from Piccotts End Lane and informal footpaths extending along the exposed ridgeline shoulder that crosses the northern and eastern portions of the site. (Figure 3380_LA_02B, Viewpoint 4)
- Middle distance views out towards the Marchmont Farm portion of the Piccotts End Conservation Area are visible from the south eastern half of the site. (Figure 3380_LA_02B, Viewpoint 4)
- Prominent local views towards the urban edge of Grovehill, Hemel Hempstead are visible from most of the site. (Figure 3380_LA_02C, Viewpoint 5)
- The densely wooded slopes of Howe Grove are visible throughout most of the site. (Figure 3380_LA_02C, Viewpoint 6)
- Views towards the local ridgeline to the west can be seen throughout most of the site. (Figure 3380_LA_02D, Viewpoint 7)
- Views toward a distant ridgeline beyond the River Bulbourne can be seen from the north western portion of the site. (Figure 3380_LA_02D, Viewpoint 8)

4.8.2. Views towards the site from public roads and footpaths

- The site is partially visible from areas of land immediately surrounding the Conservation Area of Piccotts End from some parts of the A4146 Leighton Buzzard Road.
- Views into the more exposed areas of the site can be experienced from the Galley Hill road between the urban edge of Gadebridge and the roundabout with the A4146. (Figure 3380_LA_02E, Viewpoint 9).
- The south-eastern portion of the site is visible from the A4147 Link Road when approaching north Hemel Hempstead from the direction of the Leighton Buzzard Road. Only a narrow portion of the extreme southern end of the site is visible when approaching the Piccotts End Conservation Area from north Hemel Hempstead along the Link Road. (Figure 3380_LA_02E, Viewpoint 10).
- Views of the site can be experienced from many parts of Piccotts End Lane as the lane approaches the site from Piccotts End. The hedgerow extending along either side of the lane deflects views along many parts of the lane. The hedgerow is steeply embanked in places, particularly at the north and south ends of the lane and the site is not visible from the lane in these areas. The south eastern portion of the site can be seen occasionally through gaps in the hedgerow along Piccotts End Lane to the south of the site. The more exposed parts of the site become visible where the lane extends over the local ridgeline to the south of the site. (Figure 3380_LA_02F, Viewpoint 11).
- There are views into site from the public footpath that extends through woodland along the north western and northern boundary of the site. Filtered views into the north western portion of the site are visible through gaps in the boundary hedgerow and the south eastern portion of the site is visible in the local view towards Howe Grove woodland. (Figure 3380_LA_02F, Viewpoint 12).

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- The exposed shoulder of the ridge that passes through the south eastern portion of the site is partially visible from a few points along the public footpath that passes through Marchmont Farm. (Figure 3380_LA_02F, Viewpoint 13)

4.8.3. Views towards the site from existing settlement

- The north western portion of the site is visible from a number of properties at the southern end of Washington Road where some properties have views from 1st floor windows and some rear gardens have filtered views into the site. (Refer to Figure 3380_LA_02C, Viewpoint 6).
- The north western portion of the site is visible from houses bordering the edge of the site along Laidon Square. Trees filter views from some properties.
- Filtered views into the south eastern edge of the site can be seen from 1st floor windows of some properties on Marlborough Rise.
- Filtered views into the south east portion of the site can be seen from some properties on Wharfedale and Westerdale roads.
- Views into the exposed north eastern portion of the site can be seen from the upper slopes of Gadebridge Park. Views into the site are filtered by parkland trees in parts. (Figure 3380_LA_02G, Viewpoint 14).
- Views into the elevated north eastern portion of the site can be seen from some properties that border onto or are close to the western edge of Gadebridge Park. Views to the site are also likely from other properties further up the valley side within Gadebridge, depending upon the orientation of 1st floor windows, orientation and openness of street ends, location of breaks in built form and presence of screening vegetation.
- Views into the elevated north eastern portion of the site can be seen from Gade Valley Infant School, Gadebridge Road. (Figure 3380_LA_02G, Viewpoint 15).

In summary, the site is evident in views from a number of locations within the study area, in particular Grovehill, Piccotts End, Piccotts End Land and the A4147. However, it is generally seen in the context of existing urban areas of Hemel Hempstead and/or views are obscured by intervening landform and vegetation.

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5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This section outlines the conclusions of the landscape appraisal, identifying the principle site constraints and considerations, and reviews planning context in relation to proposed development. The masterplan has been developed from these considerations and context. Reference should be made to Figure 2003LO/8 Schematic Masterplan.

5.2. Landscape Capacity

Landscape capacity is defined in the Landscape Character Assessment guidance published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) as ‘the degree to which a particular landscape type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape type’.

In its landscape and visual context, the site has capacity to absorb change without significant detriment to the overall landscape character. This relies on the masterplan building on site topography and vegetation and considering aspects of character, quality, size and siting of the development, which will define the capacity of the site.

The site forms part of a wider landscape tract, as defined by the district character appraisal which encompasses varied urban edges which are both screened and unscreened. Development of the site would lead to a local erosion of character but would not lead to a fundamental impact on the wider tract. The site, whilst elevated in portions, does not form a significant element in the wide valley landscape or setting of Hemel Hempstead.

The existing edge of Hemel Hempstead in this location is contained in part by Grove Hill woodland and Howe Grove, but the edge is breached, in particular by elevated development at Lomond Road to the north east.

The site forms part of the landscape tract separating the settlement edges of Grove Hill and Piccotts End. Whilst there is existing inter-visibility between the settlement edges, the local ridgeline aligning the western boundary of the site contributes to the perceived physical and visual separation of these settlements.

5.3. Masterplan Framework Proposals

5.3.1. Masterplan Guidelines

The approach to masterplan development of the site should seek to strengthen the described landscape character of the area and should address the following points:

- Establishment of a permanent defensible Green Belt boundary that is appropriately ‘soft’ and is considered an appropriate response in defining the separation of Piccotts End from the new edge of Hemel Hempstead.
- Introduce a long term planted boundary to the site to establish a strong western and southern edge to contain the site with the planting of native species following the pattern of existing field boundaries.
- Retain views to Piccotts End from Hemel Hempstead along the A4147.

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- Retain open land on the prominent ridgeline shoulder of the site, to include new planting.
- Design the layout to retain views to Grovehill Park where possible.
- Respect the topography of the site and align development with the site contours, where possible.
- Retain and, where possible, enhance Piccotts End Lane and Grovehill Park wooded edge as features in the site layout.
- Take into account the TPOs on the hedge trees along Piccotts End Lane and avoid puncturing the lane with too many road crossing points to retain its integrity.
- Sensitively plan the interface with existing development.
- Extend existing hedgerows, incorporating old hedgerow patterns, as a basis for establishing compartments for development.
- Work towards a structured masterplan, capitalising on site topography and strategic landscaping and allowing a looser development edge to relate to Piccotts End and the A4147.
- Maintain green open space and habitat links between Grovehill and the wider farmland landscape including Howe Grove.
- Provide an extension of Margaret Lloyd Park through the site.
- Consider open surface water drainage for the development with drainage features building on the topography of the site, creating the potential for new habitats.

Plans 3380_02 Constraints and Opportunities and P_11_509_A Key Landscape and Development Principles, in the appendix of this document, show how the masterplanning process is guided by an analysis and evaluation of the site, and explain how evaluation and the guidelines above have been translated into development principles for the formation of the masterplan.

5.3.2. Outline Capacity Testing

The capacity study has been informed by the original Landscape Appraisal and a further review of the constraints and opportunities of the site and site context. Based on this, a sketch masterplan established the development principles for the site, which were transferred into the site capacity study as outlined below.

For the purpose of capacity analysis, offsets to Piccotts End Lane and the A4147 were taken into consideration and were deducted from the developable site area when establishing the capacity.

The density of the proposed development should reflect the density of the surrounding settlement, while taking into account sustainable and efficient land use.

While local patterns of development and building densities are generally low - medium in the surrounding suburban areas and the outlying settlement, the capacity study assumed largely densities of 30-35dph with some area of lower density of 25dph, depending on visibility.

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The site capacity study showed that the site could accommodate a maximum of 450 homes and would comfortably fit the 300 homes that the Local Authority seeks to allocate in their Core Strategy. This is taking into account associated open space requirements, offsets to Piccotts End Lane and the A4147, site access arrangements as well as likely drainage requirements for surface water drainage.

The provision of Open Space and Play will be in line with Appendix 6 of Dacorum Local Plan, Adopted April 2004, which requires a minimum area of open space and play provision of 2.8ha per 1 000 population. This includes the NPFA standard of 2.4ha and a further 0.4ha per 1 000 population for other leisure space, comprising mainly ornamental parks and gardens. A development of 300 homes would require the provision of approximately 2.4ha of open space.

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Appendix 1: Extracts and Summaries of Local Plan policies relevant to landscape matters

Policy 21: Density of Residential Development

Densities will generally be expected to be in the range of 30-50 dwellings per hectare net.

For sites at the edge of an urban area, special attention will be paid to the effect of development density on open countryside and views. In such locations proposals will be expected to retain existing trees and hedges and incorporate appropriate landscape in order to achieve a soft edge to the countryside

Policy 76: Leisure Space in New Residential Developments

Major developments may also be required to contribute to other recreational needs of the development such as off-site provision of sports pitches or the enhancement of existing parks or playing fields.

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.

Special regard will be paid to the effect of development proposals on views, vistas and skylines and visual impact on the countryside will be minimised. Proposals which are considered to be visually obtrusive will normally be refused...

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.

Wherever development is permitted it will be on the basis of its satisfactory assimilation in to the landscape.

Every effort will be made to discourage development and operations that would adversely affect the beauty of the area.

New Buildings and other development must be sympathetically sited and designed, having regard to natural contours, landscape, planting and other buildings; there should be no adverse effect on skyline

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views; colours and materials used for a development must fit in with the traditional character of the area. Development must not be intrusive in terms of noise, disturbance, light pollution, traffic generation and parking.

The retention of existing and planting of new woodlands on hill tops and ridges, other than on chalk downland or other grassland of nature conservation interest is encouraged. Broad-leaved species which are native to the particular soil and location should be used in all planting and landscaping schemes.

Policy98: Landscape Regions

The Council will take in to account the degree to which the proposals protect and enhance the visual quality of the landscape by retaining, reinstating or managing desirable elements.

Policy 100: Preservation of Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

Encouragement will be given to the preservation of trees, hedgerows and woodlands (including 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 – should included careful consideration of the position of existing and proposed trees with the proposed development so that a harmonious relationship is achieved, require an accurate tree survey indicating trees proposed for retention or removal & detail of proposed underground works and tree protection measures to be submitted and approved.

Policy101: Tree and Woodland Management

Appropriate management of trees standing as individual specimens, groups or woodlands or orchards and of hedgerows will be encouraged.

For trees in both urban and rural locations, management should aim to maintain a healthy and safe tree population without causing an unreasonable nuisance or hazard to person, highway or property.

Policy 111: Height of buildings

The development of buildings over two storeys in height will not be permitted in the countryside or in small villages unless there are exceptional reasons related to the particular use of the site and the visual impact is limited.

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Within the towns and large villages, buildings up to three storeys will be permitted provided they harmonise with the character of the surrounding area.

Reasons – the majority of Hemel Hempstead is characterised by low-rise buildings of domestic scale ie. Having one to three storeys (with pitched roofs over)... It is desirable to maintain the character of each particular settlement and its relationship with the countryside and thus building heights should be limited.....There are other circumstances too, where a height building may not cause any harm and may indeed add variety and excitement to the townscape. Generally, the higher the building, the more noticeable it is, and a particularly high standard of design will be necessary

Policy 116: Open Land in Towns and Large Villages

Measures to conserve and improve the attractiveness, variety and usefulness of all open land will be investigated, encouraged and promoted.

Hemel Hempstead Open Land Strategy notes that there has been a general trend within Hemel Hempstead to leave open ridges and valley sides largely undeveloped. The strategy encourages the creation of open links with the countryside and stresses the importance of the main roads being punctuated by open land. This open land forms green wedges and act as “green” entry points, emphasising the “Garden City” aspect of the New Town. The open ridges and valley sides of the Gade river valley comprise a ‘Green Wedge’. Features such as green wedges also provide the opportunity for wildlife to migrate safely between town and country and to spread within settlements, as well as bringing ‘green space’ close to people’s home, providing buffers between different parts of settlements and generally enhancing the quality of life.

Appendix 3: Layout and Design of Residential Areas

- A3.1 Proposals should be guided by the existing topographical features of the site and its immediate surroundings. They should respect the character of the surrounding area, and in particular there must be adequate space for the proposed development without creating a cramped appearance.
- A3.2 There is a need for variety and imagination in the layout and design of housing so as to avoid residential developments which lack character and identity

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A3.3 Careful consideration needs to be given to the spatial quality of layouts. Roads and buildings must be designed and located to ensure that the scale of space between buildings is related to the pedestrian... Large expanses of car parking should be avoided as far as possible.

A3.4 Terraced and courtyard forms of development have the greatest advantages in terms of sustainability, though the former must be carefully oriented.

A3.5 The design of individual buildings should respect the overall street scene and the finishing materials should be in keeping with those of the surrounding area.

A3.6 i) Privacy

Residential development should be designed and laid out so that the privacy of existing and new residents is achieved

Buildings should at least maintain the distances with their neighbours given under (ii) and (iii) below.

ii) Gardens and Amenity Space

All residential development is required to provide private open space for use by residents whether the development be houses or flats.

Private gardens should normally be positioned to the rear of the dwelling and have an average minimum depth of 11.5m. Ideally a range of garden sizes should be provide to cater for different family compositions, ages and interests

Residential development designed for multiple occupancy will be required to provide a private communal amenity area to the rear of the building at least equal to the footprint of the building at least equal to the foot print of the building for two storey developments, and increasing with height. Drying areas and bin stores should be separate from the private communal amenity area.

iii) Spacing of Dwellings

There should be sufficient space around residential buildings to avoid a cramped layout and maintain residential character....

The minimum distances of 2.3m between the rear main wall of a dwelling and the main wall (front or rear) of another should be met to ensure privacy.

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Appendix 6: Open Space and Play Provision

Leisure Space (eg. Playing fields, children’s play areas)

The minimum level of open space provision for the Borough as a whole is assessed on the bases of 2.8 ha (7 acres) per 1 000 population as derived from the National Playing Fields Association (NPFSA). This can be broken down:

Adult/youth play – 1.6 ha

Children’s play – for the over 5’s – 0.6

Children’s play – for the under 5’s - 0.2

Other (eg. Ornamental parks and gardens) – 0.4

(excludes educational playing fields, golf courses, large areas of water, woodlands, commons, verges, ornamental parks and gardens)

The 4 acre adult/youth play component is considered to be of benefit to the community as a whole, and developers would normally only be expected to provide space for the remaining categories at a rate of 1.2ha per 1 000 population or 5% of the development area, whichever is the greater.

Area Based Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance, May 2004

A comprehensive base of policies for controlling new development in the established residential areas of Dacorum’s towns: Hemel Hempstead (amongst others).

- Each character area contains a policy approach as to whether changes to all or part of its character may be acceptable
- An appraisal of development potential has identified the suitability of all areas for accommodating new development: areas are graded into four categories of development opportunity
- Policies within each Character Area give a detailed level of control over the extent, layout and appearance of new development

Hemel Hempstead Design Objectives

- Conserve and enhance the new town structure and the concept of residential neighbourhoods
- Improve the design of development and provide scope for innovation and modern approaches
- Preserve and enhance the high level of open spaces, amenity greens and landscaping
- Preserve important long-range views across valleys and into open countryside

29 August 2012

Marchmont Farm, Hemel Hempstead

- Maintain the low to medium nature of most residential areas

HCA32: Grovehill

Character Appraisal

Opportunity for potential development is stated for this character area in the appraisal but the Marchmont Farm site is not highlighted under the opportunities for this area.

Environmental Guidelines, Supplementary Planning Guidance, May 2004

3. Landscaping on Development Sites

- 1) Character and amenity should be designed to a high standard...includes the retention and enhancement of existing trees
- 2) Trees, shrubs and other plants provide a setting for the building and a buffer between the development and adjoining land... they may also be used to reduce noise intrusion and to screen or enhance particular views
- 3) Elements of the existing and proposed landscape should be an integral part of layouts, especially for residential developments
- 4) Natural boundaries comprising hedgerows and trees should be retained, as should more scattered trees throughout a site wherever appropriate
- 5) Applicants should consider the practicality of retaining trees at an early stage in formulating their development proposals
- 6) Very few building developments can rely solely on the retention of existing trees to create an acceptable overall appearance. The existing vegetation, along with, along with water features and even man made features such as old walls, helps to give the site a feeling of maturity
- 7) Planting schemes should generally use species of trees and shrubs which are similar to those occurring adjacent to the development site to help buildings blend in with their surroundings to help maintain and enhance local distinctiveness
- 8) The location of parking provision and nature of hard surfaces should be carefully chosen to enable existing trees and shrubs to survive and new planting to flourish
- 9) Landscaped areas should be designed to ensure that maintenance is straightforward and does not become a future problem

4. Landscape and Nature Conservation

- 4.5 Dacorum Nature Conservation Strategy identifies the Upper Gade Valley as meriting nature conservation.