

LAND NORTH OF CAMBRIDGE NORTH STATION

**Proof of Evidence of Jeremy Smith BSc (Hons),
Dip LA, CMLI on Landscape and Visual Matters**
Prepared for: **Brookgate Land Limited (on behalf of
the Chesterton Partnership)**
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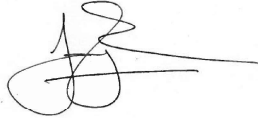
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Qualifications and Experience

1. I am Jeremy Smith, Director with SLR Consulting Limited (SLR). I am the founder member of SLR's landscape architecture practice, which now has over 120 landscape and masterplanning staff across the UK, Australia, New Zealand and USA.
2. I am a chartered landscape architect with 32 years of professional experience. I have a first class degree in geography from the University of Nottingham and a post-graduate diploma in landscape architecture from Sheffield University.
3. Whilst working in landscape practice I have specialised in landscape planning and landscape and visual assessment. I have acted as an expert witness on landscape, visual and Green Belt matters at numerous appeals, giving evidence both for and against development proposals. I have written guidance for Local Authorities such as Oxford and Harrow on protected views, and for Haringey on their Tall Building Strategy. I was one of four landscape architects that recently co-authored new guidance on landscape value and paragraph 174 valued landscapes on behalf of the Landscape Institute ("*Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations*", Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21, **CD 12.08**).
4. In October 2022 I was asked by Bidwells LLP (Bidwells), on behalf of Brookgate Land Limited (Brookgate, on behalf of the Chesterton Partnership), to review the design of the proposed development in the context of potential landscape and visual concerns expressed by South Cambridgeshire's Landscape Officer. I also reviewed the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared by Bidwells as part of the Environmental Statement (ES), and also visited the site and its context. I concluded that the LVIA followed best practice and that the design for the proposals was well considered and appropriate.
5. In December 2022 the appellant served notice of their intention to submit an appeal, and I was asked if I would give evidence on landscape and visual matters at the inquiry. Based upon the knowledge gained from my desk top assessments, and my site visit, I accepted the instructions.
6. The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal in this proof of evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of the Landscape Institute. I

confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions, irrespective of by whom I am instructed.



5th May 2023

1.2 Scope of Evidence

7. Brookgate made a hybrid application comprising the following elements:
 - (a) **An outline application** (with all matters reserved except for access and landscaping) for the construction of: three new residential blocks providing up to 425 residential units, with class E and F uses on the ground floor; two commercial buildings for offices and research and development (R&D), with class E and F uses on the ground floor; and basements for building services, cycle and car parking, and infrastructure works.
 - (b) **A full application** for the construction of three commercial buildings for offices and R&D, with class E and F uses on the ground floor and associated car and cycle parking; as well as a multi-storey car and cycle park building, together with the construction of basements for parking and building services, and associated landscaping and infrastructure works.
8. The application was refused by the Joint Development Control Committee (JDCC) on 22nd March 2023. Eight Reasons for refusal were cited, of which Reason for Refusal 1 focuses on “*Visual and Landscape Impact*”. Reason for Refusal 1 states that:

The eastern edge of the site is particularly sensitive due to its long views over the River Cam across the Green Belt towards the City. It is considered that the proposals, due to their height and massing, create an abrupt, hard edge that fails to enhance or preserve the character of the area and is not sympathetic to or in keeping with the site’s context in the wider landscape including the setting of the City.

The height and massing of the proposed development is not sympathetic to the scale, density and massing of the surrounding areas which comprise primarily low level and low-density development. Accordingly, the development will not result in a well designed place

that responds positively to the surrounding context and is considered to have an overbearing presence on the existing development to the east of the development on Fen Road and to the west of the development particularly on Discovery Way.

Overall, the proposed development is not considered to result in high quality development that delivers a well designed place contributing positively to its surroundings. Instead, the proposals result in harm to the surrounding landscape and Green Belt, particularly on the eastern edge of the site, and to the urban area and its relationship with the wider North East Cambridge Area, the City skyline and the landscape beyond. The proposal is therefore not in accordance with South Cambridgeshire Local Plan policies HQ/1, NH/2, NH/6, NH/8 and SS/4 and Policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan and the NPPF [paragraph 130(c) is specifically cited].

9. This evidence therefore considers the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, in order to address the concerns raised in Reason for Refusal 1.
10. Reason for Refusal 3, on Design, is addressed by Robert Myers in relation to landscape design Friedrich Ludewig and Greg Willis in relation to architectural design. My consideration of design relates only to the elements of massing, height and materiality that have potential to cause landscape and visual effects.
11. Evidence on heritage matters is provided by Jon Burgess, and for ecology is provided by Mike Barker.
12. Evidence on planning policy and the planning balance is provided by Mike Derbyshire. I refer to the planning policies within Reason for Refusal 1, but I defer to Mr Derbyshire on all planning matters and the overall planning balance.
13. In order to address the landscape and visual matters within Reason for Refusal 1 I have partly relied upon the landscape and visual impact assessment prepared by Bidwells which formed part of the ES ("the Bidwells LVIA", **CD1.17**). However, I have also provided additional photographs, a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), photomontages for six viewpoints, and my own, independent analysis of the potential landscape and visual effects of the appeal proposals within this proof.

14. My evidence specifically addresses the following issues:
- Review of the planning context relevant to this proof.
 - Landscape design review of the massing, height and materiality of the proposed development, particularly at the eastern edge of the appeal site.
 - Review of the Bidwells LVIA and of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposals (as well as a concise review of the potential effects on the Green Belt).
 - Response to the landscape and visual aspects of Reason for Refusal 1.
 - Response to the concerns raised by Cambridge Past Present and Future (CPP&F)
 - Summary and Conclusions.

1.3 Definitions

15. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as *“an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”* (see Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (2013, GLVIA3, **CD12.07**), paragraph 2.2). As GLVIA3 states, the ELC definition of landscape is inclusive, in that covers *“natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas”*, as well as *“inland water and marine areas”*.
16. Townscape is the character and composition of the built environment, and forms one element of the landscape. Townscape focuses on the buildings and spaces that create character in urban landscapes.

1.4 Methodology

17. The terminology in this proof of evidence follows the guidance of GLVIA3. The methodology for the Bidwells LVIA is included in Appendix 12.1 of the ES, and for ease of reference I have applied the same methodology in my own analysis of landscape and visual effects. As paragraph 12.105 of the Officer’s Report to the JDCC states, ***“the LVIA methodology and viewpoints were agreed by the LPA at pre-application stage”***.
18. Methodologies for preparing the ZTV and photomontages are also set out in my Appendices, at **Appendix A and B** respectively.

1.5 Structure of this Evidence

19. This document is my proof of evidence. Methodologies for the ZTV and photomontages, and new drawings, are included within my appendices, and I have also produced a separate summary of my evidence.

1.6 The Study Area

20. The study area for the Bidwells LVIA is defined at paragraphs 12.12 and 12.13 of the ES, and this initially focused on a radius of 1.5km for townscape and landscape effects, and up to 7km for visual effects, based upon the findings of the ZTV at Appendix 12.4 of the ES.
21. As paragraph 12.141 of the Bidwells LVIA explains, a number of viewpoints were then excluded from the LVIA in agreement with the Local Planning Authority (LPA), due to the lack of visibility of the proposals in these areas, as determined by both site assessment and Vu City modelling. Table 12.1 of the ES sets out the original 36 viewpoints, and table 12.5 sets out the final 18 representative viewpoints. Table 12.4 sets out the final landscape/townscape receptors that were assessed.
22. I have also carried out my own assessment of potential visibility, with the aid of a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV, see **drawing CN-003**). This accords with the findings of the ZTV within the ES.

2.0 Review of Landscape Planning Context

2.1 Introduction

23. In this section of my proof I have briefly reviewed the relevant planning policy and history in order to understand the planning context for Reason 1 for Refusal. A full consideration of planning policy and history is included within the evidence of Mike Derbyshire to whom I defer on matters of planning judgement; this section focuses only on those aspects relevant to the effects of the development upon character and views.
24. The ES (including the Bidwells LVIA) also includes a review of planning policies relevant to the appeal site. I have not repeated all of that information in this proof, but instead focus on the matters of relevance to Reasons for Refusal 1.

2.2 National Policy

25. NPPF paragraph 10 states that “*at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development***” (bold text as per NPPF).
26. Paragraph 130 of the Framework states that “*planning policies and decision should ensure that developments (inter alia) “are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping”, “are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)” and “establish or maintain a strong sense of place”*”.
27. The NPPF states at paragraph 174 that “*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes ... in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan” and (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside...*”. It is common ground that the appeal site does not constitute a valued landscape in the sense of paragraph 174(b) of the NPPF, and further analysis of this conclusion is set out at section 4.0 of this proof of evidence.

28. Paragraph 175 states that plans should “*distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites*”.

2.3 Designations

29. The Bidwells LVIA sets out details of landscape and landscape-related designations in paragraph 12.47 and table 12.2 on page 314, and designations are also illustrated on Maps 4 and 5 in Appendix 12.2 of the ES.
30. In summary the appeal site is not within or adjacent to any national or local landscape designations, nor does it contain any landscape-related designations.
31. Green Belt is just over 40 metres to the east of the appeal site at its closest point, and the site is separated from this designation by the existing railway line.
32. To the south and east of the appeal site are the Fen Ditton and Riverside and Stourbridge conservation areas, which are approximately 500 metres from the appeal site, (SoCG 2.11).
33. Other designations of note include listed buildings at Fen Ditton and Chesterton, and the Local Nature Reserve at Bramblefields, to the south of the appeal site.
34. In relation to access, the Fen Rivers Way regional trail passes along the western bank of the River Cam, and the Harcamlow Way runs south-westwards from Fen Ditton, to the south of the Cam. National Cycle Route 11 also passes along the north bank of the Cam, and there a number of other paths crossing Stourbridge Common and Ditton Meadows. Stourbridge Common is also Common Land and Open Access land.

2.4 The Development Plan

2.4.1 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (Adopted September 2018, CD 5.00)

35. Policy SS/4 allocates land to the north of Cambridge North station - including the appeal site – for mixed-use development. The objective of the policy is to “*enable the creation of a revitalised, employment-focused area centred on a new transport interchange*”, (my emphasis).

36. The policy states that the area will include *“high quality mixed-use development, primarily for employment ... as well as a range of supporting uses, commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses”*.
37. The Policy goes on to state that the nature and amount of development will be established through an Area Action Plan (AAP), to be developed jointly by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. However, paragraph 3.31 of the Local Plan also states that *“early development around Cambridge North station could help create a vibrant area around this key infrastructure to meet the needs of users of the station and bring forward further phased delivery elsewhere within the CNFE area”*, and that applications submitted before the adoption of the AAP *“will be considered on their own merits and subject to ensuring that they would not prejudice the outcome of the AAP process...”*
38. Policy HQ/1 states that *“all new development must be of high quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context”*. Sub-paragraph (a) requires that development should *“preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and **respond** to its context in the wider landscape”* (my emphasis). It is notable that this policy does not require that the wider landscape should be preserved or enhanced, but that instead the proposals should respond to this landscape context.
39. Policy NH/2 states that *“development will only be permitted where it respects and retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which it is located”*. I have provided a brief description of the key characteristics of National Character Area (NCA) 88, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, at section 4.0 of this proof. It is important to note that this regional level assessment is primarily focused upon the character of the landscape, and very little information regarding the character of the urban area of Cambridge is considered.
40. Policy NH/6 states that the Council *“will aim to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district”*, with proposals that cause loss or harm to this network not being permitted. This issue is addressed within the evidence of Robert Myers.

41. Policy NH/8 states that “*development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of high quality*”. As I have noted above, the appeal site is not within the Green Belt, nor is it immediately adjacent to this designation since it is separated from it by the railway lines (see Map 4 at Appendix 12.2 of the ES). It is also important to note that, as Map 4 illustrates, the mixed-use development on Fen Road, which lies to the east of the railway line, is within the Green Belt.

2.4.2 Cambridge Local Plan (Adopted October 2018, CD5.18)

42. Policy 60 defines tall buildings as being “*any proposal for a structure that breaks the existing skyline and/or is significantly taller than the surrounding built form*” (this same definition is repeated at paragraph F.9 of Appendix F, see below).
43. The Policy sets out certain criteria for tall buildings, and I have summarised below those criteria that are of particular relevance to this proof of evidence (further details for each of these criteria are provided in Appendix F of the Local Plan, see below):
- a) “*location, setting and context*”: this criteria requires applicants to demonstrate how the proposals “*fit within the existing landscape and townscape*” with the aid of a visual assessment and accurate visual representations.
 - b) “*impact on the historic environment*”. Heritage matters are addressed by Jon Burgess, but it is important to note that this clause also states that “*tall building proposals must ensure that the character or appearance of Cambridge, as a city of spires and towers emerging above the established tree line, remains dominant from relevant viewpoints as set out in Appendix F*”. Further analysis of Appendix F is set out below.
 - c) “*scale, massing and architectural quality*”. With the aid of appropriate illustrative visual material applicants should show “*how the proposals will deliver a high quality addition to the Cambridge skyline*”.

2.5 The Evolving Area Action Plan for North-East Cambridge (NECAAP) and the Supporting Evidence Base

2.5.1 NEC LCVIA

44. The “*Landscape Character and Visual Impact Appraisal: Development Scenarios*” report, (referred to as the **LCVIA, CD5.13**) assesses the potential landscape and visual effects of three development height scenarios, High, Medium and Low. Each of these options was tested with reference to verifiable views from six representative viewpoints, and the analysis of landscape effects applied a methodology that accords with the recommendations of GLVIA3. Having assessed each of the options the LCVIA then provides design guidance regarding the massing, height, roofscape, materials, and edges of the proposed development. Four of the six representative viewpoints (views 1 to 4, see figure 4.2 of the LCVIA, and also Table 4 on page 46 of the LCVIA) are to the north-east, east and south-east of the appeal site and are therefore of particular relevance to assessing the landscape and visual effects of development upon the site itself.
45. For all of the High, Medium and Low building scenarios the appeal site includes built form up to 24 metres high north of Cambridge North Station, with up to 12 metres on the eastern edge of the appeal site grading up to 18 at the north of the appeal site and 21 metres at the west of the appeal site. In the photomontages that were used in the assessment, block 4 (which includes most of the appeal site) was modelled at a height of 21 metres for all three scenarios (see Table 3, page 16, LCVIA).
46. In the wider NCAAP site area **the High building scenario considered heights reaching 12 storeys (36m), and 13 storeys (39m) at the District centre. The Medium scenario considered building heights of up to 9 storeys, or 27m in the wider NCAAP, with the District Centre reaching 10 storeys, or 30m. Finally, the Low option considered heights of up to 6 storeys (18m) in the wider NCAAP, with the District Centre at 7 storeys, (21m).**
47. For viewpoint 1 the study concludes (see for example page 56) that there are visual benefits to having lower building heights on the eastern edge of blocks 2 and 3, to the north of the appeal site. It also notes that “*the High option indicates that some higher development potentially could be achieved in block 4...*”, which is the location of the appeal site. For viewpoint 2 (see for

example page 58) it is concluded that *“blocks 4 and 5 and the District Centre would represent a coherent nucleus of development of similar scale and mass to the proposed Cambridge North Station Local Centre...”*

48. In terms of the potential landscape effects of the three options, it is noted that NCA88, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, has a low sensitivity to change from the development (see page 72) *“due to the fact that there is existing development at the site which is embedded in the built-up area of Cambridge and separated from the rural parts of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands by the A14 dual carriageway”*. The High option was assessed as having a moderate effect on this character area, whereas the Medium option was assessed as having a low effect on this character area.
49. The effects of the three options upon the character of the River Cam Corridor would be minor for the Low option, Moderate for the Medium option and major for the High option. In all options development would be more noticeable than in the baseline scenario in this character area.
50. The Design Guidance of the LCVIA is summarised in Diagram 1 on page 86 of the LCVIA, and this diagram has been reproduced in **Plate I**, below. **In summary the appeal site is considered an appropriate location for Medium/High buildings**, with low buildings being considered more appropriate at the east, north-east and north of the NCAAP area, at the interface with the Fen character areas.
51. It is important to note that **the LCVIA is the only element of the NECAAP evidence base that bases its conclusions upon a robust, methodical approach to landscape and visual matters**. All other elements of the evidence base rely upon the LCVIA for guidance on landscape and visual matters.

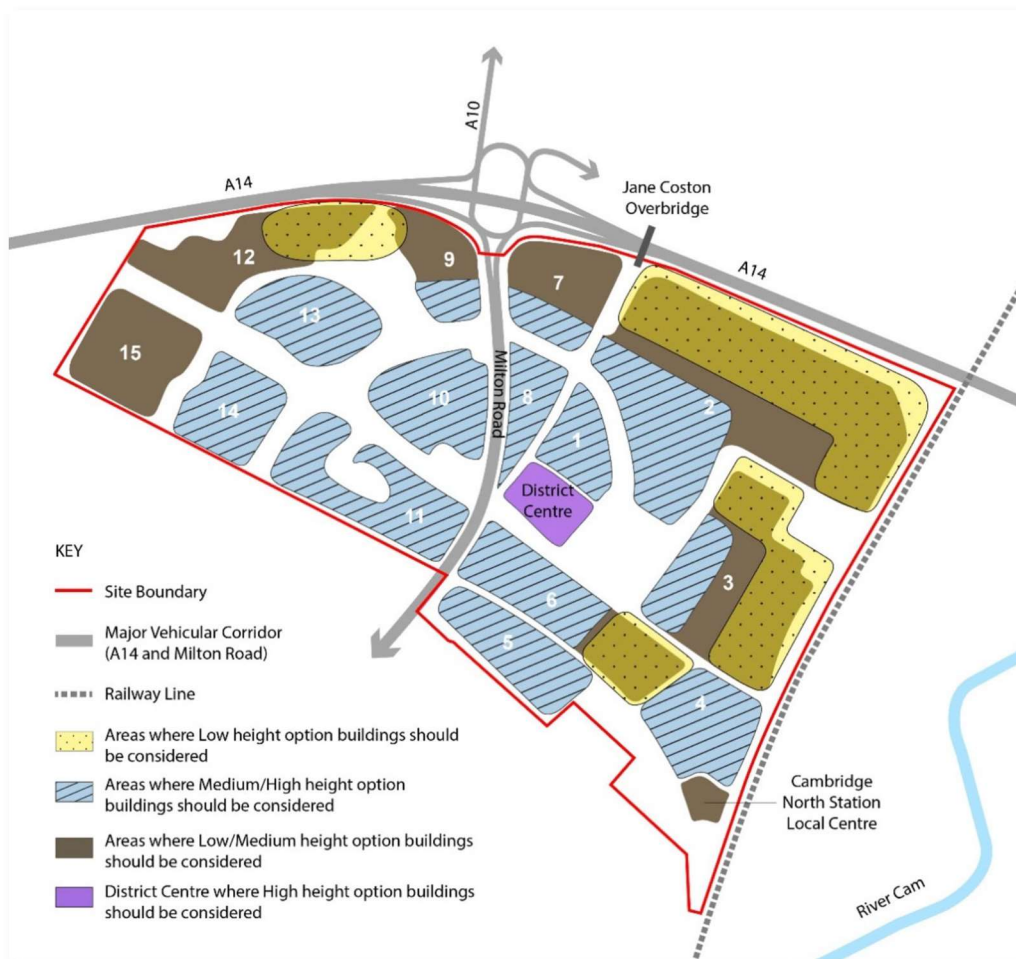


Plate I: The Potential development Heights recommended in the LCVIA (taken from Diagram 1, page 86): the appeal site is within block 4, at the southernmost corner of the study area, and is seen as an area where medium/high buildings should be considered.

52. The LCVIA recognises that **there will be some changes to the skyline as a result of this development**, and states at paragraph 5.13 that “*the introduction of potential development into views of the skyline would need to be of high architectural quality and sensitive design*”. High quality materials are also recommended, with a common palette of materials in each character area.
53. It is recognised that the edges of the site are sensitive to development as they form the interface with adjacent character areas. At 5.17 a number of design approaches are recommended for edges to minimise these effects, and these measures are set out below:

- *Variable set-back of buildings on plots*
- *Variable roofline;*
- *Minimal hard boundary treatment such as fences and walls;*
- *Use of semi-mature trees;*
- *Creation of an irregular parkland edge of adequate space to accommodate forest scale trees;*
- *Permeability of built form and landscape allowing views into the Site along green corridors of adequate space to accommodate forest scale trees; and*
- *Avoiding an abrupt transition between development and countryside.*

2.5.2 NEC Townscape Strategy (CD5.15, Urban Initiatives Studio, October 2021)

54. This report aims to provide “*an overall framework based on strong townscape principles*” (1.1.1, page 4). The report states that it is “*built on the evidence provided in the NEC Townscape Assessment and Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment reports*”. **In this context it is important to note that the Townscape Strategy does not seek to present an alternative independent assessment of potential landscape and visual effects to that within the LCVIA, but is wholly reliant upon it when considering landscape and visual matters.**
55. It provides a series of design principles which include the need to “*respond sensitively to and preserve the special character of the River Cam corridor, meadows, and Fen Ditton by stepping down development heights towards the landscape edges*” and also “*respond appropriately to the adjacent residential context by stepping heights and densities down towards its interface with existing settlements*” (page 24).
56. Figure 4.6 of the Strategy (page 46) envisages that the appeal site would have mixed uses, with residential-led development along the western edge and some retail uses close to the station. The appeal site forms the eastern end of the “*Mixed-Use Spine*”, which is envisaged as becoming “***an intense and vibrant urban environment***” (my emphasis, 4.4.5, page 45). The appeal site forms part of proposed character area 2a, “*Cambridge North Station Hub*”, which is described as a “***key gateway into Cambridge ... which will see increased activity and buzz... the character***

of the area should be urban and celebrate the arrival in the NEC area” (page 70). In terms of proposed building heights, the Strategy states that the hotel and One Cambridge Square already provide prominence and legibility to this area and *“no further tall buildings are necessary or proposed in this area”*, although a *“local height accent”* of up to 7 storeys is proposed at the north of this area.

57. In general, the Strategy states that *“building heights across North-East Cambridge are proposed to be of a medium rise urban scale”* (4.5.1, page 50). More specifically, the *“general building heights”* drawing, figure 4.7 on page 51 of the Strategy **recommends building heights of up to 5 storeys (15m) in the locality of the appeal site. This strategy is clearly at odds with the recommended building heights in Diagram 1 of the LCVIA** (see Plate I, above), which saw the potential for medium to high development on the appeal site based upon a more detailed consideration of the potential landscape and visual effects of development.
58. At 3.3 (page 24) the Townscape Strategy sets out a series of design principles, and I have summarised those principles which are of particular relevance to this evidence below:
1. *“Respond sensitively to and preserve the special character of the River Cam corridor, meadows and Fen Ditton by stepping down development heights towards the landscape edges”.*
 2. *“Respond positively to the adjacent residential context by stepping heights and densities down towards its interface with existing settlements and avoiding stark contrasts in heights with existing neighbouring buildings”.*
 3. *“Enhance legibility and distinctiveness through appropriately scaled landmark buildings at places of visual prominence and functional significance where they can make a positive contribution to the skyline and do not cause an inappropriately adverse impact on heritage assets or landscape character”* (my emphasis).
 4. Create a network of walking and cycling routes, creating a legible place that is easy to navigate.

5. Create “a distinctly green place” with a “network of green corridors”, “ample tree planting and landscaping” and “**recognisable green and public “feature” spaces that provide identity**” (my emphasis).

Principles 6 to 10 relate more specifically to urban design matters and are not addressed further in this proof.

59. In summary, the Townscape Strategy encourages the establishment of **an intense and vibrant urban environment, with some appropriately scaled landmark buildings to aid legibility particularly at places of functional significance**. It states that its recommendations are based partly upon the findings of the LCVIA, and yet its proposed building heights in the locality of the appeal site contrast with those recommended in the LCVIA.

2.5.3 The Evolving North-East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP)

60. As Mike Derbyshire explains in his proof of evidence, progress with the establishment of the AAP has been slow, and he concludes that the draft AAP carries very little weight in the decision-making process.
61. It is notable that both the Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 AAPs recognise that there would be an increase in building heights across the appeal site and the wider NECAAP, although the massing and height proposed is different in these draft documents, and also different to the recommendations within the LCVIA.

2.6 Relevant Planning Guidance

2.6.1 Appendix F of the Cambridge Local Plan: Tall Buildings and the Skyline

62. This Appendix is referred to in Policy 60, and aims to “provide a robust set of criteria to assist in assessing the likely impact of a proposed tall building (or buildings)” (F.5). It is therefore guidance document which aims to maintain the character and qualities of the Cambridge skyline.
63. Appendix F defines the historic core of Cambridge on figure F.1, and the appeal site lies approximately 2.46km to the north-east of this area at its closest point. The historic core

includes a large number of existing landmark buildings, as defined in drawing F.2. The Appendix notes that outside of the historic core the prevailing height of residential buildings is two storey, although there are notable exceptions including Addenbrookes Hospital and the hangars at Cambridge Airport.

64. Paragraph F.20 of the Appendix states that *“views from the rural hinterland of Cambridge from both elevated and level views of the spires and towers in the historic core are limited and generally distant”*. Figure F.3 sets out the Strategic Viewpoints which provide these views, and these viewpoints are considered further both in the Bidwells LVIA and at section 4.0 of this proof.
65. The same criteria set out in Policy 60 are examined in further detail at Appendix F, and I have considered the most relevant elements of these below:
- **Location, Setting and Context.** The guidance notes that the relationship of the proposed building(s) to the surrounding context *“needs to be carefully examined”*, and a thorough assessment of the townscape and landscape context should be prepared. Paragraph F.31 indicates that tall buildings can play a very positive role in the townscape:
“Tall buildings have the potential to act as positive landmarks that aid legibility and make it easier for people to orientate themselves around the city. Appropriate ‘conditions’ for a tall building could, for example, include local nodes, key city street junctions, the ends of important vistas, and in and around principal transport junctions”, (my emphasis).
66. F.31 goes on to state that however this approach would not be appropriate in the historic core.
- **Impact on the Historic Environment** is addressed by Jon Burgess.
 - **Scale, Massing and Architectural Quality.** It is noted at F.37 that *“tall buildings are frequently constructed to serve as memorable, landmark features”*, and that *“consideration needs to be given to the articulation of the building and the creation of shadow lines to provide interest and relief to facades”*

F.39 states that “*tall buildings and their materials need to be of the highest quality and sensitive to the site context*”. However, F.39 also notes that materials could provide a positive statement by contrasting with materials used in the site’s context:

*“Building materials should be similar or sympathetic to the surroundings **or provide contrast through thoughtful juxtaposition of materials**”.*

67. In summary, Appendix F requires very careful examination of the townscape, landscape and visual effects of a proposed development to assess how tall buildings would relate to their context. **The Appendix recognises that tall buildings can play a positive role in aiding legibility, for example by marking principal transport junctions, and that sometimes materials used can contrast with those used in the site’s context.**

2.6.2 South Cambridgeshire Design Guide (SPD, 2010, CD 5.11)

68. This SPD states at paragraph 3.4 (page 18) that identifying, protecting and enhancing the distinctive character of our surroundings is a key aspect of sustainability. In defining local character, the guidance refers to the classification of National Character Areas around Cambridge (see for example figure 3.1, page 19).
69. Paragraph 5.2 states that new development should “*sit comfortably in its landscape*”. New development “*should not intrude upon the skyline, **with the exception of specifically agreed features selected as landmarks...***”, (my emphasis).

2.6.3 Conservation Area Appraisals

70. Heritage matters are addressed by Jon Burgess and I defer to him on these matters. However, Conservation Area Appraisals can also provide useful information regarding landscape and visual matters, and it is in this context that I have reviewed these documents.
71. The Fen Ditton Conservation Area Appraisal (**CD5.07**) notes that the designation includes Ditton Meadows and extends up to (and partially includes) the River Cam itself. The Appraisal notes at paragraph 5.4 that “*attractive water meadows lie between the village and the river and these, combined with the surrounding fields, serve visually to separate the village from the City*”. The

appraisal also notes that there is potential for some glimpsed views from the settlement towards the meadows, and also some potential for views towards the settlement from the meadows.

72. The Riverside and Stourbridge Common conservation area abuts the southern boundary of the Fen Ditton conservation area. The Conservation Area Appraisal for this designation (CD5.08) notes that *“a backcloth of trees surrounds the open commons to the south, softening and at times hiding the built-up area beyond”*. The appraisal also notes that the common area is *“not only an important landscape feature, but also a significant linear wildlife corridor, linking the City centre with its countryside”*.

2.7 Relevant Planning History

2.7.1 Novotel, to the south of the Appeal Site (S/2372/17/FL), CD12.01

73. This full application for a 217 bedroom hotel, with an L-shaped footprint comprising a five storey wing and a seven storey northern wing, was permitted in July 2017. The maximum height of this building will be 23m to roofline, or 25 metres once the plant is included, with the lower wing being up to 17.5m without plant, or 19m with plant.
74. The Officer’s Report notes at paragraph 11.3 that the upper parts of the proposed building would be visible from a number of viewpoints, and that it would be *“quite prominent”* from Ditton Meadows. However, the officer concludes that ***“on balance it is considered that the proposal would not have a significant visual impact”***, partly due to new landscape mitigation which would be provided by the new landscape mitigation measures which form part of the Hayling House application (16/0617/FUL).
75. Paragraph 11.2 of the officer’s report acknowledges that the proposed building would be taller than surrounding buildings, but considers that this is acceptable because:
- Firstly, there is differentiation in height between the two wings of the building;
 - Secondly the buildings need to *“frame the Station Square and be of sufficient scale to do this”*;
 - Thirdly, the height provides a *“new urban status”* for this area.

76. At paragraph 11.9 it is stated that the proposed flat roof *“which provides a contemporary appearance”*.
77. **It is notable that the Council’s landscape officer did not object to the proposals.**
78. The Officer concludes at 11.13 that *“the proposal is considered to be high quality design, which would enhance the character of the local area”*, (my emphasis).

2.7.2 One Cambridge Square, south of the Appeal Site (S/4478/17/FL), CD12.00

79. This application for 9,723 square metres of office space, with additional retail space and cycle storage, was permitted in 2018.
80. The proposed building was proposed to measure up to 26 metres in height without plant, or up to 29 metres with plant.
81. Paragraph 11.2 acknowledges that the height of the building is taller than surrounding buildings, and that it was of a similar height to the permitted Novotel. As with the Novotel, Officers concluded that the height of this building was acceptable, and necessary both to frame the station square and also *“to provide a city form that establishes a new urban status”*.
82. As for the Novotel application, the Officer notes at 11.3 that whilst the proposal would be partially visible from Ditton Meadows *“it is considered that the proposal would not have a significant visual impact in long distance views, resulting in limited visual harm on any one of the key viewpoints...”*
83. **Once more it is notable that the Council’s landscape officer did not object to the proposals.**
84. At paragraph 11.4 the Officer concludes that *“the massing and height of the building is appropriate to its context...”*

2.8 Responses to the Application

2.8.1 Responses from the Council's Landscape Officer

85. The Landscape Officer did not support the application, and in her December 2022 response summarised her concerns (**CD3.31b**). In relation to this evidence the key concerns can be summarised as follows:

- The proposed buildings exceed those set out in the draft AAP (for example One Milton Avenue would be 5 metres taller than the maximum landmark building height, S6 and S7 would exceed the maximum landmark height by 0.1m, S8 would exceed the landmark height by 2m, and S9 is said to exceed the landmark height by 4 metres.
- The Officer recommends a “*wholesale review of heights and mass across the site*”.
- The hotel and One Cambridge Square “*do not set a precedent for development in the area*”, but instead form the focus of a tall building cluster at the railway.
- The concern is expressed that the LVIA was delayed and therefore “*could not be used as an effective design tool*”. It is for this reason that the Landscape officer feels the proposed heights exceed acceptable limits.
- The views where moderate to high adverse visual effects are predicted in the LVIA – primarily viewpoints along the River Cam corridor and around Fen Ditton and Ditton Meadows are “*incredibly significant and sensitive*”.
- The visual effects on residential receptors at Discovery Way have been understated.
- The applicant has not demonstrated that the proposals are a high quality addition to the Cambridge skyline.

2.9 Summary and Conclusions of Planning Context

86. The appeal site is not within or adjacent to any national or local landscape designations, nor does it contain any landscape-related designations.

87. The Green Belt is just over 40 metres to the east of the appeal site at its closest point, and the site is separated from this designation by the existing railway line. Fen Ditton and Riverside and

Stourbridge Common Conservation Areas are approximately 500 metres from the appeal site boundary.

88. The appeal site is within an area which is allocated for mixed-use development in the adopted Local Plan. Policy SS/4 states that the allocation will *“enable the creation of a revitalised, employment-focused area centred on a new transport interchange”*.
89. Accordingly, the various documents which form the evidence base for the NECAAP recognise that the character of the locality of the appeal site will change. The LCVIA, Townscape Strategy, and the draft AAPs all envisage the introduction of increased height and mass on the appeal site and the wider NECAAP.
90. **The LCVIA** – the only document that addresses the potential landscape and visual effects of built development within the NECAAP – **recognises that development of the NECAAP area will result in changes to the skyline and that it is therefore important that the development is “of high architectural quality and sensitive design”**.
91. **The LCVIA concludes that the appeal site could accommodate medium to high buildings.**
92. The Townscape Strategy is partly based upon the findings of the LCVIA, but provides different recommendations on building heights in the locality of the appeal site. It recommends that proposed building heights step down towards the River Cam corridor and the residential areas, but it also states that development of the appeal site and its context should provide *“an intense and vibrant urban environment”* which should also *“celebrate the arrival in the NEC area”*. It recognises that tall buildings can be helpful in providing landmark buildings can enhance legibility and distinctiveness.
93. The AAP is not agreed or adopted, and Mr Derbyshire concludes that very little weight can be attached to it.
94. Appendix F of the Local Plan provides guidance on Tall Buildings and the Skyline. **It recognises that tall buildings have the potential to act as positive landmarks that aid legibility**, particularly at local nodes, key city junctions or in and **around principal transport junctions**. This guidance

also notes that the **materials used in tall buildings could provide a positive statement by contrasting with materials used in the site's context**. The guidance also recommends careful attention to the **articulation of the elevations**, with creation of shadow lines to provide relief and interest.

95. The Officer's reports for the Novotel and One Cambridge Square both acknowledged that the proposed buildings were higher than adjacent buildings. However, in both cases the landscape officer did not object to the proposals, and Officers concluded that the proposals would be appropriate as they established a "***new urban status***" and resulted in limited visual harm to surrounding viewpoints.

3.0 Landscape Review of the Proposals

3.1 Introduction

96. In this section of my proof I provide a landscape review of the appeal proposals which are relevant to this evidence. In particular I focus upon:

- A brief consideration of the **character of the site and its context** (recognising that this is dealt with in detail in section 4.0 of this proof);
- An overview of the **main elements of the appeal proposals**;
- A consideration of the overall **proposed height and massing**;
- a brief review of the **design process**;
- the **overall design concept and principles**;
- and the **height, massing and materiality of the proposed eastern edge**.

97. Design evidence has been prepared by Friedrich Ludewig and Greg Willis for architecture and masterplanning, and by Robert Myers in relation to landscape design, and I do not seek to repeat their evidence in this. However, I have cross-referenced to parts of their evidence, and to documents submitted with the application, **in order to the identify aspects of the proposals that have potential to cause or influence landscape and visual effects**.

3.2 The Existing Site and its Context

98. When considering the suitability of the proposals it is important to consider the existing character of the site and the wider context. This is described in detail in section 4.0 of this proof, and is also summarised at paragraphs 1 to 7 of the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (LSoCG).

99. In essence the site is a brown field area, comprising car parking and waste ground, and juxtaposed by a station, a 25.8m high hotel and a 30m high office building. It is allocated for mixed-use development, and as LSoCG paragraph 8 states it will become **a vibrant, employment focused area**. The site itself is therefore in poor condition and there is a clear aspiration to create a new, urban character area in this location.

100. **Importantly, at no point does the appeal site directly interface with the more rural landscapes of the River Cam Valley.** As LSoCG paragraph 5 states, the appeal site is separated from these landscapes firstly by the railway lines, which are approximately 36m wide, and then by the mixed-use development on Fen Road, which is between 100m and 475m wide.
101. **Similarly, at no point does the appeal site directly interface with residential areas.** As LSoCG paragraph 3 states, the appeal site is separated from Discovery Way, the nearest residential development, by the guided busway and by allotments. It is also common ground that Bramblefields Nature Reserve, to the south of Discovery Way, is 180 metres from the appeal site at its closest point, and separated from it by allotments.
102. **The appeal site is thus brown field and within an urban context, clearly separated from countryside and residential areas by other urban and suburban uses.**

3.3 Overview of the Main Elements of the Appeal Proposals

103. The application is hybrid, comprising (in summary):
- A detailed application for the construction of an office building at One Milton Avenue (S4), a mobility hub (S5), and two laboratories (One and Two Station Row, S6 and S7);
 - An outline application for the construction of a residential quarter, providing up to 425 homes, and two further buildings providing laboratories and offices (Two Milton Avenue, S8, and One Chesterton Square, S9).
104. **These proposed uses accord with the proposed uses under policy SS/4 of the Local Plan, and this point is agreed at paragraph 9.8 of the Officer's Report (CD4.00)**
105. The nomenclature and layout of those elements is summarised in **Plate II**, below.



Plate II: Three-Dimensional computer model of the Appeal Proposals, (extracted from page 106 of the DAS).

3.4 Proposed Building Heights and Massing

106. The proposed building heights for the various elements are set out in **Table CN1**, below. (Building heights are taken from page 110 of DAS and Parameter Plan 6, **(CD1.77f)** and are also set out in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground).
107. **In overview, the proposals therefore include varied building heights, both within each individual buildings and also between buildings.** For example, the maximum roof heights of the residential quarter vary between 15m and 30m in height, and buildings along the eastern edge vary between a maximum of 15.81 and 22.1. Within buildings there are often lower elements of roof planes; for example S6 and S7, on the eastern edge of the site, have lower sections at between 13.4 and 17.6m in height.

108. The tallest proposed buildings would be at the north-east of the residential quarter (30m) and the eastern side of One Milton Avenue (30.835). **It is notable that both of these taller buildings are set back from the eastern edge of the development, where building heights are limited to a maximum of 22 metres for S6 and S7 and (for the majority of the roofline) 15.81m for the mobility hub.**

TABLE CN1: PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHTS, TAKEN FROM 110 OF THE DAS AND PARAMETER PLAN 06

Building	Lowest Point	Highest Point
Novotel (existing)	17.7m	25.8m
One Cambridge Square (existing)	27.4m	30.2m
Detailed Application		
Mobility Hub (S5)	15.81m	18.3m
1 and 3 Station Row (S6 and S7)	13.4m	22.1m
One Milton Avenue (S4)	19.95m	30.835m
Outline Application		
Two Milton Avenue (S8)	20.8m	23.9m
One Chesterton Square (S9)	22.0m	25.8m
Residential Quarter	14.5m	30.0m

109. It is also notable that these taller buildings are of a similar height to One Cambridge Square (30.2m maximum), which is now completed and which is to the south-west of the appeal site.
110. It is also notable that the proposed heights are well within the range of medium to high buildings specified in the LCVIA (see section 2.0 of this proof): **high buildings were specified in the LCVIA as reaching 12 storeys (36m), and 13 storeys (39m) at the District centre, and Medium buildings reached heights of up to 9 storeys, or 27m in the wider NCAAP, with the District Centre reaching 10 storeys, or 30m.**
111. In addition to the variation in height across the proposals, **it is also important to note from, for example, Plate II, above, that the overall massing of the development comprises a series of discrete blocks, with articulations and set-backs in their elevations.** This fragmentation of mass creates visual interest when viewed from both internal and external viewpoints.

3.5 Review of the Design Process

112. The design process is described within the evidence of Friedrich Ludewig and I will not repeat this here. However, it is important to point out that the design process has been very long, has involved a considerable degree of consultation with the public, Council and review bodies, and has resulted in a considerable degree of change to the proposed masterplan and the design of individual buildings.
113. The design process for the appeal proposals has taken place over nearly six years and has involved extensive consultation with the Council, design workshops, design reviews, public consultations, and many iterations of both the design of the masterplan and of individual buildings. Page 73 of the DAS summarises the consultation process, which started with the first pre-application meeting on 22nd June 2017.
114. The evolving Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment also influenced the proposed design, (see for example DAS page 78), and verifiable visualisations of proposed designs were shared with the Council's landscape officer. The methodology for the LVIA, landscape receptors and representative viewpoints were all agreed with the landscape officer.

3.6 Overall Design Concept and Principles

115. As page 50 of DAS explains, the proposals would create a **high quality mixed- use scheme for Cambridge**. The development would serve as **an employment hub**, with a **strong sense of community**.
116. The DAS also sets out guiding principles for the proposals, which include the objectives to be **pedestrian and cyclist-led**, with **vibrant and active public realm**. The scheme also aims to enhance local biodiversity by providing a biodiversity net gain across the appeal site.
117. As Mr Myers explains at section 4 of his proof, the landscaping proposals represent a high quality design "*which would result in a well-designed coherent sense of place that contributes to distinctiveness*". Each external space would be of different scale and character.

118. As Mr Myers explains in his evidence, built form and planting would be used to create vistas, and would also help to define a *“legible link to the railway station for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians”*.
119. This design concept accords with the objectives of Policy SS/4 and also of the Townscape Strategy. The proposed design also represents a significant departure – both in quality and character - from the existing character and condition of the former rail sidings, which comprises large areas of car parking and waste ground juxtaposed by the somewhat disconnected railway station, hotel and One Cambridge Square office building.

3.7 Height, Massing and Materiality of the Proposed Eastern Edge

120. A summary of the design approach to the eastern edge of the appeal site is provided in the Consultation Response to Cambridge Past, Present and Future, prepared by ACME in October 2022 (see section 1.0 of this document, particularly pages 6 to 16 (**CD2.15a**)).
121. In relation to **height and massing**, care has been taken to divide the mobility hub and laboratory space (S6 and S7) into three discrete buildings, with the mobility hub being approximately ten metres lower than the highest roofline on the Novotel, and over six metres lower than both S6 and S7. As noted above, the overall height and mass of proposed buildings also reduces towards the eastern edge of the appeal site, with S6 and S7 reaching maximum heights of 22m, with parapets at 13.4m, whereas buildings further to the west reach a maximum of 30m.
122. Buildings S6 and S7 are then each further subdivided into four “fingers”, with each finger stepped up from the general roof level by approximately two metres to provide interest in the roofline.
123. The fingers also provide variable setbacks in the elevations of these buildings, as illustrated in **Plate III**, below, which provides **articulation, interest and shade lines**. Further interest and articulation is provided by parapets whose elevation varies between the fingers, as well as variations in the shape and size of window apertures between fingers.

124. The **materials** proposed in the eastern elevations provide further diversity and distinctiveness in the elevations at the eastern edge of the appeal site. The mobility hub would have a perforated metal cladding with a unique pattern, whereas S6 and S7 would utilise a precast concrete frame (see **plate III**, below). Both of these treatments would differ significantly from that found on both the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square.



S6, S7 Materiality



Mobility Hub Materiality

Plate III: Cambridge Paste Present and Future Feedback Response (October 2022): Page 10: diversity in the articulation, roof height and materials used on buildings S6 and S7 (top image) and the mobility hub (lower image).

125. **Landscaping** would also form an increasingly important part of the design of the eastern edge of the appeal site. Climbers would also be established over the elevations of some of the fingers to further provide variation in the elevations of S6 and S7, and a tree planting width of approximately 5.5 metres, with a canopy width of between 12.6 and 18.6 metres (see page 11 of the ACME Consultation Response) would be sufficient space for the establishment of both medium sized tree species, such as small leaved lime, (*Tilia cordata* ‘Greenspire’) and larger trees, such as London Plan (*Platanus x hispanica*), with the fully mature height of the latter reaching approximately 35 metres.
126. **In summary the design of the eastern edge has been carefully considered, with variety in height, articulation in the elevations, high quality and varied materials, and proposed landscaping both on the elevations and next to the railway lines providing visual interest, and a distinctive and attractive design.**
127. These measures accord with the design recommendations set out in the LCVIA, as set out in section 2.0 of this proof.
128. **The design proposals for the eastern edge do not, therefore, represent “an abrupt hard edge” as alleged in Reason for Refusal 1. There is a reduction in height and mass towards the east of the appeal site, a breaking down of mass on the eastern edge into separate blocks with different heights, and the perception of mass would be further reduced by the parapets and set-backs proposed in the elevations, as well as variations in materials and the proposed landscaping.**

3.8 Conclusions of Landscape Review

129. The design for the appeal proposals has resulted from six years of work by an experienced, multi-disciplinary design team, as well as from consultation with the Council, public and a series of design reviews. The design has changed considerably as result of the assessment and consultation process.
130. It is common ground between the parties that the proposed uses accord with Policy SS/4.

131. The proposed masterplan, and building and landscape designs, would provide a high quality mixed-use scheme for Cambridge, with vibrant and active public realm. The masterplan would provide a coherent and distinctive sense of place within an area that is currently dominated by car parking and waste ground.

132. The height and massing of the development has been carefully conceived, with heights reducing towards the eastern edge and roof heights also varying considerably along both the western and eastern edges. Varying roof heights, diverse and high quality materials, careful articulation in the elevations and landscaping both on the elevations and also within a landscaped margin at the eastern edge of the site would together provide an attractive and distinctive design for the proposed development.

4.0 The Potential Landscape and Visual Effects of the Appeal Proposals

4.1 Introduction

133. In this section of my Proof of Evidence I consider the potential effects of the Appeal proposals upon the landscape and townscape of the site and its context, and also on views from publicly accessible viewpoints. The terminology and methodology used in this review accords with GLVIA3, (CD5.1), and is set out in appendix 12.1 of the ES.
134. This section includes a summary of the findings of the Bidwells landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA), but also provides my own independent review of the potential landscape and visual effects. My analysis is based upon a desk top assessment of all existing reports and assessments, site visits in December 2022 and February 2023, a new Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), and photomontages for six viewpoints which were identified by the Council's Landscape Officer as being of particular significance.
135. **Both the Bidwells LVIA in the ES, and my own review, are assessed against the baseline of the existing site condition.** Given that there is no adopted AAP this is the correct approach: however, given that the site is allocated for mixed-use development, and given that all elements of the evidence base for the NECAAP envisage a significant number of new buildings on the site, and a new, vibrant and urban character area, **it is important to recognise that assessing the proposals against the baseline of the existing site condition is very much a worst-case assessment.** The importance of considering how the site and its context might evolve in the future is underlined by GLVIA3, which states at paragraph 5.33 (page 86) that when describing the landscape baseline *"the aim should be to describe the landscape as it is at the time but also to consider what it may be like in the future"*.
136. In judging the nature of landscape and visual effects (i.e. positive, negative or neutral) **it is important to note that it is best practice in LVIA to assess increased visibility/prominence of built form within a rural or semi-rural context as resulting in negative landscape and/or visual effects**, due to changes to the baseline condition and/or character of either landscapes and/or views.

137. **However, it is also possible that prominent new buildings, if well designed, can result in positive landscape and/or visual effects**, a fact that is Common Ground between the parties (see Landscape Statement of Common Ground, paragraph 23). For example, the Tall Buildings and the Skyline guidance (Appendix F of the Local Plan) notes at paragraph F.31 that ***“tall buildings have the potential to act as positive landmarks that aid legibility and make it easier for people to orientate themselves around the city. Appropriate ‘conditions’ for a tall building could, for example, include local nodes, key city street junctions, the ends of important vistas, and in and around principal transport junctions”*** (my emphasis).
138. This important principle is also acknowledged at paragraph 5.37 of GLVIA3 (page 88, **CD12.07**), which states that when making a judgement about the nature of effects caused by a development (positive, neutral or negative), it is important to consider not only *“the degree to which the proposal fits with existing character”* but also *“the contribution to the landscape that the development may make in its own right, usually by virtue of good design, even if it is in contrast to existing character”* (my emphasis).
139. Notwithstanding this, and as I have noted above, it is accepted best practice in LVIA to assess increased visibility of built form, particularly in a rural or semi-rural context, as causing negative effects.
140. In this context it is important that the results of any LVIA should be considered alongside an appraisal of the proposed design: for example, an LVIA will conclude that increased visibility of a proposed tall buildings from a rural viewpoint will result in a negative effect, but it is possible that the good design of the building, (combined with the suitability of having that building in that location) could result in positive urban design and visual effects.
141. The conclusions of the Bidwells LVIA, and of my own review in this section of my proof, should therefore be considered alongside the conclusions of section 3.0 of my proof, above.
142. This section also includes a concise review of the potential effects of the proposed development upon the Green Belt within the River Cam valley, in order to address the concern in Reason for Refusal 1 that the proposals would cause harm to the Green Belt.

4.2 Methodology used in the Bidwells LVIA

143. As I have noted, the Officer's Report notes (see paragraph 12.105) that the methodology used in the Bidwells LVIA was agreed with the LPA at the pre-application stage. Bidwells also undertook an extensive pre-application exercise with regards to the selection of representative viewpoints, and the remaining 18 viewpoints were again agreed with the Council. The proposed landscape receptors also formed part of the baseline that was shared with and approved by the Council through the ES scoping process.
144. The Bidwells LVIA methodology also accords with the recommendations of the most up to date guidance issued by the Landscape Institute, including GLVIA3 and guidance on the landscape value outside of national landscape designations (TGN 02/21, **CD12.08**). The LVIA was produced by an experienced chartered landscape architect.
145. In accordance with the requirements of the Tall Buildings and the Skyline guidance, (see for example paragraph F.48), the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development were tested at an early stage in the project design process – and on an iterative, ongoing basis through the pre-application process - with the aid of detailed computer modelling prepared by Vu City. The Vu City model has comprehensive coverage of the buildings and vegetation in Cambridge, as well as its landscape setting, and the Vu City is often used for testing the potential effects of development in other sensitive urban environments, such as London and Oxford. Importantly, the results of the early Vu City modelling were also shared with the Council, and it is on this basis that (for example) the number of representative viewpoints was reduced from 30 to 18.
146. In accordance with paragraph F.54 of the Tall Buildings and Skyline guidance, the Bidwells LVIA was also accompanied by verifiable photomontages, as well as a computer generated ZTV. The photomontages accord with the methodology set out in Landscape Institute's guidance "*Visual Representation of Development Proposals*", TGN 06/19.
147. In summary, the Bidwells LVIA methodology thus follows the most up to date guidance, and the assessment is also supported by a ZTV and verified photomontages, which are again prepared in accordance with the most up to date guidance. In accordance with best practice, Bidwells has

also consulted with the Council throughout the LVIA process, agreeing methodologies and receptors.

4.3 Potential Landscape Effects of the Proposed Development

4.3.1 Existing Landscape Character Assessments

148. In accordance with best practice the Bidwells LVIA reviews existing landscape character assessments in order to provide the context for a more detailed analysis of the character of the appeal site. Existing character classifications are also illustrated on Map 8 at Appendix 12.2 of the ES. I have reviewed the findings of the character assessments below, with reference to the Bidwells LVIA.

National Level: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA (CD12.09)

149. At a national level the appeal site and its context is classified as part of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands National Character Area (NCA 88, ES paragraphs 12.56 to 12.65). The description of this NCA focuses on the *“predominantly open, arable landscape of planned, regular fields bounded by open ditches...”* and rivers *“in shallow, broad valleys of significant ecological value”*, but also acknowledges that *“settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors”* and *“major transport routes cross the area”*.

City Level: Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (CD5.26)

150. At a greater level of detail, the Bidwells LVIA refers to the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment prepared by Cambridge City Council in 2003. The Bidwells LVIA notes that whilst this assessment is slightly dated, it is referenced in the Cambridge Local Plan. The appeal site is included within the **Industrial - Railway Corridor character type**. In specific reference to the locality of the appeal site it is stated at 3.6.1 that *“to the north-east and associated with the sewerage works is a large area of sidings – now mostly unused and derelict. This area may now be developed”*. As the Bidwells LVIA notes at paragraph 12.85, the assessment states that there is an opportunity for enhancement *“through development opportunities in the station area especially to improve and create a new district with its own character”* (my emphasis).

151. Land to the east of the site is classified as being within the River Corridor – Open Rural character type at Ditton Meadows, and within the River Corridor – Commons character type at Stourbridge Common. The Open Rural sub-type is described as having *“some of the characteristics of Fenland, with the proximity of the willow lined river and the adjacent flat pastoral landscape contained within the very shallow river valley”*, whereas one of the essential characteristics of the Commons sub-type is identified as *“long views across open grassland and under long avenues of trees”*.
152. The Bidwells LVIA also makes reference to other elements of this assessment which are of particular relevance to the appeal site and its context and which are distinctive features of Cambridge, (see Paragraphs 12.69 to 12.86 the LVIA). I have summarise the key elements of this below:
- **Green fingers and corridors:** for example the assessment notes that *“Cambridge owes much of its very special character to the way these spaces penetrate the urban fabric and the unique association between built spaces and green space”*. The corridor that extends to the east and south of the site is described as *“the green space that sweeps along the corridor of the Cam from the south-west linking the claylands with the fenlands to the north-east. It consists of a string of major open spaces, mostly Commons, encircling the City centre which relate and give a setting to the historic City core”*.
 - **Water Courses and Bodies:** *“water bodies and their associated riverside trees, wetland habitat and floodplain are regarded as Defining Character”*.
 - **Separation:** one of the five purposes of the Green Belt is to prevent the coalescence of settlements, and the Cam valley course to the east of the appeal site maintains a clear sense of separation between urban Cambridge and Fen Ditton.
 - **Edges:** the assessment notes that *“the character and quality of the rural landscape and urban interface is variable. Areas where the built edge is framed within a treed or hedged landscape or which afford views of the City skyline or to landmark buildings are regarded as making a high quality, positive contribution to Cambridge and its setting... edges that are abrupt and lack tree cover or hedgerows or which are adjacent to degraded landscapes, major arterial roads or detracting views are regarded as negative assets”*. The

locality of the appeal site is not identified as either a positive or a negative edge in the assessment.

- **Local Views:** important views from the rural setting to the City are Defining Character, as are key views within the urban fabric and from the urban area to the rural setting. A number of key landmarks and local views (negative and positive) are defined in the assessment, (see figure 12.4 of the ES), but these do not include land or features in the locality of the appeal site.
- **Ecology, Natural History and Landscape Structure:** the distribution of nature conservation areas throughout the City is generally seen as supporting the character of Cambridge. In the locality of the appeal site Stourbridge Common is a County Wildlife Site, and Bramblefields, to the south of the appeal site, is a Local Nature Reserve.

Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (CBA February 2021)

153. In this assessment the appeal site is included within the Cambridge Urban Area (see Map 8, Appendix 12.2 of the ES), with Stourbridge Common and Ditton Meadows combined into one landscape character area, Cam River Valley (area 9A). Fen Ditton itself is within the Fen Ditton Fen Edge Chalklands (character area 6A).
154. This assessment does not focus on defining character in the urban area, but it does refer to the Townscape Character Areas within the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (LDA, 2015), which is considered separately below.
155. The assessment notes that the River Valleys Landscape Character Type (of which area 9A forms part) is “*largely characterised by low density development*” but that “*the exception to this is the south-west and north-east edge of Cambridge, which influences the character of the River Cam as it flows north-east through the study area*”.
156. Area 9A is described as a “*distinctive green corridor within the Cambridge Urban Area*”, with “*views of built form on the settlement edge visible in framed and filtered views between trees*” (it is also noted that “*whilst the LCA itself is largely unsettled due to being floodplain, built form on the edges of the surrounding Cambridge Urban Area is a distinctive feature*”).

Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (LDA 2015, CD5.27)

157. As noted above this study includes a townscape character assessment, and the appeal site is classified as part of character area 5B Railway Corridor, with development either side of Fen Road, to the east of the site, being classified as townscape character type 21st Century Mixed Use Development, which is set within character area 3A, River Cam Corridor (an extract from the townscape character plan is illustrated in the ES at figure 12.5).
158. Character area 5B is described as being “characterised by medium and large scale commercial, light industrial and office development on both sides of the railway line. There are also extensive areas of hard surfacing for car parks with little vegetation”.

North-East Cambridge Townscape Assessment (Urban Initiatives Studio, September 2021)

159. The Townscape Assessment provides a further level of detail regarding townscape character within and around the appeal site, dividing the site into “parcels with their own character” (see **Plate IV**, below) The appeal site is classified as being within land parcel 10, Cambridge North Station, with parcel 6 to the west (Cambridge Business Park), and parcels 8 and 9 to the north (Cambridge Commercial Park/ Cowley Road industrial estate and Chesterton Railhead aggregate site respectively).



Plate IV: figure 5.1 from the NEC Townscape Assessment character analysis. The appeal site is wholly within parcel 10, Cambridge North Station

160. The accompanying description of parcel 10 states that this area includes the *“contemporary railway station that opened in 2017 and connects with Cambridge Station and London to the south, and northwards to Norwich and Ely”*. The station itself *“faces onto a new public square and is co-located with a 5-7 storey hotel”*.
161. The residential area to the west of the appeal site is described as Chesterton, *“a suburban residential neighbourhood that grew in the 20th century”*. This includes the Bramblefields LNR and Discovery Way on its northern edge, and also the allotments immediately to the west of the site.
162. Parcel 6, to the west of the appeal site, is Cambridge Business Park, which is described as *“a large office park with 2-3 storey office buildings with associated surface car parking”*.
163. Parcel 11 is described as Trinity Hall Farm Industrial Estate/Nuffield Road Industrial Estate. The assessment notes that *“the uses and scale of the buildings here are generally at odds with the surrounding residential context”*.
164. Parcel 7 is the Waste Water Treatment Works, which is occupied largely by the sewage treatment plant and which does not allow public access.

4.3.2 Description of the Existing Character of the site and the Wider Context: the Landscape Baseline

165. As GLVIA3 notes, (5.16) *“even where there are useful and relevant existing landscape character assessments and historic landscape characterisations, it is still likely that it will be necessary to carry out specific and more detailed surveys of the site itself and perhaps its immediate setting or surroundings”*. The Bidwells LVIA accordingly provides a description of the existing character of the appeal site and its immediate context at paragraphs 12.109 to 12.131, with reference to vegetation cover, topography, tranquillity, site boundaries and townscape.
166. In the following sections I have provided my own review of the character of the appeal site and its context, focusing on the character areas that have been identified within existing character assessments, as follows:

- **Railway Corridor character area, Parcel 10, (Cambridge North Station)**
- **Railway Corridor character area outside of Parcel 10 (parcels 6, 7, 8 and 9)**
- **21st Century Mixed Use Development at Fen Road**
- **Cam River Valley (character area 9A, excluding the mixed-use development above)**
- **Chesterton Residential Area (including Discovery Way, allotments and Bramblefields LNR)**

Railway Corridor character area, Parcel 10, (Cambridge North Station)

167. As the Bidwells LVIA correctly notes (see paragraph 12.125), the character of this area “*has experienced rapid change with the construction of Cambridge North Station and the Novotel*”, and this change has continued with the construction of One Cambridge Square, see **plate V**, below.



Plate V: photograph taken from the centre of the appeal site (and Parcel 10), looking towards the Novotel at the centre, and One Cambridge Square to the right. Overhead electrical infrastructure for the railway line can be seen to the left of the view. The foreground is occupied by the station car park.

168. The construction of these buildings, combined with the new station and forecourt area, has created a zone of intensive, urban character which then transitions abruptly to the open car park area and waste ground to the north and north-west, both of which are more typical of the “*unused and derelict*” railway corridor character type described in the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment, (see above).

Railway Corridor character area outside of Land Parcel 10 (Parcels 6, 7, 8 and 9)

169. To the west of the appeal site lies Cambridge Business Park, with flat roof, mostly three storey office buildings, tree lined avenues and large car parking and lawned areas (parcel 6 in the Townscape Assessment). South of this is the Nuffield Road Industrial Estate (parcel 11), which comprises diverse light industrial units, often steel portal framed structures, with outside storage areas and car parking and little vegetation.
170. Area 8, to the north-west of the appeal site, also includes an area of two to three storey light industrial buildings, again often steel portal framed with large car parking/outside storage areas and little vegetation. Area 9, to the north of the appeal site, comprises waste ground and areas of informal car parking, with some mineral workings at the northern end.
171. Parcel 7 is the Waste Water Treatment Works, which is bounded by the A14 and includes filter beds, low density development, hard surfacing and small areas of low vegetation.

21st Century Mixed Use Development at Fen Road

172. This is an area of largely single storey development, mostly to the west of Fen Road but also to the east. Development includes brick-built bungalows as well as static caravans, as well as some light industrial units – particularly at the south of this area - up to two storeys high, with car parking, outside storage areas and steel palisade fencing.
173. As **plate VI**, below, illustrates, the existing Novotel and to a lesser extent One Cambridge Square are visible across this area, providing a clear sense of the proximity of the Cambridge urban area.
174. The Fen Road mixed use area varies in width, between 30m and 500m. The western edge is defined by the railway and the eastern edge extends almost up to the River Cam.



Plate VI: View towards the appeal site from Fen Road, illustrating predominantly single storey residential development.

Cam River Valley (character area 9A, excluding the mixed-use development above)

175. Character area 9A is a corridor of open space, approximately 300 to 450 metres wide, which comprises open grasslands sloping gently towards the Cam, crossed by well-used public rights of way, including regional trails and National Cycle Route 11. Mature trees are characteristic of the area, including willows along the Cam but also more formal avenues at Stourbridge Common.
176. The built form of the Cambridge Urban Area is clearly visible from parts of Stourbridge Common, consisting mainly of two storey residential development next to the Cam. As **plate VII**, below illustrates, it is also possible to see built form adjacent to the appeal site, as well as development on Fen Road, from Ditton Meadows. As the Greater Cambridge Character Assessment notes, these views of built form are “*framed and filtered views between trees*”.
177. The presence of the river and the open grassland with mature trees create a semi-rural character overall, but there is also a clear sense of proximity to the settlement, due to the filtered views towards built form, the surfaced formality of the Chisholm Trail and some other routes, the

railway line and also the numbers of people using foot and cycle paths and enjoying the open grassland in the summer months.



Plate VII: View over sloping meadows towards the River Cam. The Novotel and One Cambridge Square are visible on the skyline, and existing single storey structures on Fen Road can also be seen in the middle ground.

Chesterton Residential Area

178. A 20th century, moderately dense and largely two storey residential area, with red brick and tile homes and little vegetation outside of private gardens. Also includes allotments along the northern edge of this area. There is generally a strong sense of enclosure from built form, with little or no visibility of elements outside of the site. The main exception to this is the most recent residential development at Discovery Way, which lies to the west of the appeal site. As **plate VIII**, below, illustrates, this area includes one, two and three storey homes, and One Cambridge Square is clearly visible over the existing roof tops.



Plate VIII: Discovery Way, in the Chesterton character area. Whilst most of this residential area is visually enclosed, Discovery Way already has clear visual connections with existing buildings next to the appeal site.

4.3.3 Description of the Existing Character of the Site: Night-Time Landscape

179. When assessing the existing character of the appeal site and its context, it is also important to consider the night-time landscape. The CPRE's Dark Skies map, prepared in 2016 with the help of consultants LUC, measures the luminance of existing lighting in the landscape. The map represents dark sky areas with purples and blues, urban fringe areas with yellows and greens, and more brightly lit, urban areas with oranges, pinks and reds.
180. **Plate IX**, below, illustrates an extract from the map for the appeal site and its context. It is notable that the appeal site and the wider railway corridor are within the pink area, and are thus strongly influenced by existing light sources. The mixed-use development on Fen Road, to the east of the appeal site, is also within a pink zone, since there is street lighting and domestic lighting throughout this area.
181. It is also notable that the Cam River Valley is largely within the orange zone: whilst there is little lighting on Ditton Meadows and Stourbridge Common themselves, there are a significant

number of light sources on all sides of these open spaces, and these sources significantly detract from the darkness of these areas.

182. Appendix 13.2 of the ES includes further details about existing light sources on the site, and it is notable that some of the pedestrian areas outside of the station have a lighting level of over 100 lux.

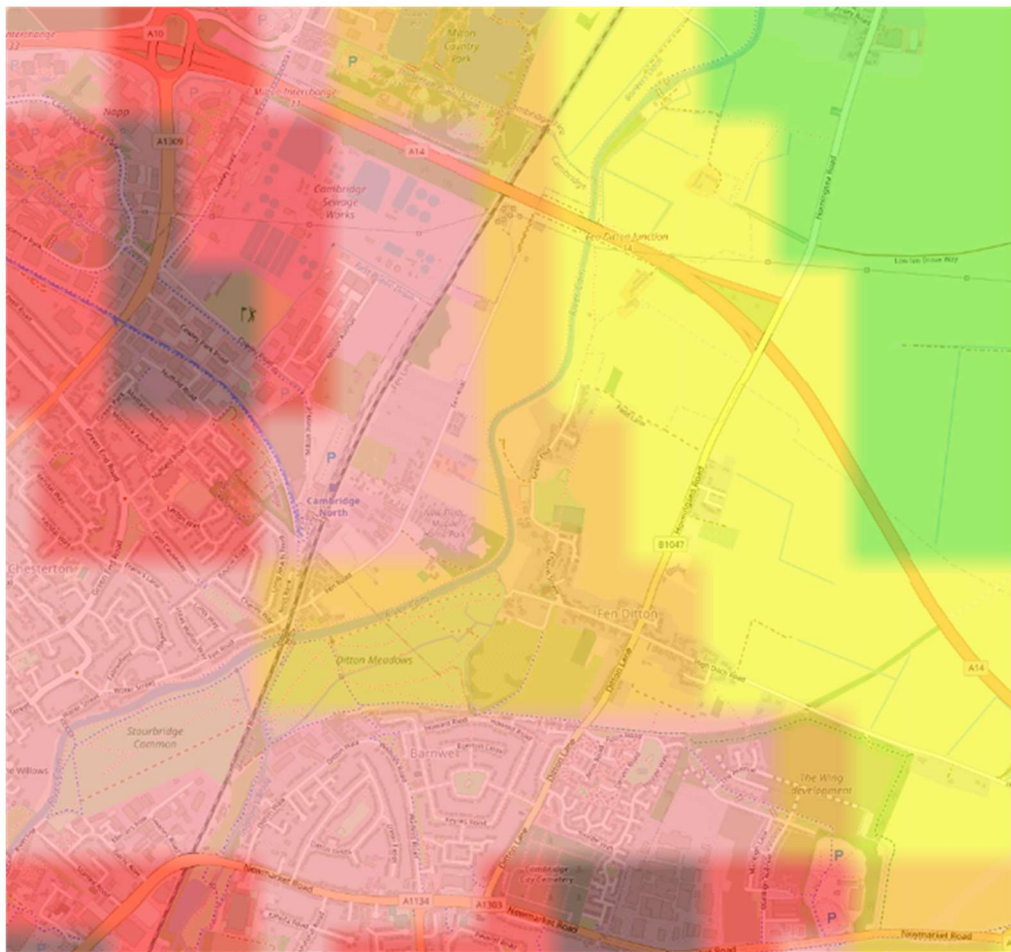


Plate IX: Extract from the CPRE Dark Skies Map, illustrating that the appeal site and development on Fen Road is strongly influenced by existing light sources. The Cam Valley landscapes (Ditton Meadows, Stourbridge Common) are also influenced by light sources to the west, south and east.

4.3.4 How the Landscape of the Appeal Site and its Context may Evolve in the Future

183. When describing the landscape baseline it is also important to recognise any significant changes that are likely to occur. As GLVIA3 states *“the aim should be to describe the landscape as it is at*

the time but also to consider what it may be like in the future in the absence of the proposal”
(GLVIA3, paragraph 5.33, page 86.)

184. In this context it is important to recognise that the appeal site and its context is allocated under Policy SS/4 to create *“a revitalised, employment focused area centred on a new transport interchange”*. Proposed uses in this area will include B1, B2, and B8, as well as commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses.
185. As I have noted in section 2.0 of this proof, the precise amount of development that would be developed in the locality of the appeal site has not yet been established, since there is no adopted Area Action Plan. As I have also noted, even the evidence base documents, which are designed to inform the AAP process, also disagree on the heights of development that should occur in and around the appeal site. The LCVIA envisages medium to high buildings on the appeal site, ranging between 27 metres and 36 metres high, whereas the AAP 2020 suggested buildings up to 18 metres on the appeal site, and up to 24 metres to the west of the appeal site. AAP 2021 envisages buildings of 4 to 6 storeys typically on the appeal site, with a landmark building up to 22 metres high.
186. There is therefore not sufficient certainty in any of these scenarios to make them an alternative assessment baseline. However, **it is very clear that there is an intention to intensify development on the appeal site and its context, that the types of development which are envisaged in Policy SS/4 are exactly those which form part of the appeal proposals, and that in all scenarios there would be a significant increase in massing and height of built form in the locality.**
187. This should therefore form an important part of the assessment process: **whilst the Bidwells LVIA is correct in assessing the effects of the development against the baseline of the existing site condition, (since there is no certainty in the draft AAP and no clarity in the evidence base), it is a material consideration that the character of the site will change, and that this will probably also affect the relationship between the appeal site and its wider context.**

4.3.5 Landscape Receptors

188. In accordance with best practice the Bidwells LVIA sets out the landscape receptors (i.e. those elements of the landscape that are likely to be affected by the proposed development) at paragraph 12.136 and in table 12.4. As paragraph 12.136 states, these receptors were agreed with the Council.
189. I agree with the receptors which have been used, but have suggested some modifications to provide a more focused assessment of landscape effects appropriate for the appeal stage. These changes are summarised in **Table CN2**, below.

Table CN2: Landscape Receptors Used in the Bidwells LVIA, and Proposed Amendments

Receptors Used in the Bidwells LVIA	Proposed Amendments	Rationale
NCA88, Bedfordshire and Cambridge Clayland	Not assessed in this proof	High level assessment of landscape character, not appropriate for the appeal stage on this project.
LCA 9A Cam River Valley	No change	Remains relevant
The Railway Corridor	Parcel 10, Cambridge North Station	Sub-divided in order to differentiate between direct effects on the appeal site (parcel 10) and indirect effects on adjacent land . Also acknowledges the detailed character analysis in the NEC Townscape Assessment.
	Other parts of the Railway Corridor (parcels	
The Local Residential Area	Chesterton character area	Sub-divided to reflect the different character of these areas. Also acknowledges the detailed character analysis in the NEC Townscape Assessment.
	21 st century mixed-use development at Fen Road	
The Skyline of Cambridge	No change	Remains relevant
The Landscape Setting of Fen Ditton Conservation Area	No change	Setting of the conservation area also to be addressed by heritage witness.
The Townscape Setting of Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area	No change	Setting of the conservation area also to be addressed by heritage witness

4.3.6 Landscape Value of the Landscape Receptors

190. In accordance with the recommendations of GLVIA3, the value of the landscape receptors is assessed within the Bidwells LVIA at page 329 and in more detail at table 12.3 (page 336). In accordance with best practice the assessment of value is based upon Landscape Institute Guidance on Assessing Landscape Value Outside of National Landscape Designations, TGN 02/21.
191. In summary the Bidwells LVIA concludes that the Cam River Valley receptor is assessed as being of **high value**, due to its identification as one of the elements that defines the character of Cambridge within the Cambridge Landscape Assessment, its ecological and scenic value, as well as its recreational value. **I agree with this assessment, and on this basis conclude that the Cam River Valley is a valued landscape in the sense of paragraph 174(a) of the NPPF.**
192. The Railway Corridor receptor is assessed as being of **low value**, **I agree with this conclusion, and conclude that it applies to both the appeal site itself and other parts of the railway corridor. This area is of low scenic quality, has little or no natural or cultural heritage value and very little recreational value. It also lacks distinctiveness and has no particular associations with literature, art, people of events.**
193. The Bidwells LVIA assesses the value of residential areas as also being low. **I agree with this assessment for both the Chesterton character area, to the south, and the development at Fen Road, to the east. Whilst the character of these two areas differs considerably, both areas lack notable or distinctive architectural elements, and there is generally low natural and cultural heritage value.** The Chesterton conservation area is located over 1.5km from the appeal site at its closest point, and is separated from it by less distinctive housing.
194. The skyline of Cambridge is assessed as having **high** landscape value. **I agree with this assessment. Policy 60 in the Cambridge City Local Plan makes it clear that there is little scope for new, tall buildings in the historic core of the City, and Appendix F to the Local Plan states that “Cambridge has a distinctive skyline that combines towers, turrets, chimneys and spires with large trees”.**

195. The landscape setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area is assessed within the Bidwells LVIA as having **high/medium** value. It is important to note in this context that Ditton Meadows forms the landscape setting for Fen Ditton itself, as described in the conservation appraisal, and this is part of the conservation area. The landscape to the west of the Cam – which includes the mixed-use development at Fen Road in addition to the partly developed Railway Corridor – provides the much wider setting, and one which already includes not only the single storey development along Fen Road but also the more prominent Novotel and One Cambridge Square. As I have noted under the assessment of the value of the Railway Corridor and Residential landscape receptors, above, **the innate value of these areas is low, for the reasons set out above, and they do not make a positive contribution to the conservation area. I have therefore concluded that the value of the setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area – specifically the Railway Corridor and the Mixed-Use development on Fen Road - is therefore low.**
196. Similarly, the Bidwells LVIA concludes that the townscape setting of the Riverside and Stourbridge Common conservation area is of **medium** value. Part of the setting for this conservation area is formed by the Chesterton residential area, to the north, and by the Railway Corridor further to the north. As I have noted above, **the innate value of these particular areas is low, and they do not make a notable contribution to the conservation area. I have therefore concluded that the value of this receptor – specifically in relation to Chesterton and the Railway Corridor - is low.**

4.3.7 Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

197. In accordance with GLVIA3, (see for example paragraph 5.39, page 88), the Bidwells LVIA determines the sensitivity of landscape receptors by combining their value with their susceptibility to the proposed development (see for example table 12.3).
198. The Cam River Valley is assessed within the Bidwells LVIA as having a medium susceptibility to the proposed development, and therefore **high/medium sensitivity overall. I agree with that judgement**, as there is already some visibility of built form on the settlement edge from the Cam Valley, and the presence of these existing buildings, combined with the distance of the site from the Cam Valley and the intervening buildings and vegetation, means that this area has some

capacity to accommodate the proposed development without causing significant change to the character of this area.

199. The Railway Corridor receptor is assessed within the Bidwells LVIA as having low susceptibility to the proposed development and therefore **low sensitivity overall**. **Again, I agree with this judgement**, since it has potential to create positive change to the baseline condition, and this area is allocated for exactly the types of development which are proposed.
200. The local residential areas are assessed as having medium susceptibility to the proposed development, and **low/medium sensitivity overall**. Again, I agree with this judgement for both the Chesterton Area and the Mixed-Use area on Fen Road: it is theoretically possible that a very large development on the appeal site could cause transformation change to the character of these residential areas, closest to the site. However, the character of these areas is already influenced by One Cambridge Square and the Novotel, and with careful design these areas have some ability to accommodate change without transformational effects on character.
201. The Bidwells LVIA assesses the susceptibility of the Cambridge skyline receptor as being medium, with sensitivity for this receptor being **high/medium overall**. I agree with this judgement – it is theoretically possible that very tall buildings on the appeal site could have a negative effect on the character of the skyline in the historic centre of the City, and also in long views towards the City; but also there is potential to accommodate some carefully designed, taller buildings on the site without harming the Cambridge skyline.
202. The setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area is assessed in the Bidwells LVIA as being of medium susceptibility to the proposed development, and **high/medium sensitivity overall**. As I have noted above, if one specifically considers the value of the Railway Corridor receptor, which forms part of the setting to this conservation area, then its innate value is low. However, if one considers **the role of the Railway Corridor as providing part of the setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area then its susceptibility is medium**: there is the potential that development on the appeal site could affect the character of the conservation area itself, but there is also potential for the site to accommodate well designed development that would not cause significant change to the character of the conservation area. **I have therefore concluded**

that the sensitivity of the setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area – specifically that part within the Railway Corridor – to have medium/low sensitivity to the proposed development.

203. Finally, the Bidwells LVIA concludes that the townscape setting of the Riverside and Stourbridge conservation area is of medium susceptibility to the proposed development, and therefore **medium sensitivity overall**. As for the Fen Ditton conservation area, it is important to break down the setting of this conservation area into its constituent character areas, one of which is the Railway Corridor. This has low value for the reasons set out above, and if one considers **the role of the Railway Corridor as providing part of the setting of the Riverside and Stourbridge conservation area then its susceptibility is medium**: there is potential that development on the appeal site could affect the character of the conservation area itself, but there is also potential for the site to accommodate well designed development that would not cause significant change to the character of the conservation area. I have therefore concluded that the part of the setting of the Riverside and Stourbridge conservation area that is within the Railway Corridor is of **medium/low sensitivity to the proposed development**.

4.3.8 Potential Magnitude of Landscape Effects

204. In accordance with GLVIA3 (see for example paragraphs 5.48 to 5.52, pages 90 and 91, GLVIA3), the Bidwells LVIA assesses the potential magnitude of effects for each landscape receptor by considering the size/scale of effect, the geographical extent of the effect, and the duration of the effect.
205. The Bidwells LVIA assess the magnitude of effects on the Cam River Valley landscape receptor as **low at year 1. I agree with this assessment**. In terms of the size/scale of change this would be an indirect, perceptual change caused by an increase in mass and height in the Railway Corridor approximately 500 metres from the receptor itself, and where the Railway Corridor already includes some taller buildings adjacent to the station. There is already a clear sense that the Cam Valley is on the settlement edge, through the visibility of existing buildings, light from the settlement edges (see CPRE Dark Skies extract, **plate VI**, above) and through noise. The proposed development would cause a small increase in the visibility of built form, but this would occupy only a small proportion of views from the River Cam Corridor, and would not be adding components that are alien to those views. In relation to the geographical extent of change, as

- the ZTV in **drawing CN-003** illustrates there would be glimpsed views of the proposed development throughout much of this receptor, but these effects would often be filtered by existing trees, particularly at Stourbridge Common. The duration of the effect would be permanent.
206. Bidwells assessed the magnitude of effect on the Railway Corridor as being **high** overall, with the proposed design causing a beneficial, transformative effect for this area. I agree that the proposals would result in a permanent, large scale of change over the whole of Parcel 10 (which is effectively the appeal site), and to this extent **I agree that the magnitude of change would be high for the appeal site element of the Railway Corridor**. However, the effects on the remaining section of the Railway Corridor landscape receptor would be indirect, with the changes being perceived in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square buildings. The geographical extent of effects within the wider Railway Corridor receptor would also be limited by existing vegetation and buildings. **The magnitude of change for the remaining sections of the Railway Corridor landscape receptor would therefore be medium close to the appeal site, becoming low at the northern edge of the receptor.**
207. In the Bidwells LVIA the magnitude of effects for the Local Residential Area is assessed as being **high** overall, due to the contrast of the relatively large scale of the proposed development against the smaller scale of the adjacent residential area. However, the proposed new buildings would be perceived in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square, and would therefore be adding buildings of a similar scale and character to those that exist already. Furthermore, as the ZTV in **drawing CN-003** illustrates, the geographical extent of visual effects would extent over only the northern edge of the Chesterton residential area, but would be visible over a greater proportion of the Fen Road development. **I have therefore concluded that the magnitude of effects for the Chesterton residential area would be medium on the northern edge, becoming low further south, and for the Fen Road area the magnitude would be medium.**
208. The magnitude of effects for the Skyline of Cambridge receptor is assessed in the Bidwells LVIA as being **medium**. The assessment notes that the proposed development is not in the historic core, and would not compete with the skyline of spires and tree cover, but it would introduce a cluster of new buildings. I agree that there would be no direct effects upon the skyline of the

historic core, but I also agree that there would be a degree of change to the skyline in the vicinity of the Cam Valley and Fen Ditton. The size and scale of this change would, however, be reduced by the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square, since these buildings are of a similar scale and form to the proposed development, and mean that the proposals would logically integrate with existing elements on the skyline. The geographical extent of this change would be largely limited to the Railway Corridor, the northern edge of Chesterton, and the Cam River Valley, but visibility of the buildings in these areas is often filtered by existing buildings and/or vegetation. **I have concluded that the effects on the Skyline of Cambridge landscape receptor would be medium/low overall.**

209. For the landscape setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area the Bidwells LVIA concluded that there would be a medium magnitude of change in year 1, since the increased visibility of urban form would reduce the sense of remoteness and rurality. In reality there is already a clear sense that the Fen Ditton conservation area is close to the Cambridge urban area, due to the visibility of existing built form, (as well as lighting and noise to a lesser extent). Importantly, those urban influences would continue to be separated from the appeal site by Ditton Meadows and the mixed-use area on Fen Road. The degree of change to the contribution made by the wider setting to the conservation area itself would therefore be minor. **I have therefore concluded that the magnitude of effects upon the setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area would be low.**
210. The Bidwells LVIA assessed the magnitude of effects for the setting of the Riverside and Stourbridge conservation area to be **negligible**, due to the presence of existing, taller buildings in the locality of this designation. **I agree with this conclusion**, and would add that the fact that Riverside and Stourbridge conservation area is located to the south of the appeal site means that the existing One Cambridge Square and Novotel buildings are between the proposed new buildings and the designation, creating a clear context for the proposals. Furthermore, this conservation area is more enclosed in character due to existing vegetation, meaning that the proposals would have only a minor effects on the contribution of the setting to the conservation area.

4.3.9 Assessment of Potential Landscape Effects

211. **Table CN3**, below, summarises the landscape effects assessed in the Bidwells LVIA, and compares these with my own conclusions.
212. **In essence the conclusions of my own assessment are similar to those for the Bidwells LVIA. Overall, the proposals would result in no significant landscape effects, with beneficial landscape effects for the railway corridor and moderate to moderate/minor negative effects on adjacent character receptors.**

Table CN3: Comparison in Assessment of Landscape Effects between Bidwells LVIA and my Own Assessment

Receptors Used in the Bidwells LVIA	J Smith Assessment	Bidwells LVIA
LCA 9A Cam River Valley	High/medium sensitivity Low magnitude Moderate/Minor adverse effects	High/Medium sensitivity Low magnitude Moderate/Minor adverse effects
The Railway Corridor (Parcel 10)	Low sensitivity High magnitude Moderate beneficial effects	Low sensitivity High magnitude Moderate beneficial effects
(Remaining Sections of the) Railway Corridor	Low Sensitivity Medium becoming low at N edge Moderate/Minor beneficial effects	
Residential Area: (Chesterton)	Medium/Low sensitivity Medium on the northern edge, becoming low further south. Moderate/Minor and negative to the north, becoming minor and neutral to the south	Medium/Low sensitivity, High magnitude Moderate neutral effects
Residential Area: (21st Century Mixed-Use at Fen Road)	Medium sensitivity Medium magnitude Moderate negative effects	
The Skyline of Cambridge	High/Medium sensitivity Medium/Low magnitude Moderate adverse effects	High/medium sensitivity, Medium magnitude Moderate neutral effects
The Landscape Setting of Fen Ditton Conservation Area	Medium/Low sensitivity Low magnitude	High/medium sensitivity Medium magnitude

	Moderate/Minor adverse effects	Moderate adverse effects
The Townscape Setting of Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area	Medium/Low sensitivity Negligible magnitude Minor neutral effects	Medium sensitivity Negligible magnitude Minor neutral effects

213. **The proposals would result in beneficial, direct effects for the appeal site itself, by creating a distinctive, high quality and designed urban townscape within an area that currently has a largely derelict character.** In my assessment these beneficial effects reduce for other parts of the Railway Corridor, where the effects would be indirect and therefore less evident.
214. I have concluded that the Cam River Valley is a valued landscape in the sense of paragraph 174(a) of the NPPF, and the value of this landscape receptor has been increased accordingly. Both the Bidwells LVIA and my own landscape and visual review agree that the effects on this receptor would be moderate/minor and adverse; the increased visibility of built form would have a negative effect on open landscape of the Cam Valley, although there is already a clear sense of proximity to the urban area in this location, and the appeal site would remain clearly separated from the valley by the vegetation along the River Cam and the intervening mixed-use development along Fen Road.
215. The Bidwells LVIA concluded that there would be moderate neutral effects on the local residential areas, whereas I have concluded that there would be localised moderate/minor and adverse effects on the Chesterton character area, becoming minor and neutral to the south. For the residential area on Fen Road I have assessed the effects as moderate and negative.
216. For the skyline of Cambridge the Bidwells LVIA concluded that the proposed development would result in moderate neutral effects, whereas I have concluded that these moderate effects would cause an adverse change, since the increased visibility of built form on the skyline in this location is judged to be a negative change to character.
217. For the effects on the landscape setting of the Fen Ditton conservation area, the Bidwells assessment conclude moderate adverse effects, whereas I have concluded slightly lower,

moderate/minor and adverse effects. Both assessments have concluded that the effects on the setting of the Riverside and Stourbridge conservation area would be minor and neutral in nature.

218. **In my experience, for a development of this scale, these assessments of landscape effect are relatively low.**

219. **Furthermore, the fact that the proposals would result in beneficial effects for the site and its immediate context, and less than significant effects for the surrounding landscape/townscape, indicates that the design of the proposals are able to both enhance the character of the immediate area and preserve the character of the wider area, contrary to the statement in Reason for Refusal 1.**

220. Additionally, any negative landscape and visual effects that result from the development should be considered alongside its design benefits as a high quality marker, defining the presence of a new, vibrant urban area and important transport interchange. I address this matter further at section 4.5 of this proof.

221. Of course, both the Bidwells and my own landscape assessment have been made based upon the baseline of the landscape's existing condition, which is the correct approach given the uncertainty in the NECAAP evidence base. However, **given that Policy SS/4 envisages the development of significant new areas of built form on and around the appeal site – including uses very similar to those included in the appeal proposals – it is important to consider that landscape change is likely to occur on the appeal site (and therefore, indirectly, on adjacent landscape/townscape), even in the absence of the appeal proposals.**

4.4 Potential Visual Effects of the Proposed Development

4.4.1 Overall Visibility

222. The starting point in any visual assessment is to define those parcels of land from which the proposed development could be seen, and the Bidwells LVIA provides a detailed analysis of potential visibility in its computer-generated "bare earth/trees off" Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and also a comparative ZTV with vegetation included ("trees on", see both in Appendix 12.4 of the ES).

223. The ZTV including vegetation provides the most accurate picture of potential visibility, and this indicates that the majority of views are contained by vegetation along the A14 to the north and east, by vegetation and industrial buildings south of Stourbridge Common to the south, and by residential areas to the west.
224. I have provided my own ZTV to check potential visibility (see drawing **CN-004**). The SLR ZTV shows a very similar pattern of visibility to that illustrated in Appendix 12.4 of the ES, but it provides additional detail about the potential vertical angle of visibility, at eye level, that could occur at any location. For comparison, a two-storey house, at an average height of 8m, would subtend a vertical angle of 4.58° at 100m, 2.29° at 200m, 0.92° at 500m and 0.46° at 1km. It is notable in this context that vertical angles of over 3 degrees are largely concentrated on the appeal site and its immediate context, the mixed-use development at Fen Road to the east and south-east, and the Cambridge Business Park, Nuffield Road industrial estate and northern edge of the Chesterton residential area to the west and south-west.
225. Both ZTVs acknowledge that there is a theoretical possibility that longer views of the proposed development could be obtained: however, Bidwells conducted a very thorough process of modelling all potential views in Vu City, and then consulting with the Council to determine whether further assessment of those viewpoints was necessary. Table 12.1 of the Bidwells LVIA lists the 32 initial viewpoints that were tested, and provides the rationale for excluding some of these from further assessment, as agreed with the Council. The final representative viewpoint list, set out for example in table 12.5 of the ES, includes just 18 viewpoints, and even some of these would have little or no visibility of the proposed development.

4.4.2 Potential Visual Receptors and Representative Viewpoints

226. The location of the remaining 18 viewpoints, and baseline, winter photography from each view, is included at Appendix 12.4 of the ES. For ease of reference, I have also included viewpoint location plans for these viewpoints within my Appendices, on **drawings CN-001 and CN-002**.
227. I have also provided up to date photography from each of these 18 views, taken in February 2023 (see **drawings CN-005 to CN-025**). These photographs, taken just under one year later than the photographs in the ES, include the largely completed One Cambridge Square building,

and a new transmitter mast has also been erected to the east of the appeal site (see for example the existing view from viewpoint 8, **drawing CN-009**).

228. It is important to note that selected viewpoints are representative of what potential visual receptors – that is people – might see. In this context it is important to relate the representative viewpoints to the type of people that might obtain those views, and the Bidwells LVIA sets this out very clearly at paragraph 12.142. For ease of reference, I have set these receptors out below:

- Visitors to the Bramblefields LNR (Viewpoint 2);
- Visitors to the Limekiln Road West Pit LNR (Viewpoint P6);
- Vehicle users in proximity of the Site, including the guided busway (Viewpoints 4, 9, 14);
- Vehicle users on the A14 (Viewpoint 20);
- Walkers on the public footpaths to the east of the Site (Viewpoints 8,10);
- Walkers in the green open spaces along the river (Viewpoints 5, 15, 16);
- Walkers on footpaths in the wider landscape - long distance views, including relevant Policy 60, Cambridge Skyline views (Viewpoints P1, P4, P5)
- Cyclists and pedestrians on the Chisholm Trail (Viewpoints E1, E2); and
- Local residents to the south-east and south-west of the Site (Viewpoints E5, E6).

4.4.3 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

229. The nature of each of the representative viewpoints, and the type of viewers that experience each view, is set out at paragraphs 12.145 to 12.173 of the Bidwells LVA. I agree with these descriptions, and therefore I have not repeated this information in my proof.

230. In accordance with best practice (see for example GLVIA3 paragraph 6.30, page 113), the sensitivity of views is assessed within the Bidwells LVIA by combining the value of the view with

the susceptibility of the viewer. A summary of receptor sensitivity is set out in table 12.5 of the Bidwells LVIA.

231. I have set out below a summary of the sensitivity judgements for each viewpoint within the Bidwells LVIA, and compared them with my own judgements along with a brief explanation:

- **Viewpoint 2: Bramblefields LNR – Bidwells LVIA Sensitivity High**

This is a locally designated area and is therefore of medium value. Receptors would include walkers and others focused on the countryside. **I therefore agree with the judgement of high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint 4: Cowley Road – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium/Low**

This is a bus route to the west of the appeal site, but it also has a footway. The value of the viewpoint is low, and vehicle users in this location would be of low susceptibility to the type of change envisaged. Pedestrians would have higher susceptibility. **I conclude that sensitivity would therefore be Low for vehicle users, and Medium/Low for pedestrians.**

- **Viewpoint 5: Footpath 85/2, Ditton Meadows – Bidwells Sensitivity High**

This is a well-used public footpath to the south of Fen Ditton, and is located within the Fen Ditton conservation area. The value of the site is therefore medium and the receptors are of high susceptibility. **Sensitivity is therefore High/Medium.**

- **Viewpoint 8: Footpath 85/6, Fen Ditton – Bidwells Sensitivity High**

Well-used footpath/regional trail north of fen Ditton and within conservation area. Value of the viewpoint is medium and walkers would be of high susceptibility. **Sensitivity is therefore high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint 9: Field Lane Byway – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium**

Located at the junction of a formal byway and the busy Horningsea Road, and therefore representative of the views of both walkers and vehicle users. The viewpoint is of medium value, and the susceptibility of walkers would be high, whilst vehicle users would be medium. **Sensitivity of walkers is therefore high/medium, and vehicle users medium.**

- **Viewpoint 10: Low Fen Drove Way – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium**

Located on Low Fen Drove in open, arable fenland, which is used mainly by walkers. The value is therefore medium and susceptibility is high. **Overall sensitivity is therefore high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint 14: Guided Busway – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium/Low**

Busway with footways, and consequently used by both vehicle users and pedestrian/cyclists. Urban context. Value is low, and susceptibility of pedestrians is medium and vehicle users is low. **Sensitivity is therefore medium/low for pedestrians and low for vehicle users.**

- **Viewpoint 15: Ditton Meadows – Bidwells Sensitivity High**

Well-used footpath within the Fen Ditton Common conservation area, with receptors including walkers and cyclists. Value is therefore medium and susceptibility is high. **Sensitivity is high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint 16: Stourbridge Common – Bidwells Sensitivity High**

Well-used footpath with Riverside conservation area, with receptors including walkers and cyclists. Value is therefore medium and susceptibility is high. **Sensitivity is high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint 20: A14 Bridge over the River Cam – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium**

Views would be experienced by vehicle users on a fast moving road. Value of the viewpoint is low, and receptors are of low susceptibility. **Sensitivity of receptors at this point is therefore low.**

- **Viewpoint E1: Chisholm Trail Bridge on River Cam – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium**

Well-used cycle route within Riverside and Stourbridge Common conservation area. Value of viewpoints is therefore medium and susceptibility of receptors is high. **Sensitivity of receptors is therefore high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint E2: Chisholm Trail – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium**

Well-used cycle route within Riverside and Stourbridge Common conservation area. Value of viewpoints is therefore medium and susceptibility of receptors is high. **Sensitivity of receptors is therefore high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint E5: Discovery Way – Bidwells Sensitivity Medium**

Representative of residential receptors on a cul de sac of dwelling between 1 and 3 storeys high, south-west of the appeal site and with views of One Cambridge Square. Value of viewpoint is low, and susceptibility of residents is high. **I therefore agree with the sensitivity being medium.**

- **Viewpoint E6: Fen Road – Bidwells Sensitivity Low**

Representative of views of vehicle users on Fen Road, residents and also pedestrians on the footway along the road. Value of the viewpoint is low, with vehicle users being of low susceptibility, pedestrians being of medium susceptibility, and residents being of high susceptibility. **Sensitivity is therefore low for vehicle users, medium/low for pedestrians, and medium for residents.**

- **Viewpoint P1: Harcamlow Way – Bidwells Sensitivity High/Medium**

Formal footpath (130/7 and Harcamlow Way), and therefore of medium value with walkers being of high susceptibility. **I therefore agree that sensitivity is high/medium.**

- **Viewpoint P4: Little Wilbraham Road – Bidwells Sensitivity High/Medium**

Minor road and therefore receptors are largely vehicle users. Value is low and susceptibility is medium, **which means that sensitivity is medium/low.**

- **Viewpoint P5: Worts' Causeway/Shelford Road – Bidwells Sensitivity High**

Minor road and also regional trail, used by vehicle users and walkers/cyclists. Value is therefore medium and susceptibility is medium for vehicle users and high for walkers/cyclists. **Sensitivity is therefore high/medium for walkers/cyclists and medium for vehicle users.**

- **Viewpoint P6: Limekiln Road, Wet Pit LNR – Bidwells Sensitivity High**

This is a locally designated area and is therefore of medium value. Receptors would include walkers and others focused on the countryside. Value is therefore medium and susceptibility is high. **Sensitivity is therefore high/medium.**

232. In summary I agree with the majority of the judgements of visual receptor sensitivity in the Bidwells LVIA.

4.4.4 Potential Magnitude of Visual Effects

233. In accordance with GLVIA3 (see paragraph 6.38, page 115), the magnitude of potential visual effects is assessed by considering the scale of change in the view, the geographical extent of visual change, and the duration of the effect. The results of this assessment for each viewpoint are set out in Appendix 12.3, and these results are summarised in table 12.5 of the Bidwells LVIA.
234. The Bidwells LVIA has based its assessment of magnitude upon a Vu City model of the proposed development, viewed from each viewpoint, as well as verifiable photomontages (set out within Appendix 12.4 of the ES). The assessment of the magnitude of visual effects is thus based upon detailed analysis of all 18 representative views, with the aid of a detailed computer model.
235. I have carried out my own assessment of the magnitude of visual effects for each viewpoint, and I have also had access to the Vu City computer model, and have produced verifiable photomontages for viewpoints 5, 8, 9, 15, 16 and E5, all of which have been identified by the Council's Officers as being of particular concern (see **drawings CN-026 to CN-055**, in my Appendices).
236. I have set out my assessment of magnitude for each viewpoint, below (all assessments are year 1 to provide a worst case scenario of visual effects):

- **Viewpoint 2: Bramblefields LNR – Bidwells LVIA Magnitude Medium**

The views towards the appeal site are largely screened by existing vegetation within and around the nature reserve, although it is possible to see One Cambridge Square on the skyline at the right of the view, which provides a clear sense of being on the edge of the urban area. One Milton Avenue would be visible to the left of One Cambridge Square,

and there would also be glimpses of the proposed residential blocks to the left of the view, albeit that these would be largely screened by existing vegetation. **I therefore agree with the judgement of medium magnitude.**

- **Viewpoint 4: Cowley Road – Bidwells Magnitude Medium**

This view along a bus route is enclosed on both sides by existing trees, although as the latest photograph from this viewpoint in my Appendices illustrates (see drawing **CN-007**) there is also clear visibility of existing medium rise employment uses at the right of the view. Part of the proposed outline application for a new laboratory would be clearly visible at the end of the road in this view, and the residential development would be glimpsed behind the trees on the right of the view in the winter months. **I therefore agree with the Bidwells judgement that this is a medium magnitude of change.**

- **Viewpoint 5: Footpath 85/2, Ditton Meadows – Bidwells Magnitude None**

On the latest Type 4 photomontage produced at drawing **CN-027** of my Appendices the outline of the proposed development is defined with a red line. It is clear from this that, even in the winter months, **there would be negligible or no magnitude of change as a result of the proposed development.**

- **Viewpoint 8: Footpath 85/6, Fen Ditton – Bidwells Magnitude High**

The River Cam forms the focal point of this view, but the edge the Cambridge urban area is visible to the east of the view, framed and filtered by riverside vegetation. The Novotel and One Cambridge Square can be seen on the skyline, particularly in the winter months, although trees on the riverside already reach above the roof height of these structures and summer views will therefore be less clear. Development along Fen Road is also visible, particularly due to light colouration of many roof planes.

Drawing **CN-032** in my Appendices shows a type 4 photomontage of the proposed development, and the upper levels of the laboratories on the eastern edge of the site are visible, as is the roofline of the mobility hub to the left of these buildings, and the residential area in the background. The presence of the Novotel and One Cambridge Square in this view, at a similar level, means that the appeal proposals would not introduce an entirely contrasting element into the view. It is also notable that there is considerable visual variation in this eastern edge, in terms of roof heights, articulation in

the eastern elevation, and the materials used. Vegetation has also been proposed along the recessed sections of the laboratory elevations, and in later years the proposed tree planting along the eastern edge of the appeal site will also filter and screen the proposed built form. In the short to medium term, it is clear to see from the photomontage and the existing view in **drawing CN-009** of my Appendices that there are trees in the middle ground that will filter views of the proposed buildings, and this filtering effect will be more effective in the summer months.

The proposed development would therefore occupy a relatively small proportion of the total view, and would be of a comparable scale and character to the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square. However, in the short to medium term they would be clearly visible on the skyline. The variation in roofline, materiality and the articulation of the eastern elevations would provide visual interest. **The overall magnitude of effect at year 1 would therefore be medium.**

- **Viewpoint 9: Field Lane Byway – Bidwells Magnitude Medium**

The viewpoint is located over a kilometre from the appeal site, and as the existing view in **drawing CN-011** illustrates there are existing residential buildings in the middle ground of the view. However, as CN-011 also shows, the Novotel and One Cambridge Square are largely screened from this perspective, and it is for this reason that the proposed development (see the type 4 image in **drawing CN-037**) is noticeable on the skyline, even though it occupies a relatively small proportion of the view.

Articulation in the eastern elevation is again evident, as is the variation in roof height, and this serves to reduce the perceived mass of the building and also to create visual interest.

I agree with the Bidwells LVIA that the magnitude of effect on this view would therefore be medium.

- **Viewpoint 10: Low Fen Drove Way – Bidwells Magnitude None**

As the visualisation at page 78 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES illustrates, views of the proposed development from this viewpoint would be entirely screened by intervening vegetation.

I therefore agree with the Bidwells LVIA that there would be no effect on this viewpoint.

- **Viewpoint 14: Guided Busway – Bidwells Magnitude Low**

The photograph of the existing view in **drawing CN-013** illustrates the urban character of this view, with built form framing views along the roadway. The montage on page 97 of appendix 12.4 of the ES illustrates that the proposed residential blocks would occupy a small proportion of the total view. These buildings would be clearly visible on the skyline, but would be seen in the context of existing buildings in the fore and middle ground. **I agree therefore that the magnitude of effect on this view would be low.**

- **Viewpoint 15: Ditton Meadows – Bidwells Magnitude Low**

As **drawing CN-014** in my Appendices illustrates, the Novotel and One Cambridge Square can be clearly seen within this view on the skyline, although they do not occupy a large proportion of the view. **Drawing CN-042** in my Appendices provides a type 4 montage of the proposed development, and from this perspective the proposed residential development would be screened, and views of the proposed laboratories along the eastern edge of the site would be filtered by existing trees, even in the winter months. Given that the proposed development would cause a relatively small scale of change to the existing skyline, and given that they would be of a similar character and scale to the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square, **I agree that the magnitude of change in this view would be low.**

- **Viewpoint 16: Stourbridge Common – Bidwells Magnitude Negligible**

As drawing **CN-015** illustrates, the skyline viewed from this viewpoint comprises filtered views of built form, and the Novotel is visible above intervening rooflines. As the type 4 montage in drawing CN-047 illustrates, One Milton Avenue would be glimpsed to the left of, and behind, One Cambridge Square. The proposed residential development would not be visible from this perspective. The proposed development would therefore occupy a very small proportion of the total view and would be seen adjacent to existing buildings of a similar height and character. **I agree with the Bidwells LVIA that the magnitude of effect on this viewpoint would therefore be negligible.**

- **Viewpoint 20: A14 Bridge over the River Cam – Bidwells Magnitude Low**

Drawing CN-06 illustrates the existing oblique and transitional view from this viewpoint, and a model view of the proposed development is illustrated on page 139 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES. The proposed development would be visible on the skyline, although it

would be partially screened by intervening vegetation and would be seen in the context of existing buildings on the skyline which are of a similar scale and character. **I agree with the Bidwells LVIA that the magnitude of effect on this viewpoint would therefore be low.**

- **Viewpoint E1: Chisholm Trail Bridge on River Cam – Bidwells Magnitude Negligible**

The existing view from E1 is illustrated by drawing CN-017 in my Appendices, and the view looks along the cycle bridge over the railway towards the Novotel. Page 187 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES illustrates that One Milton Avenue would be visible just to the left of the Novotel, and behind that building, and the proposed residential development would also be glimpsed. The proposed buildings would occupy a very small proportion of the total view and would be seen in the context of existing buildings of a similar scale and character. **I agree with the Bidwells LVIA that the magnitude of effect on this viewpoint would therefore be low.**

- **Viewpoint E2: Chisholm Trail – Bidwells Magnitude Negligible**

Drawing CN-018 illustrates the existing view from this location, which includes a glimpsed view of the rooflines of One Cambridge Square and the Novotel above the railway bridge. Page 191 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES provides a verified montage of the proposals, and shows that the residential development would be glimpsed between existing trees in the back ground of this view. **I agree with the Bidwells LVIA that the magnitude of effect on this viewpoint would therefore be negligible.**

- **Viewpoint E5: Discovery Way – Bidwells Magnitude Medium**

Drawing CN-019 illustrates the existing view from Discovery Way, in which One Cambridge Square is visible above the roof lines in the foreground. **Drawing CN-052** illustrates the type 4 montage of the proposed development, in which One Milton Avenue is clearly visible on the skyline to the left of One Cambridge Square, and the proposed residential development is visible to the left of the view and again on the skyline.

It is important to compare the existing view with **Plate V** in this proof; that view is also taken from Discovery Way, but is taken from a point approximately 50 metres to the north-west. From that perspective three storey development is a feature of the

foreground, One Cambridge Square is more prominent in the view and the proposed development would be largely screened by existing buildings.

It is therefore clear that whilst the proposals would occupy a moderate proportion of view E5, the geographical extent of this clear view in Discovery Way is actually more limited. **It is for this reason that I agree with the Bidwells judgement that the magnitude of effects would be medium.**

- **Viewpoint E6: Fen Road – Bidwells Magnitude Medium**

Drawing CN-021 in my Appendices illustrates the existing view from this location, which is characterised by diverse, low built form and caravans in the fore and middle ground, with the appeal site glimpsed at the end of the road. The roofline of the Novotel can be seen just above the caravan at the left of the view. A visualisation of the proposed development from this perspective is included at page 200 of Appendix 12.4. The upper storey and roofline of One Milton Avenue would be seen above the existing rooflines at the left of the view, and the much lower mobility hub, with its textured metal cladding, would be seen above the wall at the end of the road. The proposal would cause noticeable change but would not occupy a large proportion of the view and would be seen in the context of existing built development in the fore and middle ground. **I have therefore concluded that the magnitude of effect for this viewpoint would be low.**

- **Viewpoint P1: Harcamlow Way – Bidwells Magnitude None**

As the existing view on **drawing CN-022** in my Appendices illustrates, this is an extensive fenland view from a location north-east of Horningsea. Page 161 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES provides a model view of the proposed development, and clearly indicates that the proposed development would be screened behind existing vegetation and landform. **I therefore agree with the Bidwells LVIA that there would be no effect on this view.**

- **Viewpoint P4: Little Wilbraham Road – Bidwells Magnitude None**

Drawing CN-023 illustrates the existing view from this perspective, and page 167 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES illustrates the fact that the proposed development would be screened behind intervening vegetation and landform. **I therefore agree with the Bidwells LVIA that there would be no effect on this view.**

- **Viewpoint P5: Worts' Causeway/Shelford Road – Bidwells Magnitude None**

Drawing CN-04 illustrates the existing view from this viewpoint, and a model view of the proposed development is illustrated at page 171 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES. The proposed development would be screened behind existing buildings at the airport, although it is possible that some glimpses of the proposed built form would be visible.

There would therefore be no effect at this viewpoint.

- **Viewpoint P6: Limekiln Road, Wet Pit LNR – Bidwells Magnitude None**

Drawing CN-025 in my Appendices illustrates the existing panoramic view from this viewpoint, and the model view on page 175 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES illustrates the potential visual effects of the proposed development. The proposed buildings would be screened by other built forms of a larger scale and mass. **There would therefore be no effect on this view.**

4.4.5 Potential Visual Effects for Representative Viewpoints

237. Table CN4, below, summarises my judgements of sensitivity and magnitude for each of the representative viewpoints, and combines these to determine the visual effects. The Bidwells LVIA judgements are included for reference. Significant effects (**Major or Major/Moderate**) are highlighted in bold type)

Table CN4: Comparison in Assessment of Landscape Effects between Bidwells LVIA and my Own Assessment

Viewpoint Reference	J Smith Sensitivity	J Smith Magnitude	J Smith Effects	Bidwells Effects
2	High/Medium	Medium	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
4	Low (Vehicle Users) Medium/Low (pedestrians)	Medium	Moderate/Minor neutral	Moderate neutral
5	High/Medium	Negligible	Minor neutral	No effect
8	High/Medium	Medium	Major/Moderate adverse	Major adverse
9	High/Medium (walkers) Medium (vehicle users)	Medium	Major/Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
10	High/Medium	No effect	No effect	No effect

14	Medium/Low (pedestrians) Low (vehicle users)	Low	Moderate/Minor (pedestrians) Minor (vehicle users), neutral	Minor neutral
15	High/Medium	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse	Moderate/Minor neutral
16	High/Medium	Negligible	Minor neutral	Minor neutral
20	Low	Low	Minor neutral	Moderate/Minor neutral
E1	High/Medium	Low	Moderate/Minor neutral	Negligible neutral
E2	High/Medium	Negligible	Minor neutral	Negligible neutral
E5	Medium	Medium	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse
E6	Medium (residents) Medium/Low (pedestrians) Low (vehicle users)	Low	Moderate/Minor neutral Moderate/Minor neutral Minor neutral	Moderate/Minor neutral
P1	High/Medium	No effect	No effect	No effect
P4	Medium/Low	No effect	No effect	No effect
P5	High/Medium (walkers) Medium (vehicle users)	No effect	No effect	No effect
P6	High/Medium	No effect	No effect	No effect

238. Having carried out my own, independent review of visual effects on the representative viewpoints, based upon detailed modelling of visibility and of effects on individual views, **I have reached conclusions very similar to the Bidwells LVIA.**
239. **Significant visual effects would be limited to two viewpoints in my assessment,** (and just one in the Bidwells assessment). **Importantly, the visual effects on viewpoints in the Fen Ditton Conservation Area and the Riverside and Stourbridge Common conservation are assessed as being mainly moderate/minor or minor, with several viewpoints experiencing neutral effects or no effects at all.**

240. It is also important to note that viewpoint E5 represents views at Discovery Way, whilst E6 represents effects on residents at Fen Road. **Both of these areas have been specifically mentioned in Reason for Refusal 1 as experiencing “*overbearing effects*” as a result of the proposed development. However, in both cases both the Bidwells LVIA and my own review have concluded that the visual effects would be moderate or moderate/minor and therefore less than significant.**
241. For both of these cases the magnitude of effect is reduced for three main reasons:
- Firstly, the proposed built form would be seen in the context of existing extensive built form in the foreground, and consequently the proposals would not be anomalous in their context.
 - Secondly, there is sufficient distance between the receptors and the proposed new buildings to allow the effect of perspective to reduce the perceived scale of the proposed buildings. In the case of Discovery Way, the viewpoint is approximately 160 metres from the nearest building, with the guided busway and allotments in between. For Fen Road, the viewpoint is approximately 280 metres from the nearest proposed building, with the railway lines and other built form
 - Thirdly, the height and mass of the proposed buildings seen from these perspectives is not excessive in any case: the residential quarter and proposed S4 building are broken into discrete blocks of varying height from 15m to 30m, with set backs in the elevations providing visual interest in the elevations. The mobility and hub and buildings S6 and S7 vary between maximum heights of approximately 15 and 22m, with lower parapets sections.
242. **There is a considerable difference between a proposed building that is clearly visible and one which is “*overbearing*”. Both the Bidwells LVIA and my own conclude that the development would be clearly visible in views, but this visual effect would be of medium magnitude and therefore less than significant.**
243. It is also appropriate in this context to consider **another concern raised in Reason for Refusal 1, that “*the height and massing of the proposed development is not sympathetic to the scale, density and massing of the surrounding areas which comprise primarily low level and low-***

density development”, since the developments at Discovery Way and Fen Road are precisely the “low level” development to which this comment relates.

244. Ultimately, the test of what level of development is *sympathetic* to these surrounding uses can only be tested by detailed landscape and visual assessment. It was the conclusion of the Bidwells LVIA, and my own assessment, that the visual effects of the proposals upon these areas would be at most moderate and less than significant. Similarly, in my landscape review (and that of Bidwells), the effects on Fen Road and the Chesterton Residential areas as landscape receptors would also be less than significant; whilst the proposed buildings would be more visible in these areas, they would not fundamentally change the character of these areas.
245. In this context both the Bidwells LVIA and my own assessment have concluded that the proposed development is sympathetic to the scale and massing of these surrounding uses.
246. It is also worth noting in this context that the LCVIA also recognised that the only way to test appropriate built forms on the appeal site is to analyse key views, and to assess the level of change that would result in these views. It was on this basis that the LCVIA concluded that the appeal site could accommodate medium to high buildings.

4.4.6 Overview of Potential Visual Effects for Visual Receptor Groups

247. In the following sections I have summarised the potential effects of the development on different visual receptor groups in the relevant geographical areas. This focus on visual receptors applies the assessments for the individual representative viewpoints, but also provides more context as to how those views are experienced (for example as individual glimpses or long, sequential views).

Visitors to Local Nature Reserves

248. There are a series of informal paths within the **Bramblefields Local Nature Reserve**, as the photographs at drawings **CN-005** and **CN-006** of my appendices illustrate, the area is largely enclosed by mature trees and shrubs, with the newly constructed One Cambridge Square office building clearly visible on the skyline. This is therefore a semi-rural context with a clear sense

of being on the settlement edge. As the photomontage for viewpoint 2 (see for example **page 22 of Appendix 12.4 to the ES**) illustrates, glimpses of the proposed residential development, and also the upper storeys of One Milton Avenue (S4) would be partially visible above and between the surrounding vegetation, but would be seen in the context of the existing building at One Cambridge Square. Both the Bidwells LVIA and my own visual review that the visual effects on visitors to the nature reserve would therefore be moderate adverse.

249. Visitors to **Limekiln Road Local Nature Reserve** are able to obtain open views over Cambridge, but there would be no view of the proposed development from this perspective (see viewpoint P6, page 175 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES).

Vehicle Users

250. Vehicle users which have potential to obtain views include users of Cowley Road, to the north-west of the appeal site. As viewpoint 4 illustrates, (see **drawing CN-007 of my Appendices**) the context for these views is one of business parks and industrial buildings, although these are frequently filtered by mature vegetation which lines other side of this road. As the photomontage for **viewpoint 4 at page 30 of Appendix 12.4 to the ES** illustrates, the proposed development would be clearly visible at the end of this road, with views of the residential element being filtered by trees. The new building would be viewed as part of a sequential experience through an area of similar industrial buildings, and effects at viewpoint 4 would be moderate/minor and neutral.
251. Users of buses on the Guided Busway, to the north-west of the appeal site, pass through an area of business parks and industrial buildings as they head south towards Cambridge North Station. They would experience sequential but glimpsed views of the proposed development, with intervening buildings often screening parts of the development. As the photomontage for **viewpoint 14** illustrates, (see **page 98 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES**), the buildings would occupy a small proportion of the view and would be seen in the context of existing buildings of a similar character, and effects at viewpoint 14 would therefore be minor and neutral.
252. Vehicle Users at the northern end of Green End, to the east of the Cam Valley and to the north of Fen Ditton, have some potential for glimpsed views of the proposed development through

intervening vegetation, as illustrated by the photomontage for **viewpoint 6 at page 42 of appendix 12.4 of the ES**. Whilst most of this road is enclosed by existing buildings and vegetation, this view is one location where the proposed S6 and S7 buildings would be seen, albeit in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square. These effects would therefore be moderate and adverse at most in the winter months, reducing in summer.

253. Views by vehicle users from Horningsea Road, to the east of Fen Ditton, are limited to oblique glimpses, since many views are screened or filtered by roadside vegetation. **Viewpoint 9** would be one location where oblique views of the proposed development would be obtained, and these effects for these users at this point would be moderate and adverse, since the proposed buildings would be clearly visible on the skyline.
254. Views from vehicles on the A14, to the north of the appeal site, are oblique and fast moving, with many views screened by roadside vegetation. The clearest views can be obtained as the road crosses the River Cam (see for example **viewpoint 20, drawing CN-016 in my Appendices**). As the model view on page 139 of ES Appendix 12.4 illustrates, the proposed new buildings would be visible but would occupy a small proportion of the view and would also be seen in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square office building. The effects for vehicle users at this viewpoint would therefore be minor and adverse.

Walkers and Cyclists

255. There is a network of **footpaths and cycle routes along the Cam River valley** and I have considered the potential effects of the proposed development upon these users under the following geographical areas:
- Walkers/Cyclists on Fen Rivers Way and Harcamlow Way at **Ditton Meadows and north-west of Fen Ditton**
 - Walkers/Cyclists on Fen Rivers Way and Harcamlow Way (and Wadloes footpath) in **Stourbridge Common**
 - Walkers/Cyclists on the **Chisholm Trail**.

256. The rights of way passing through the **Ditton Meadows** area, and open fields north-west of Fen Ditton, provide a sequential experience through a largely rural landscape, with attractive views over open fields towards the River Cam. This area is often visually enclosed by vegetation, and as a result there are parts of both the Harcamlow Way and the Fen Rivers Way (see for example viewpoint 5) where it is not possible to obtain views of the proposed development (see the **photomontage in drawing CN-026 of my Appendices**).
257. However, there are also some areas where the existing urban edge of Cambridge is already clearly visible in views, as illustrated for example by **viewpoint 15, drawing CN-040 in my Appendices**. In these views the proposed development would be visible, but would occupy only a small proportion of the view and would be seen in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square, and consequently the visual effects would be moderate/minor adverse for walkers and cyclists.



Plate X: Photograph taken from Harcamlow Way in Ditton Meadows, showing how recent arboricultural works on the trees to the west of the Cam permit views towards the appeal site, including the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square building.

258. Similarly, I have noted on my site visit in February 2023 that there has been some arboricultural work on trees to the west of the River Cam which now allows some filtered views towards the Novotel and One Cambridge square, as other buildings in the vicinity of the appeal site (see **plate X**, above). As for viewpoint 15, whilst the proposed buildings would be visible from this point, they would again occupy a small proportion of the view and would be seen in the context of the existing buildings.
259. The section of the Harcamlow Way to the north of Fen Ditton is on slightly higher ground, and this affords clearer views of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square office building, as well as lower level, mixed use development along Fen Road, (see for example viewpoint 8, **drawing CN-030 in my Appendices**). These clearer views are available for approximately a 150 metre section of the footpath in this location. Drawing CN-031 shows a verified photomontage of the proposed development from viewpoint 8, and the proposed built form is clearly visible on the skyline, although seen in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square and other development around the appeal site. I have assessed this effect as being major/moderate and adverse due to the increased visibility of built form within a largely rural context.
260. In summary walkers and cyclists using rights of way crossing Ditton Meadows often have longer views foreshortened by vegetation to the west and east of the River Cam Valley, and as a result the nature of views is largely rural. However, there are several points at which existing built form on the settlement edge can be clearly seen, and this gives a clear sense of the proximity of the Cambridge urban area. Where the proposals are visible, they would often occupy a small proportion of the view and be seen in the context of existing built form, and would therefore cause less than significant effects. However, in one location, the Harcamlow Way north of Fen Ditton, the proposed buildings would appear more prominent on the skyline and have therefore been assessed as causing significant visual effects.
261. Sequential Views by walkers and cyclists on Stourbridge Common are typically enclosed by mature trees to the north of the industrial area at Mercers Row, to the south, and by a combination of mature trees and residential development at Water Street and Fen Road, to the north. The prominence of housing next to the Cam, (see for example **viewpoint E4, page 193 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES**), combined with the more formal layout of trees, and the urban form

of the Chisholm Trail bridge over the Cam, gives Stourbridge Common gives users a clear sense of being on the settlement edge, in a semi-parkland setting. Views towards the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square for users of the Harcamlow and Fen Rivers Ways are limited to glimpses (see for example viewpoint 16, (**drawing CN-015, in my appendices**), and the proposed development would cause little change to these views (viewers at viewpoint 16, for example, would experience only minor and neutral visual effects).

262. Views by walkers on Wadloes footpath, south of Fen Ditton, are largely enclosed by vegetation on either side of the path, with views towards the existing settlement edge being limited to glimpses.
263. In summary visual effects for walkers and cyclists on Stourbridge Common would be limited to small glimpses, with the proposed buildings occupying only a small proportion of the view and being seen in the context of other buildings.
264. Walkers and riders on the Chisholm Trail are represented by viewpoints E1 and E2. The trail itself is surfaced with tarmac, and this, combined with the prominence of the settlement edge to the north, the refined, steel construction of the cycle bridge, lighting, and the overhead infrastructure on the adjacent railway line, give a strong sense of being close to the settlement edge. The appeal proposals would occupy only a small proportion of the view from these viewpoints, and would be seen in the context of the existing Novotel and office buildings (see for example the model view for viewpoint E1 on page 187 of Appendix 12.4 to the ES), and consequently the effects for walkers and riders would be largely minor and neutral.
265. Views of the proposed development from footpaths and bridleways to the north of the A14 would be limited due to intervening vegetation, (there would, for example, be no effect on viewpoints 10 and P1), and there would also be limited potential for views from rights of way on the more open farmland to the east and north-east of Fen Ditton. One exception to this is the availability of views from the eastern end of Field Lane; this right of way is largely enclosed to both the north and the south by hedgerows, but there is some potential for views from the eastern end of the path (see the existing view for **viewpoint 9, CN-035 in my Appendices**). As the photomontage in drawing CN-036 illustrates, the proposed development would be visible

from this perspective above existing residential properties, and I have assessed that this increase in visibility would result in major/moderate and adverse effects for walkers.

266. For walkers on long distance views seeking to experience views of the Cambridge skyline (from example viewpoints P4, P5) there would be no views of the proposed development.

Local Residents

267. Views of the proposed development by residents on the northern edge of Chesterton (for example Long Reach Road, Bourne Road, would be limited due to the screening effect of intervening vegetation and buildings. However, as the existing view for viewpoint E5 (**drawing CN-050** in my appendices) illustrates, there are clear views of One Cambridge Square from the eastern end of Discovery Way, (whereas views from the western part are largely screened by existing three storey homes). **Drawing CN-051 in my Appendices** includes a photomontage of the proposed One Milton Avenue (S4), and also a model view of the proposed residential quarter. These buildings would be clearly visible on the skyline, but would be experienced in an urban context of existing one, two and three storey homes on Discovery Way itself, the Nuffield Road industrial Estate immediately to the north-west of Discovery Way, and the Cambridge Business Park to the north. The visual effects for residents at Discovery Way would therefore be moderate and adverse at the eastern end of the development, reducing to the west.
268. Residents at Fen Road are mostly within single storey homes, and as the existing view from viewpoint E6 illustrates (see **drawing CN-020** in my Appendices), whilst it is possible to see the existing Novotel on the skyline views of the majority of this building are screened by intervening built form. The model view on **page 200 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES** illustrates that the upper storeys of One Milton Avenue (S4) would be visible on the skyline, as would the upper part of the mobility hub and the laboratory at building S6. These buildings would occupy a relatively small proportion of the total view and would be seen in the context of complex built form, roads and lighting in the foreground, with the existing hotel also visible on the skyline. The effects on residents in this location would therefore be moderate/minor and neutral in nature.

269. The majority of Fen Ditton is visually enclosed, with Church Street and High Street, for example, being enclosed by existing buildings and mature vegetation. However, there is potential for some glimpsed views for a small number of residents, for example at the northern end of Green End or the western end of High Street, particularly in the winter months. Viewpoint 6 (see **page 41 of the ES visualisations, Appendix 12.4**), provides an example of a glimpsed view from Green End which is largely screened in the summer months but which allows filtered views towards the existing urban area of Cambridge, including the Novotel and One Cambridge Square. As **page 42 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES** illustrates, in the winter months it would be possible to obtain filtered views of the proposed development, seen in the context of existing buildings in the middle ground. This would represent a negative visual effect, due to the increased visibility of built form on the skyline, but would not change the fundamental nature of the view, since viewers at this point are already gain a clear sense that that the Cambridge urban area is beyond the River Cam, and separated from Fen Ditton by the riverside meadows and existing development at Fen Road.

4.4.7 Conclusions on the Visual Effects of the Proposed Development

270. The Bidwells LVIA concluded that only one of the representative viewpoints would experience significant visual effects, and in my own independent review I have concluded that only two representative viewpoints would experience visual effects. I have considered how the proposed development would be experienced by different groups of viewers around the site, and have noted that where views of the proposals are available there is already built form within the view, and that the proposed development is therefore increasing the visibility of an existing element within views, rather than introducing a new and entirely contrasting feature.
271. **In my experience, given the scale of the appeal proposals, the overall degree of visual effect resulting from the appeal proposals is at the lower end of the scale.**
272. As I have noted, all of the landscape and visual assessments in the Bidwells LVIA and in my own independent review have been made against the baseline of the existing site condition. But, as section 2.0 of this proof identifies, the appeal site is allocated under Policy SS/4 for a similar type of development to that which is proposed. Furthermore, whilst the NECAAP evidence base

presents contradictory approaches to the suggested heights of new buildings on the appeal site, all documents indicate that the appeal site will be developed and building heights will increase.

273. In this context it is helpful to review the additional model views that have been created for six of the key viewpoints: for viewpoints 5, 8, 9, 15, 16 and E5 the buildings heights suggested within AAP2020 (red), the LCVIA (blue) and AAP2021 (yellow) have been accurately modelled, with the minimum heights shown in full colour and the maximum heights shown in translucent colour (see drawings CN-026 to CN-055). **In nearly every case each one of these scenarios shows a noticeable increase in built form within the views.** In many cases – notably viewpoints 8 and 9, where I have concluded the only significant visual effects would occur – there would be a particularly noticeable increase in the visibility of built form.
274. As for the landscape assessment I have not assessed the visual effects of the proposals against these various alternatives, since there is no adopted AAP and the evidence base is contradictory. **However, the assessed visual effects should be considered in the context of what is highly likely to be a changing landscape, with increased visibility of built form in many views.**

4.5 Consideration of the Effects of Design

275. As I have noted at the introduction to this section of my proof, it is common ground between the parties (LSoCG 23) that it is best practice in landscape and visual impact assessment to assess increased visibility of built form in a rural or semi-rural context as causing negative landscape and visual effects. However, it is also agreed between the parties that new buildings can result in positive landscape and visual effects.
276. **It follows that it is important to consider the landscape and visual effects of development in the context of an appreciation of the design of the proposals, in order to understand whether the proposals – regardless of whether they are assessed as causing negative effects due to their increased prominence for example – would still be a positive addition to the townscape and landscape.**

277. At section 3.0 of my proof I reviewed the design of the proposed development, both in terms of the overall design concepts but more specifically the design approach used for the eastern edge of the development. I noted that it is common ground between the parties that the uses which are proposed accord with Policy SS/4. I also noted that the development aimed to provide a high quality employment hub, with a strong sense of community and vibrant, distinctive public realm. I concluded that the eastern edge design was of high quality and that it accorded with the design recommendation in the LCVIA.
278. Given the degraded character and condition of the existing appeal site, **the proposals would therefore introduce a positive change to the landscape of the appeal site itself**, and this is reflected both in my assessment of landscape and visual effects and that in the Bidwells LVIA.
279. Turning to visual effects, in accordance with best practice, the visual effects of the development upon, for example viewpoint 8, have been assessed as being significant and adverse, since built form would become far more prominent on the skyline when compared with the existing view.
280. However, SS/4, the LCVIA and the townscape strategy all envisage the creation of a vibrant mixed-use development on the appeal site, and paragraph F.31 of the Tall Buildings and the Skyline guidance states that *“tall buildings have the potential to act as positive landmarks that aid legibility and make it easier for people to orientate themselves around the city... [for example] in and around principal transport junctions”*.
281. In this context, it should be considered that the proposed buildings are performing the important task of marking a new, vibrant urban area, as well as an important transport node – on this basis the marginally increased visibility in built form becomes an asset.
282. Of course, just because the buildings are bigger and therefore provide legibility doesn't make them acceptable in design terms. As the LCVIA notes at paragraph 5.13 *“the introduction of potential development into views of the skyline would need to be of high architectural quality and sensitive design”*.
283. **Drawing CN-031** in my appendices, which shows a verified montage of the proposed development seen from viewpoint 8 north of Fen Ditton, illustrates how the proposed design is

visible without being dominant in this view. It shows that the roofline varies, and that there is a varied pattern of light and shade on the eastern elevations which reduces the perceived mass of buildings and creates visual interest. The varied materials provide further visual interest, and the proposed climbers on buildings S6 and S7 would introduce further interest in the short to medium term. In the medium to long term, the proposed trees on the eastern edge of the appeal site would provide further filtering of views towards the elevations. **In design terms, then, the appeal proposals represent a high quality, sensitive and positive design statement, marking the edge of a new urban area and transport hub.**

284. I have also assessed the visual effects of the development upon viewpoint 9 as being significant and adverse, and the Bidwells LVIA assessed these effects as being moderate and adverse. Again, these judgements are based upon the increased visibility of built form on the skyline within a largely rural view.
285. Reference to the photomontage in **drawing CN-038** indicates that the proposal would be clearly visible, but again not dominant in the view; the area of the view occupied by the new buildings is not significantly more than that occupied by existing buildings within the view, for example.
286. The variation in the proposed skyline is again visible, as are the articulations in the eastern elevation, variation in materials and the proposed climbers. Again, in design terms this is clearly a carefully designed urban edge, providing a positive design statement and marking the position of a new urban community and a transport hub.
287. In summary, whilst the Bidwells LVIA, and my own review, have concluded that there would be significant visual harm to at least two viewpoints as result of the proposed development, the proposed design would also create high quality, visually diverse and distinctive urban edge that would perform the important urban design role of marking an important transport interchange as well as a new urban area and transport hub.
288. **The design quality of the proposals thus provides design benefits which should be considered alongside the harm assessed in the Bidwells LVIA and in my review.**

289. It is notable that Reason for Refusal 1 states that the proposals do not “*respond positively*” to their context, and that the proposals are “*not sympathetic to the scale, density and massing of surrounding areas*”. Whilst I have acknowledged within my landscape and visual review that the proposed development would result in some adverse landscape and visual effects, it is firstly important to recognise that any increased visibility of built form on the skyline would also result in negative landscape and visual effects, and such an increase in visibility is possible for any vibrant, mixed-use development proposed on the appeal site in accordance with Policy SS/4.
290. Critically, these proposals would not be of such height and mass that the effects are unacceptably overbearing or widespread in the surrounding townscape and landscape – instead the proposed heights, and the careful design of rooflines, massing and elevations means that this would be a positive marker, signposting the station and the new urban area.

4.6 The Effect of the Proposals upon the Strategic Views of the Cambridge Skyline identified in Appendix F of the Local Plan

291. As I have noted at section 2.0 of this proof, Appendix F defines the historic core of Cambridge on figure F.1, and the appeal site lies approximately 2.46km to the north-east of this area at its closest point. The appeal proposals would therefore have no direct effects upon the most historic and sensitive part of the Cambridge skyline.
292. It is also notable that the proposed development would have no effect upon any of the Strategic Views defined on Figure F.3 of Appendix F. Appendix F views that had potential to be affected by the proposals were agreed with the Council, and potential visual effects on these were then assessed with the aid of computer modelling. The results of this process can be summarised as follows:
- **Castle Mound** (Strategic View 1) was ruled out due to the proposal not being visible in agreement with Council (see Viewpoint 3, table 12.1 of the ES);
 - Strategic View 13, **River Cam near Baits Bite Lock**, was also agreed with the Council to be excluded due to lack of visibility (see Viewpoint 7b, “*exclude as proposal not visible*”, table 12.1 of ES);

- For Strategic View 8, at **Limekiln Road**, (see ES viewpoint P6), it is common ground that there is no view from this perspective (see LSoCG paragraph 30);
- For Strategic View 9, at Worts' Causeway (see ES viewpoint P5), it is again common ground that there would be no effect on this viewpoint (LSoCG paragraph 30).

293. At section 2.0 of this proof I have noted that Policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan also requires that proposals for tall buildings should demonstrate how the new building would fit in with the existing landscape and townscape, and would deliver *"a high quality addition to the Cambridge skyline"*. In accordance with these requirements both the Bidwells LVIA and my own review assess the effects of the proposed development upon the Cambridge Skyline as a discrete landscape receptor, and both assessments have also considered the visual effects of the proposals on relevant visual receptors. At section 4.5, above, I have also considered the effects of the design of the proposals upon the skyline. I have concluded that the proposals would represent a carefully designed and high quality addition to the skyline, providing a positive marker to signpost the station and new urban area.

4.7 Green Belt Review

4.7.1 Introduction

294. In this section of my proof I have carried out a concise review of the effects of the proposed development upon the purposes of the Green Belt, since Reason for Refusal 1 includes reference to harm to the Green Belt as well as Policy NH/8, which states, inter alia, that states that *"development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of high quality"*.

295. A discussion of the landscaping and design of the eastern edge of the proposals is included in section 3.0 of my proof – this section specifically addresses potential effects of the proposed development upon the openness and functionality of the Green Belt to the east of the appeal site.

4.7.2 The Purpose and Function of Green Belt

296. Green Belt is a spatial planning designation, and therefore inclusion of land within Green Belt does not imply additional landscape value.

297. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
298. The purposes of the Green Belt are set out at paragraph 138 of the Framework:
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (Purpose 1);
 - To prevent neighbouring towns from merging one into another (Purpose 2);
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (Purpose 3);
 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns (Purpose 4);
 - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (Purpose 5).

4.7.3 Definition of Openness

299. Traditionally, openness has been defined as freedom from buildings. In *Timmins v. Gedling Borough Council* 2014 EWHC 654, it is stated that: “[any] *construction harms openness quite irrespective of its impact in terms of its obtrusiveness or its aesthetic attractions or qualities*”.

300. But a number of judgments relating to Jackdaw Crag Quarry in Tadcaster have made it clear that openness is not only a spatial term but that it also has a clear visual dimension. The High Court decision by Lord Justices Arden, Floyd and Sales (2016 EWHC 2788) states at paragraph 15 that:

“The question of visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of “openness of the Green Belt” as a matter of the natural meaning of the language used in para. 89 of the NPPF. I consider that this interpretation is also reinforced by the general guidance in paras. 79-81 of the NPPF, which introduce section 9 on the protection of Green Belt Land. There is an important visual dimension to checking “the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas” and the merging of neighbouring towns, as indeed the name “Green Belt” itself implies. Greenness is a visual quality: part of the idea of the Green Belt is that the eye and the spirit should be relieved from the prospect of unrelenting urban sprawl. Openness of aspect is a characteristic quality of the countryside, and “safeguarding the countryside from encroachment” includes preservation of that quality of

openness. The preservation of “the setting ... of historic towns” obviously refers in a material way to their visual setting, for instance when seen from a distance across open fields.”

301. Similarly, Lord Justices Lindblom and Lewison state at paragraph 37 of their judgement on the Darrington Quarries case at Tadcaster in March 2018 (2018 EWHC 442):

“The concept of “the openness of the Green Belt” is not defined in paragraph 90. Nor is it defined elsewhere in the NPPF. But I agree with Sales L.J.’s observations in Turner to the effect that the concept of “openness” as it is used in both paragraph 89 and paragraph 90 must take its meaning from the specific context in which it falls to be applied under the policies in those two paragraphs. Different factors are capable of being relevant to the concept when it is applied to the particular facts of a case. Visual impact, as well as spatial impact, is, as Sales L.J. said, “implicitly part” of it. In a particular case there may or may not be other harmful visual effects apart from harm in visual terms to the openness of the Green Belt. And the absence of other harmful visual effects does not equate to an absence of visual harm to the openness of the Green Belt”.

302. These judgments have been further clarified by the recent Supreme Court judgement on 5th February 2020, also relating to the Darrington Quarries case (Samuel Smiths Old Brewery v North Yorks CC [2020] UKSC 3). Paragraph 40 of this judgment states that: *“matters relevant to openness in any particular case are a matter of planning judgement, not law”*. This is not to say that visual matters are not relevant to the judgement of openness, but simply a reference to the fact that: *“paragraph 90 does not expressly refer to visual impact as a necessary part of the analysis, nor in my view is it made so by implication”*.

303. The Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) note on openness, produced in July 2019 again emphasises the fact that there is both a spatial and a visual aspect to openness: it states that *“the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume”*.

4.7.4 The Potential Effects of the Appeal Proposals Upon the Green Belt

304. In this case, **the appeal site is not within the Green Belt, nor is it immediately adjacent to the Green Belt**, since the site is separated from the designation by the existing railway lines.

305. Notably, the land immediately to the east of the railway lines, (to the east of the appeal site), which is within the Green Belt, includes the mixed-use development on either side of Fen Road. This part of the Green Belt does not, therefore, exhibit openness, nor does it effectively protect against encroachment or sprawl, since this area already includes a significant area of built form.
306. Given that the appeal site is not within the Green Belt, and is separated from it by both the railway lines and a transitional area of built form on Fen Road, the only potential effect that the appeal proposals can have on the Green Belt is an indirect, visual reduction in the perception of openness.
307. In this context it is important to note that existing buildings are already visible both within the Green Belt (see for example viewpoint E6) and at the edge of the Green Belt: (see for example viewpoints E1, E2, 8, 15, 16). In the case of views from the Cam River corridor (for example E1, E2, 8, 15, 16), built form is noticeable in the background of views, but the foreground comprises open grassland and trees/hedgerows. **The fact that the existing urban edge can be seen in these views in no way detracts from the openness of the foreground; indeed, the open grassland provides the setting for the city.** There is a clear sense that the city is seen on the skyline, but that the viewer is within more open, Green Belt landscape.
308. This same approach also applies to other cities where there are clear views across the Green Belt towards built form: **Bath, Durham, Oxford, York, for example, are all places where the visibility of built form in no way detracts from the openness of the Green Belt in the foreground of views; instead, it forms a contrast that is part of the distinctive character of the setting of those cities.**
309. In this context, **whilst it is true that the proposed development would make the existing settlement edge more visible from the Green Belt** (see for example viewpoints 8 and 9), **this would only serve to more clearly define the existing urban edge, and would have no effect on the perception of openness of the designation.**

4.8 Conclusions on Potential Landscape and Visual Effects

4.8.1 Methodology

310. I have carried out an independent review of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, including a review of the Bidwells LVIA within the ES.
311. I have concluded that the Bidwells LVIA follows the recommendations of GLVIA3 and follows the latest Landscape Institute guidance in relation to the production of photomontages. The methodology for the LVIA, and the landscape and visual receptors, was agreed with the Council.

4.8.2 Predicted Landscape Effects

312. Both my own review and the Bidwells LVIA have concluded that the appeal proposals would not result in any significant landscape effects, and the effects on the landscape of the appeal site itself would be beneficial in nature.
313. There would be moderate to moderate/minor negative landscape effects for the Cam River Corridor, the residential area at Chesterton, the mixed-use area at Fen Road and for the Cambridge Skyline in the locality of the site.
314. In my experience, for a development of this scale, these assessments of landscape effect are relatively low.

4.8.3 Predicted Visual Effects

315. I have concluded that the significant visual effects would be limited to two representative viewpoints on higher ground north and east of Fen Ditton. For both of these views, built form is already visible within the view and consequently the proposals are not introducing a new element, but changing the composition of existing elements within views. For all other representative viewpoints visual effects would be moderate or less.
316. In my experience, given the scale of the appeal proposals, this degree of visual effect is at the lower end of the scale.

4.8.4 Consideration of SS/4 and the NECAAP Evidence Base

317. The landscape and visual assessments in the Bidwells LVIA and in my own independent review have been made against the baseline of the existing site condition. But, as section 2.0 of this proof identifies, the appeal site is allocated under Policy SS/4 for a similar type of development to that which is proposed. Furthermore, whilst the NECAAP evidence base presents contradictory approaches to the suggested heights of new buildings on the appeal site, all documents indicate that the appeal site will be developed and building heights will increase.
318. I have therefore concluded that it is important to note that the landscape of the appeal site may change, even in the absence of the appeal proposals, and that the landscape and visual effects of the proposals should be considered in the context of this changing landscape.

4.8.5 Design Considerations

319. It is common ground that it is best practice in LVIA to assess increased prominence of built form in a rural or semi-rural context as causing negative landscape and visual effects. However, it is also common ground that a well-designed building can result in positive landscape and visual effects. The Tall Buildings and the Skyline guidance also makes it clear that tall buildings can have a beneficial effect, particularly when they mark an important location, such as a transport interchange.
320. I have noted that although the proposed development would result in landscape and visual harm when assessed through a standard LVIA approach, it would also create a high quality, visually diverse and distinctive urban edge that would perform the important urban design role of marking an important transport interchange as well as a new urban area and transport hub.
321. The design quality of the proposals thus provides design benefits which should be considered alongside the harm assessed in the LVIA and in my review.

4.8.6 Cambridge Skyline

322. I have concluded that the proposed development would have no effects upon the historic core of Cambridge on as identified on figure F.1 of Appendix F to the Cambridge Local Plan.

323. The Bidwells LVIA, and my own landscape and visual review, have also concluded that the appeal proposals would have no effect upon any of the Strategic Views identified in Appendix F as being key locations from which the Cambridge skyline is experienced.
324. In my landscape and visual appraisal I have concluded that the proposal would increase the visibility of built form on the skyline, and would therefore result in less than significant adverse effects upon the landscape receptor of the Cambridge Skyline. However, I have also concluded that in design terms the proposals would provide a high quality addition to the skyline, providing varied rooflines, materials and mass, as well as landscaping, and also providing a positive marker of the new urban area and railway station.

4.8.7 Green Belt Effects

325. I have noted that the appeal site is not in the Green Belt, and that it is separated from the designation by the railway line.
326. I have assessed the potential effects of the development upon the openness of the Green Belt in the River Cam corridor. I have concluded that whilst it is true that the proposed development would make the existing settlement edge more visible from the Green Belt, this would only serve to more clearly define the existing urban edge, and would have no effect on the perception of openness of the designation itself, which would thus continue to provide the open setting to the city.

5.0 Response to Reason for Refusal 1

5.1 Introduction

327. Throughout my proof I have addressed each element of Reason for Refusal 1, and in this section I summarise these responses for ease of reference.

5.2 Reason for Refusal 1

5.2.1 “The proposals, due to their height and massing, create an abrupt, hard edge”

328. As I have noted in section 3.0 of my proof, the height and mass of the proposed buildings reduces towards the eastern edge of the appeal site. I have also noted in this section that the massing of the proposed development has been broken into discrete development blocks of varying heights, and that the design of the eastern edge of the proposals has a varied roofline, articulation of elevations, with landscaping both on the building and at the east of the appeal site.

329. I have also noted at section 3.0 of this proof that the appeal site is set within an urban context, and does not directly interface with either residential uses or the more rural areas along the River Cam Valley. There is therefore a transitional zone of existing urban and suburban uses around the appeal site which also ensures that the proposals do not create an “*abrupt, hard edge*”.

330. I have therefore concluded that the proposals do not represent a hard, abrupt edge but instead represent a high quality, well-designed edge which accords with the recommendations of the LCVIA.

5.2.2 “...That fails to enhance or preserve the character of the area and is not sympathetic to or in keeping with the site’s context in the wider landscape including the setting of the City”.

331. It is common ground between the parties that it is best practice in LVIA to assess increased visibility of built form in a rural or semi-rural context as causing negative landscape and visual

effects. By conforming with this best practice both the Bidwells LVIA and my own landscape and visual review have concluded that the proposed development would result in adverse and less than significant landscape effects for some landscape receptors around the appeal site, but also concluded that there would be beneficial effects for the appeal site and its immediate context.

332. I noted that in my experience the overall degree of landscape effects was therefore low for a development of this scale.
333. In this context I acknowledge that the proposals would not entirely “*preserve*” the character of the area. There would be some harm to landscape receptors, including the valued landscape of the Cam River Valley. **However, the degree of harm to those landscape receptors has been assessed by two independent LVIAs as being less than significant. In essence, the proposed development would be more visible than existing built form in these landscapes but it would not undermine the fundamental character of these areas.**
334. It is also important to note that **the beneficial effects of the proposals on the appeal site would enhance this part of the landscape.**
335. In addition, it should also be noted that any form of development on the appeal site, as envisaged in the evidence base for the NECAAP, is likely to increase the visibility of built form for surrounding landscape and visual receptors. **Applying best practice in LVIA, these possible alternatives would also not preserve the character of the area.**
336. Additionally, and as I noted at section 4.5 of this proof, any negative landscape and visual effects that result from the development should be considered alongside its design benefits as a well-designed marker in the landscape and townscape, defining the presence of a new, vibrant urban area and important transport interchange.

5.2.3 “The height and massing of the proposed development is not sympathetic to the scale, density and massing of the surrounding areas which comprise primarily low level and low-density development. Accordingly, the development will not result in a well-designed place that responds positively to the surrounding context...”

337. As I noted at section 4.0 of my proof, the reference to “*low level development*” seems to refer specifically to housing at Discovery Way and also the mixed-use development on Fen Road.
338. As I state at the conclusions to my visual assessment, ultimately, the level of development which is *sympathetic* to these surrounding uses can only be tested by detailed landscape and visual assessment. Both the Bidwells LVIA and my own review are based upon a detailed analysis of potential landscape and visual effects, using verifiable photomontages, and therefore both of these assessments provide the necessary tools to determine whether the proposed development is sympathetic to its context.
339. Importantly, it was the conclusion of the Bidwells LVIA, and my own assessment, that the visual effects of the proposals upon these areas would be at most moderate and less than significant. Built form would become more visible in these views, but it would be seen in the context of existing built form, and would not occupy a dominant proportion of the views.
340. Similarly, in my landscape review (and the LVIA prepared by Bidwells), the effects on Fen Road and the Chesterton Residential areas as landscape receptors would also be less than significant; whilst the proposed buildings would be more visible in these areas, they would not fundamentally change the character of these areas.
341. Using detailed assessment, both Bidwells and myself have therefore concluded that the proposed development is *sympathetic* to the scale and massing of these surrounding uses.
342. It is also worth noting in this context that the LCVIA also recognised that the only way to test appropriate built forms on the appeal site is to analyse key views, and to assess the level of change that would result in these views. It was on this basis that the LCVIA concluded that the appeal site could accommodate medium to high buildings.

5.2.4 “...Considered to have an overbearing presence on the existing development to the east of the development on Fen Road and to the west of the development particularly on Discovery Way”

343. This issue was addressed in relation to my assessment of visual effects for representative viewpoints E5 (at Discovery Way) and E6 (Fen Road). Importantly, **both the Bidwells LVIA and my own review have concluded that the visual effects upon viewers at both of these viewpoints would be moderate or moderate/minor and therefore less than significant.**

344. I noted in section 4.0 that the magnitude of visual effects was reduced for visual receptors in both of these areas for three main reasons: firstly because the appeal proposals would be viewed in the context of existing, extensive built form in the foreground of views; secondly because there is sufficient distance between the receptors and the proposed new buildings to allow perspective to reduce the perceived scale of the buildings; and thirdly because the height and mass of these buildings seen from these perspectives is not excessive in any case, with mass being broken up into different buildings of varying height and with set backs in the elevations providing further visual interest.

345. I concluded that there is a considerable difference between a proposed building that is clearly visible and one which is “*overbearing*”. Both the Bidwells LVIA and my own conclude that the development would be clearly visible in views, but this visual effect would be of medium magnitude and therefore less than significant.

5.2.5 “Overall, the proposed development is not considered to result in high quality development that delivers a well- designed place contributing positively to its surroundings”.

346. I have acknowledged within my landscape and visual review that the proposed development would result in some adverse landscape and visual effects, due to the increased prominence of built form. However, importantly the appeal proposals would not be of such height and mass that the effects are unacceptably overbearing or widespread in the surrounding townscape and landscape; the overall assessment of landscape effects for surround landscape receptors, in both the Bidwells LVIA and my own review, has concluded that there would be no significant effects upon those landscapes.

347. I have also noted at section 3.0 of my proof that the proposed masterplan, and building and landscape designs, would create a high quality mixed-use scheme for Cambridge, with vibrant and active public realm. The masterplan would provide a coherent and distinctive sense of place within an area that is currently dominated by car parking and waste ground. These objectives are precisely what Policy SS/4 and the Townscape Strategy set out to achieve.
348. It is for this reason that I have concluded that the proposals would result in positive landscape effects for the appeal site and its immediate context.
349. At section 4.5 of my proof I also note that the height and mass of the proposals, combined with the quality of the design of the elevations, would also serve as a positive marker, improving legibility by signposting the station and the new urban area. This important function of taller buildings, particularly near to transport interchanges, is recognised in the Tall Buildings and the Skyline guidance (Appendix F to the Local Plan).

5.2.6 “The proposals result in harm to the surrounding landscape and Green Belt, particularly on the eastern edge of the site, and to the urban area and its relationship with the wider North East Cambridge Area, the City skyline and the landscape beyond”

350. As I have noted above, it is common ground that it is best practice to assess increased visibility of built form in a rural or semi-rural landscape as causing landscape and visual harm, and by applying this best practice both the Bidwells LVIA and my own landscape and visual review have concluded that the proposals would cause less than significant harm to some surrounding landscape receptors.
351. At section 4.0 of my proof I carried out a review of the potential effects of the proposed development upon the openness of the Green Belt.
352. I have noted that the appeal site is not in the Green Belt, and that it is separated from the designation by the railway line.
353. I have concluded that whilst it is true that the proposed development would make the existing settlement edge more visible from the Green Belt, this would only serve to more clearly define

the existing urban edge, and would have no effect on the perception of openness of the designation itself, which would thus continue to provide the open setting to the city.

354. With regards to effects on the City Skyline, I have noted that the proposals would have no direct effects upon the historic centre of Cambridge, as defined in Appendix F to the Local Plan, nor would it affect any of the strategic views identified in Appendix F.
355. In my landscape and visual appraisal I have concluded that the proposal would increase the visibility of built form on the skyline, and would therefore result in less than significant adverse effects upon the landscape receptor of the Cambridge Skyline. However, the high quality of the design terms the proposals would provide a positive addition to the skyline, whilst also providing marker of the new urban area and railway station.

5.2.7 Policy HQ/1

356. Policy HQ/1 requires that all new development proposals must be of high quality design “*with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context*”. Clause HQ/1a also states that development proposals must “*preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape*”. Other aspects of this policy are addressed by Mr Ludewig and Mr Myers.
357. In section 3.0 of this proof I noted that the proposed masterplan would provide a coherent and distinctive sense of place within an area that is currently dominated by car parking and waste ground.
358. The height and massing of the development has been carefully conceived, with heights reducing towards the eastern edge and roof heights also varying considerably along both the western and eastern edges. This variation in height helps to provide visual interest, and further visual interest and distinctiveness is provided by a range of high quality materials, as well as articulation in the elevations to provide patterns of light and shade. Landscaping has also been included along the eastern edge, both on the elevations of some of the buildings but also within a landscaped margin along the east of the site.

359. Within the development the landscaped spaces, which as Mr Myers explains exceed the quantum required in the Council's Open Space SPD standards, provide opportunities for informal and formal recreation, food growing, as well as an enhancement in biodiversity.
360. It is for these reasons that I have concluded that the proposals would provide beneficial landscape effects upon the character of the site and its immediate context.
361. The proposals would also be visible from adjacent landscape and townscape character areas, and I have acknowledged within my assessment, (and it is also acknowledged in Bidwells LVIA), that, in accordance with best practice, this would result in some less than significant adverse effects on landscape character as well as some localised significant adverse visual effects. The proposals would not, therefore, completely preserve local character.
362. Importantly, and as I have noted in my landscape and visual review, it is probable that any form of mixed use development upon the appeal site as envisaged by policy SS/4 and the NECAAP evidence base – would also result in increased prominence in built form in surrounding landscapes, and consequently it is possible that no development could fully accord with policy HQ/1.
363. Furthermore, I have also noted that in design terms the appeal proposals would provide a positive marker in the landscape, defining the location of the railway station and a new, vibrant mixed-use area with high quality, distinctive buildings. It is common ground (LSoCG paragraph 23) that whilst it is best practice to assess increased prominence of built form as causing negative effects on rural and semi-rural landscapes, it is also possible that a well-designed, more prominent building can result in positive landscape and visual effects.
364. I have therefore concluded that the appeal proposals **largely accord with Policy HQ/1 and HQ/1a**, but that the proposals – like any development of any scale on the appeal site – would not entirely preserve character of the local area.

5.2.8 Policy NH/2

365. Policy NH/2 states that “*development will only be permitted where it respects and retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which is it located*”.
366. Both the Bidwells LVIA and my own landscape and visual review have concluded that the appeal proposals would result in beneficial effects for the landscape of the appeal site and its immediate context, and that there would be no significant adverse effects upon any landscape receptors in and around the site. These assessments are therefore clearly indicating that the proposals both *respect and retain* character, and *enhance* character.
367. Certainly the overall character of the Bedfordshire and Cambridge Clayland would be conserved: the proposals would result in the development of a brownfield site which is allocated for mixed use development, with minimal harm to surrounding areas.
368. Both the Bidwells assessment and my own review acknowledge that the proposals would result in some adverse landscape and visual effects, due to the increased prominence of built form. This includes moderate/minor adverse effects upon the Cam River valley, which I have concluded to be a valued a landscape in the sense of paragraph 174(a) of the NPPF.
369. In this context it is important to note that the development of any vibrant, mixed-use development on the appeal site would result in increased visibility of built form in the Cam River valley: the LCVIA for example envisaged that changes to the skyline would occur, and considered that medium to high development on the appeal site would be appropriate. I have also noted that in the Officer’s reports for the Novotel and One Cambridge Square it was recognised that the proposals would be visible from the more rural landscapes to the east, but it was concluded that this would have an acceptable effect on landscape character.
370. It is also essential to recognise that the proposals provide a high quality design which, very appropriately, marks the position of the railway station and a new vibrant mixed-use area. The proposals provide sufficient prominence of the buildings to provide legibility and identity, but

also ensure that the proposed buildings do not dominate or appear overbearing in surrounding landscapes and views.

371. I have therefore concluded that the proposals certainly respect local character and that they would result in localised enhancement of character; however they would not entirely retain the character of the locality. The proposals would therefore **largely accord with the requirements of policy NH/2.**

5.2.9 Policy NH/6

372. Policy NH/6 deals with Green Infrastructure, and this will be addressed in the evidence of Robert Myers.

5.2.10 Policy NH/8

373. Policy NH/8 (1) states that *“Any development proposals within the Green Belt must be located and designed so that they do not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt”*. This part of the policy does not apply to the appeal proposals as the appeal site is located outside of the Green Belt.
374. But NH/8(3) states that *“Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality”*.
375. In my review of the design of the proposals I have concluded that the design of the eastern edge would be visually interesting, distinctive and attractive design.
376. In my Green Belt review I have concluded that whilst the proposed buildings would be visible from the Green Belt they would have no effect on the perception of openness of the designation itself, which would thus continue to provide the open setting to the city.
377. **Therefore, I have concluded that the proposed development accords with policy NH/8.**

5.2.11 Policy SS/4

378. As I have noted, Policy SS/4 allocates the appeal site for mixed-use development; it envisages that the site will become “*a revitalised, employment focused area centred on a new transport interchange*”. I have concluded that that is exactly what the proposed development would deliver.
379. It is also common ground that the proposed uses are acceptable, and that they comply with the uses specified in Policy SS/4.
380. It is also agreed that there is no adopted AAP, and that little weight can be attached to the existing AAP evidence base, which contains conflicting advice.
381. I have noted that there is only one part of the NECAAP evidence base – the LCVIA – which considers the effects of different scales of development upon landscape and visual receptors in order to inform the potential height and mass of development. This study concluded that the appeal site could accommodate medium to high buildings, and the proposals comply with these suggested heights.
382. Other aspects of this policy will be addressed by Mike Derbyshire, but **from a landscape and visual perspective I have concluded that the appeal proposals comply with Policy SS/4.**

5.2.12 Policy 60

383. As Mr Derbyshire explains, this does not form part of the development plan matrix as it is a policy within Cambridge City Council’s adopted plan, not that of South Cambridgeshire. It is, however, a material consideration for the determination of the appeal.
384. Policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan provides a series of criteria against which any tall building (that is a building that breaks the skyline) will be assessed.

385. As a starting point, I have noted that the appeal proposals would have no effect upon Cambridge's historic centre, nor would the proposals have any effect on the Strategic Views identified in Appendix F.
386. Both the Bidwells LVIA and my own review have assessed the potential effects of the proposed development with the aid of accurate visual representations and detailed landscape and visual appraisal; **the proposals thus accord with Policy 60 part a.**
387. In terms of part c of Policy 60, I have concluded at section 3.0 to this proof that the scale and massing of the proposed development strikes an effective balance between marking an important new community and transport interchange, whilst avoiding being either overbearing or dominant. I have also concluded that the proposals are of high design quality, and would provide a positive addition to the Cambridge skyline. **The proposals therefore accord with this part of Policy 60 part c.**
388. However, part c also states that proposals should demonstrate that "*there is no adverse impact*" as a result of the proposals. As I have noted, it is common ground between the parties that it is best practice in LVIA to assess any building that results in increased visibility of built form within a rural or semi-rural context as causing negative landscape and visual effects, and it is notable that the draft AAPs, the LCVIA and the Townscape Strategy all envisage forms of development which would result in increased visibility of built form in the more rural landscapes of the Cam River valley. In accordance with best practice, both the Bidwells LVIA and my own landscape and review have concluded that the proposals would result in some adverse landscape and visual effects, due to the increased prominence of built form on the skyline, and **consequently the proposals do not comply with this part of Policy 60 part c. However, it is difficult to conceive of any form of vibrant, mixed-use hub in this location that would not result in at least some adverse effects on the skyline in this location, if best practice in LVIA is applied.** In my view it is also important to consider the design quality of the proposals along any landscape and visual harm that they may cause, and in my assessment the proposals **would result in a positive addition to the skyline.**
389. **I have therefore concluded that the proposals largely comply with Policy 60, but do not fully comply with Policy 60 part c.**

6.0 Response to Concerns Raised by Cambridge Past Present and Future (CPP&F)

6.1 Introduction

390. In this section of my proof I respond to some of the concerns raised by CPP&F that are of particular relevance to my evidence. Based upon CPP&F's Statement of Case I have noted the following concerns:

- Massing of proposed buildings along the eastern edge of the appeal site, and the resultant effects on the River Cam corridor: see for example second response, see Appendix A, response of 5th April 2022: *"we remain concerned about the mass and bulk of buildings (in particular buildings S6 and S7 which are very similar), especially when viewed from the River Cam towpath and Fen Ditton Meadows. As well as articulation of the elevations, there needs to articulation of the roofscapes"* and also response of 2nd August 2022 which notes that *"object to the height, scale and design of the proposal as it will create a giant wall of development"*.
- Non-compliance with emerging AAP, see response of 2nd August 2022: *"Although only guidance at this stage, the Area Action Plan indicates the building heights for this area to be 4-6 storeys typically (13m-19m), maximum landmark building of 7 storeys (22m). Heights are assumed at 3m per floor with 4m at ground floor and are inclusive of plant. (Figure 21). Figure 21 indicates a landmark building at the corner of building S9 at the entrance to the site. The proposed buildings S6 and S7 are 22.1m high and therefore exceed emerging Area Action Plan policy"*.
- Concerns regarding potential effects on representative viewpoints 6, 7b, 8, 9, 15, and 20 (see response of 7th December 2022).

6.2 Massing of Buildings along the Eastern Edge of the Appeal Site

391. I have noted in my review of the proposed design (see section 3.0 of this proof) that the proposed buildings along the eastern edge of the appeal site are all significantly lower than the Novotel, and that there is also a significant degree of variation in height between buildings (the Novotel is a maximum of 25.8m high compared with a maximum of 22.1m for S6 and S7, with

the majority of the mobility hub reaching a height of 15.8m). Furthermore, there is then variation in height within buildings: the roofline of S6 and S7, for example, is divided into fingers, with roof heights on fingers being around one metre higher than for the spaces between fingers, and there is then the parapets at 13.4 and 17.6m in height. The design has therefore taken great care to provide articulation in the roofscape.

392. The proposed design has also reduced the massing of buildings on the eastern edge in a number of ways: firstly, the mobility hub, S6 and S7 are in separate buildings, with clear gaps between these buildings; secondly, there would be a number of articulations within the eastern elevations of S6 and S7, including both the parapets as well as the set-backs between the fingers, which would create differentiation through light and shade; thirdly there would be the clear differences in materials between the Novotel, mobility hub and S6 and S7, with even the fingers of S6 and S7 having different materiality; finally there would be the landscape treatment of the eastern elevations of S6 and S7, with climbers cladding the elevations of the set-back sections and tree planting at the east of the site filtering views of built form in the long term.
393. The effect of these various design elements is seen on, for example, the photomontage for viewpoint 8, from Ditton Meadows (see **drawing CN-031 in my Appendices**). The difference in height between the Novotel, mobility hub and S6 and S7 can clearly be seen, and it is also clear that there are taller buildings further from the eastern edge. The articulations in the eastern elevations create clear patterns of light and shade, as do the gaps between each building. The windows and differing materials create diversity and visual interest in the elevations, and the climbers on the set back sections on S6 and S7 provide further contrast between the fingers and the intervening spaces on these buildings.
394. Far from being a “*giant wall of development*” this is a diverse, distinctive and well-designed edge to a new urban area.
395. For further analysis of the visual effects of these design elements, please refer to section 6.4, below.

6.3 Non-compliance with the emerging AAP

396. It is common ground between the parties that the AAP is at an early stage and therefore carries little weight.
397. I have also noted that there are contradicting conclusions in the NECAAP evidence base; for example, the Townscape Strategy states that it relies on the LCVIA to advise on the landscape and visual effects of different building heights, and yet it advocates very different building heights to those recommended in the LCVIA. Similarly, the regulation 18 and regulation 19 AAPs advocate different building heights, and yet both are supported by the LCVIA document, which is the only document that provides a robust analysis of the potential landscape and visual effects of different building height options.
398. It is important to note, however, that all of the AAP documents, and Policy SS/4, envisage the creation of a vibrant, mixed-use urban environment on the appeal site. As a result of this, and as illustrated in the model views in my Appendices, all of the AAP documents envisage that the visibility of built form in in the surrounding townscape and landscape would increase.
399. It is also notable that the proposed building heights accord with the recommendations of the LCVIA, as illustrated on Plate I, at section 2.0 of this proof.

6.4 Resultant Landscape and Visual Effects, Concerns regarding effects on Specific Viewpoints

400. The CPP&F statement of case notes at page 12 that **viewpoint 6** “*demonstrates how visible the eastern elevations are*”, and that it would appear as a “*wall of development*” Reference to the photograph of the existing view at **page 41 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES** shows that the existing urban area of Cambridge is already glimpsed between branches from this perspective, and whilst the photomontage of the proposed development, (**on page 42 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES**) does show increased visibility of built form it is both seen in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square buildings, and also heavily filtered by branches even in the winter months. The articulation of the elevations and the differences in materials also create visual interest in the eastern elevation of the proposed new buildings which further to reduce the perception of built mass in this view.

401. The proposed development would therefore emphasise the presence of the Cambridge urban area within this view by adding new built form, but the design of the eastern edge of the development, and the filtering effect of intervening vegetation, would ensure that this would not appear as a wall of development from this perspective.
402. For **viewpoint 7b**, at Baits Bite Lock, the CPP&F express concerns that *“the bulk of the development will impact views... even from some distance”*. However, the model view for viewpoint 7b, on **page 51 of Appendix 12.4 of the ES**, when read together with the existing view on page 49, actually demonstrates that there would be no view of the development from this viewpoint. It was for this reasons that this viewpoint was scoped out from the Bidwells LVIA in agreement with the Council’s landscape architect (see for example table 12.1 of the ES, page 308, states that viewpoint 7b has been *“excluded as the site is not visible”*).
403. Concerns are expressed regarding the visibility of the proposals at **viewpoints 8 and 9**, and it is also noted that the Bidwells LVIA has assessed visual receptors at viewpoint 8 as experiencing major adverse impacts.
404. It is correct that built form would become more visible in both of these views, and given the largely rural/semi-rural context of this view it is common ground that, as matter of best practice in LVIA, this should be assessed as causing negative visual effects. However, it is important to note that, as the visualisations at drawings **CN032 to CN-034 of my Appendices show for viewpoint 8**, and **drawings CN-037 to CN-039 show for viewpoint 9**, the AAPs and the LCVIA also envisage change within these views.
405. As I have noted, it is also important to consider the design benefits of the proposals alongside the adverse visual effects assessed in both the Bidwells LVIA and my own landscape and visual review. The appeal site is the allocated location for a vibrant new mixed-use area, and the tall buildings guidance within Appendix F of the Cambridge Local Plan recognises that taller structures *“have the potential to act as positive landmarks that aid legibility and make it easier for people to orientate themselves around the city”*, particularly at important transport interchanges or in an important new mixed use area, and even more particularly when that location does not affect the historic centre of the city.

406. It is in this context that the effects of the proposed development upon viewpoints 8 and 9 should be viewed in a different light. The proposals are more visible, not excessively so, but enough to mark the location of this important new urban area. Equally importantly, the design of the eastern edge is well articulated, diverse and distinctive (as noted above); it is the quality of this design that indicates clearly that this is a positive addition to the Cambridge skyline.
407. In relation to **viewpoint 15**, it is noted that the development would be “*clearly visible*” and would appear as a “*single wall of development*”. Reference to the existing view in **drawing CN-040 in my Appendices** illustrates that the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square developments are visible on the skyline in this view, and the developments along Fen Road are also visible, albeit that these buildings will be largely screened by foliage in the summer months. The **photomontage in drawing CN-041** shows that buildings S6 and S7 would also be visible in this view, although at a lower level and occupying a lesser proportion of the view than the hotel and One Cambridge Square, partly due to design but also due to perspective from this angle. Views of the proposed buildings would be filtered by branches in the winter months, and partially screened by foliage in the summer months. It is for these reasons that both the Bidwells LVIA and my own assessment have concluded that the proposals would result in only a low magnitude of change in this view.
408. For viewpoint 20 it is noted that “*the development is very visible*” and that “*the additions of the mobility hub, blocks S6 and S7 will dominate*”. The existing view from viewpoint 20 (a screen shot from Google Earth for safety reasons) is shown on drawing **CN-015 of my Appendices**, and this illustrates that although the existing hotel is visible in this view (and now One Cambridge Square), at over 1.25km from the viewpoint it occupies only a small proportion of the view, and is also seen within the context of other developments on Fen Road. The model view provided on **page 139 of Appendix 12.4 to the ES** illustrates that whilst the proposed mobility hub and buildings S6 and S7 would be visible, they would appear as structures with a varied roofline and materials, with articulated elevations. The outline application elements (residential and commercial) would be almost entirely screened by existing trees to the west of Fen Road. Far from being a dominant feature in the view, the proposed development would therefore occupy a small proportion of the view, and would be viewed in the context of the existing Novotel and One Cambridge Square, as well as existing development on Fen Road.

409. It is also important to note that this is a view from a busy dual carriageway, and thus provides only transitional, oblique views of the proposed development. This viewpoint is therefore of low sensitivity, and when combined with the low magnitude of visual change this results in only slight visual effects.

7.0 Summary and Conclusions

7.1 Planning Context

410. The appeal site is not within or adjacent to any national or local landscape designations, nor does it contain any landscape-related designations.
411. The Green Belt is just over 40 metres to the east of the appeal site at its closest point, and the site is separated from this designation by the existing railway line. Fen Ditton and Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Areas are approximately 500 metres from the appeal site boundary.
412. The appeal site is within an area which is allocated for mixed-use development in the adopted Local Plan. Policy SS/4 states that the allocation will *“enable the creation of a revitalised, employment-focused area centred on a new transport interchange”*.
413. Accordingly, the various documents which form the evidence base for the NECAAP recognise that the character of the locality of the appeal site will change. The LCVIA, Townscape Strategy, and the draft AAPs all envisage the introduction of increased height and mass on the appeal site and the wider NECAAP.
414. The LCVIA – the only document that addresses the potential landscape and visual effects of built development within the NECAAP – recognises that development of the NECAAP area will result in changes to the skyline and that it is therefore important that the development is *“of high architectural quality and sensitive design”*.
415. The LCVIA also concludes that the appeal site could accommodate medium to high buildings.
416. The Townscape Strategy is partly based upon the findings of the LCVIA, but provides different recommendations on building heights in the locality of the appeal site. It recommends that proposed building heights step down towards the River Cam corridor and the residential areas, but it also states that development of the appeal site and its context should provide *“an intense and vibrant urban environment”* which should also *“celebrate the arrival in the NEC area”*. It

recognises that tall buildings can be helpful in providing landmark buildings can enhance legibility and distinctiveness.

417. The AAP is not agreed or adopted, and Mr Derbyshire concludes that very little weight can be attached to it.
418. Appendix F of the Local Plan provides guidance on Tall Buildings and the Skyline. It recognises that tall buildings have the potential to act as positive landmarks that aid legibility, particularly at local nodes, key city junctions or in and around principal transport junctions. This guidance also notes that the materials used in tall buildings could provide a positive statement by contrasting with materials used in the site's context. The guidance also recommends careful attention to the articulation of the elevations, with creation of shadow lines to provide relief and interest.
419. The Officer's reports for the Novotel and One Cambridge Square both acknowledged that the proposed buildings were higher than adjacent buildings. However, in both cases the landscape officer did not object to the proposals, and Officers concluded that the proposals would be appropriate as they established a "*new urban status*" and resulted in limited visual harm to surrounding viewpoints.

7.2 Landscape Design Review of the Proposed Development

420. The design for the appeal proposals has resulted from six years of work by an experienced, multi-disciplinary design team, as well as from consultation with the Council, public and a series of design reviews. The design has changed considerably as result of the assessment and consultation process.
421. It is common ground between the parties that the proposed uses accord with Policy SS/4.
422. The proposed masterplan, and building and landscape designs, would provide a high quality mixed-use scheme for Cambridge, with vibrant and active public realm. The masterplan would provide a coherent and distinctive sense of place within an area that is currently dominated by car parking and waste ground.

423. The height and massing of the development has been carefully conceived, with heights reducing towards the eastern edge and roof heights also varying considerably along both the western and eastern edges. Varying roof heights, diverse and high quality materials, careful articulation in the elevations and landscaping both on the elevations and also within a landscaped margin at the eastern edge of the site would together provide an attractive and distinctive design for the proposed development.

7.3 Potential Landscape and Visual Effects of the Appeal Proposals

7.3.1 Predicted Landscape Effects

424. Both my own review and the Bidwells LVIA have concluded that the appeal proposals would not result in any significant landscape effects, and the effects on the landscape of the appeal site itself would be beneficial in nature.

425. There would be moderate to moderate/minor negative landscape effects for the Cam River Corridor, the residential area at Chesterton, the mixed-use area at Fen Road and for the Cambridge Skyline in the locality of the site.

426. In my experience, for a development of this scale, these assessments of landscape effect are relatively low.

7.3.2 Predicted Visual Effects

427. I have concluded that the significant visual effects would be limited to two representative viewpoints on higher ground north and east of Fen Ditton. For both of these views, built form is already visible within the view and consequently the proposals are not introducing a new element, but changing the composition of existing elements within views. For all other representative viewpoints visual effects would be moderate or less.

428. In my experience, given the scale of the appeal proposals, this degree of visual effect is at the lower end of the scale.

7.3.3 Consideration of SS/4 and the NECAAP Evidence Base

429. The landscape and visual assessments in the Bidwells LVIA and in my own independent review have been made against the baseline of the existing site condition. But, as section 2.0 of this proof identifies, the appeal site is allocated under Policy SS/4 for a similar type of development to that which is proposed. Furthermore, whilst the NECAAP evidence base presents contradictory approaches to the suggested heights of new buildings on the appeal site, all documents indicate that the appeal site will be developed and building heights will increase.
430. I have therefore concluded that it is important to note that the landscape of the appeal site may change, even in the absence of the appeal proposals, and that the landscape and visual effects of the proposals should be considered in the context of this changing landscape.

7.3.4 Design Considerations

431. It is common ground that it is best practice in LVIA to assess increased prominence of built form in a rural or semi-rural context as causing negative landscape and visual effects. However, it is also common ground that a well-designed building can result in positive landscape and visual effects. The Tall Buildings and the Skyline guidance also makes it clear that tall buildings can have a beneficial effect, particularly when they mark an important location, such as a transport interchange.
432. I have noted that although the proposed development would result in landscape and visual harm when assessed through a standard LVIA approach, it would also create a high quality, visually diverse and distinctive urban edge that would perform the important urban design role of marking an important transport interchange as well as a new urban area and transport hub.
433. The design quality of the proposals thus provides design benefits which should be considered alongside the harm assessed in the LVIA and in my review.

7.3.5 Cambridge Skyline

434. I have concluded that the proposed development would have no effects upon the historic core of Cambridge as identified on figure F.1 of Appendix F to the Cambridge Local Plan.

435. The Bidwells LVIA, and my own landscape and visual review, have concluded that the appeal proposals would have no effect upon any of the Strategic Views identified in Appendix F as being key locations from which the Cambridge skyline is experienced.
436. In my landscape and visual appraisal I have concluded that the proposal would increase the visibility of built form on the skyline, and would therefore result in less than significant adverse effects upon the landscape receptor of the Cambridge Skyline. However, I have also concluded that in design terms the proposals would provide a high quality addition to the skyline, providing varied rooflines, materials and mass, as well as landscaping, and also providing a positive marker of the new urban area and railway station.

7.3.6 Green Belt Effects

437. I have noted that the appeal site is not in the Green Belt, and that it is separated from the designation by the railway line.
438. I have assessed the potential effects of the development upon the openness of the Green Belt in the River Cam corridor. I have concluded that whilst it is true that the proposed development would make the existing settlement edge more visible from the Green Belt, this would only serve to more clearly define the existing urban edge, and would have no effect on the perception of openness of the designation itself, which would thus continue to provide the open setting to the city.

7.4 Response to Reason for Refusal 1.

439. I have concluded that the proposals do not represent a hard, abrupt edge but instead represent a high quality, well-designed edge which accords with the recommendations of the LCVIA.
440. I have acknowledged that the proposals would not entirely “*preserve*” the character of the area. There would be some harm to landscape receptors, including the valued landscape of the Cam River Valley. However, the degree of harm to those landscape receptors has been assessed by two independent LVIAs as being less than significant. In essence, the proposed development would be more visible than existing built form in these landscapes but it would not undermine the fundamental character of these areas.

441. It is also important to note that the beneficial effects of the proposals on the appeal site would *enhance* this part of the landscape.
442. In addition, it should also be noted that any form of development on the appeal site, as envisaged in the evidence base for the NECAAP, is likely to increase the visibility of built form for surrounding landscape and visual receptors. Applying best practice in LVIA, these possible alternatives would also not preserve the character of the area.
443. Additionally, and as I noted at section 4.5 of this proof, any negative landscape and visual effects that result from the development should be considered alongside its design benefits as a well-designed marker in the landscape and townscape, defining the presence of a new, vibrant urban area and important transport interchange.
444. I have concluded that whilst it is true that the proposed development would make the existing settlement edge more visible from the Green Belt, this would only serve to more clearly define the existing urban edge, and would have no effect on the perception of openness of the designation itself, which would thus continue to provide the open setting to the city.

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