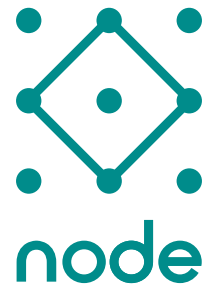


APP/E3715/W/22/3306652



Town and Country Planning Act

Appeal Ref: **APP/W0530/W/23/3315611**

LPA Application No: 22/02772/OUT

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

**Land to the north of Cambridge North Station,
Cambridge, CB4 0AE**

Landscape Proof of Evidence

Nigel Wakefield BA (Hons) BTP/DIP LA DIP/MA UD MRTPI

May 2023

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

Personal Details

- 1.1 My name is Nigel Wakefield. I am owner/ managing director of Node a landscape, urban design and heritage practice which is accredited by the Landscape Institute. I am a qualified planner landscape architect and urban designer and a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. My qualifications are as follows: BA (Hons) BTP, Dip LA, MA UD, MRTPI
- 1.2 I have over 30 years' experience of providing urban design, masterplanning and landscape services on an extensive range of residential and mixed-use developments across the UK. This has included production of masterplans, design and access statements, design codes, landscape/townscape visual impact assessments, and landscape and public realm design. I own and run an accredited Landscape Institute practice employing landscape architects, urban designers, and heritage consultants. I am a Built Environment Expert (BEE) for CABE/Design Council UK and sit on several design review panels. I am an experienced design and landscape witness.
- 1.3 Node acts as a consultant to public and private sector clients including local authorities, developers, house builders, universities, and landowners.

1.4 Scope of Evidence

- 1.5 Proposal: A hybrid planning application for:
 - 1.6 a) An outline application (all matters reserved apart from access and landscaping) for the construction of: three new residential blocks providing for up to 425 residential units and providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)); and two commercial buildings for Use Classes E(g) i (offices), ii (research and development) providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)), together with the construction of basements for parking and building services, car and cycle parking and infrastructure works.
 - 1.7 b) A full application for the construction of three commercial buildings for Use Classes E(g) i (offices) ii (research and development), providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)) with associated car and cycle parking, the construction of a multi storey car and cycle park building, together with the construction of basements for parking and building services, car and cycle parking and associated landscaping, infrastructure works and demolition of existing structures.

- 1.8 The application had been recommended for refusal by officers on a number of grounds, following an appeal against non-determination. The application was taken to the Councils' Joint Development Control Committee on 22nd March 2023 with a 'minded to' refuse recommendation which was unanimously endorsed by the Committee members. These reasons for refusal included visual and landscape impact and design.
- 1.9 **Reasons for Refusal:**
- 1.10 **Visual and landscape impact (Refusal Reason No 1)**
- 1.11 Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan provides 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) provides that proposals must preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape. Sub-paragraph (b) provides that proposals must conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting. Sub-paragraph (d) provides that proposals must be compatible with their location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, and other matters in relation to the surrounding area.
- 1.12 Policy NH/2 provides 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.
- 1.13 Policy NH/6 provides that the Council will aim to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district. Proposals that cause loss or harm to this network will not be permitted unless the need for and benefits of the development demonstrably and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the district's green infrastructure network.
- 1.14 Policy NH/8 provides that development on edges of settlements which are surrounded by Green Belts must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality.
- 1.15 Policy SS/4 sub-paragraph 4a provides that all proposals should take into account existing site conditions and environmental and safety constraints.
- 1.16 Policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) provides a framework for assessing any proposal for a structure that breaks the existing skyline and/or is significantly taller than the surrounding built form and requires proposals to demonstrate how they fit within the existing landscape, townscape, and historic environment.

- 1.17 The NPPF, at Paragraph 130(c), seeks to ensure developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- 1.18 The eastern edge of the site is particularly sensitive due to its long views across the Green Belt and over the River Cam 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.
- 1.19 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.
- 1.20 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.
- 1.21 **Design (Refusal Reason No 3)**
- 1.22 The design reason for refusal includes a number of landscape design, public realm and open space reasons for refusal as summarized below:
- 1.23 Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan provides 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 c provides that proposals must include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness. Sub- paragraph e provides that proposals must deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares, and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces. Sub-paragraph i provides for safe, secure, convenient, and accessible provision

for cycle parking and storage within the development. Sub-paragraph l provides that proposals mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on development through location, form, orientation, materials and design of buildings and spaces. Sub-paragraph m provides that proposals include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage, and climate change mitigation.

- 1.24 Policy SC/7 provides that all housing developments will contribute towards Outdoor Playing Space and Informal Open Space to meet the need generated by the development in accordance with minimum standards including 0.4ha. per 1,000 people.
- 1.25 The NPPF, at Paragraph 130(d) seeks to ensure that developments establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming, and distinctive places to live, work and visit.
- 1.26 The planning application fails to provide high quality public open space or a public realm which would result in a well-designed coherent sense of place that contributes to local distinctiveness. The proposals fail to provide sufficient formal children's play space which is convenient for residents to use, clearly distinguished from the public realm and not bisected by vehicular routes.

Appointment

- 1.27 Node were appointed by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning in April 2023 to prepare a landscape proof of evidence in respect of the appeal against non-determination of the application.
- 1.28 My evidence addresses the visual and landscape putative reason for refusal alongside the landscape design and open space putative reason for refusal as set out above.
- 1.29 I am familiar with the site in question, having reviewed all relevant background information and undertaken field surveys in April 2023.
- 1.30 Fiona Bradley provides evidence on all planning matters, Christian Brady on heritage matters and Annemarie de Boom on urban design matters.
- 1.31 My evidence is structured as follows:
 - Chapter 2 – Policy Framework
 - Chapter 3 – The Proposed Site: Local Context and Character

- Chapter 4 – Planning History and Application
- Chapter 5 – Landscape Baseline Appraisal
- Chapter 6 – Appraisal of Landscape Effects
- Chapter 7 – Appraisal of Visual Effects
- Chapter 8 – Landscape Design and Open Space
- Chapter 9 – Summary and Conclusions

1.32 Supporting plans, background documents and visual assessments are included in a separate appendix, as follows:

- Appendix 1 - Historic Plans
- Appendix 2 - Landscape Character Appraisal 2003 Figures
- Appendix 3 - Bidwell LVIA Maps – Landscape Character Areas 2021
- Appendix 4 - NEC LVIA Development Scenarios – High/ Medium/ Low
- Appendix 5 - Node Viewpoint Locations
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- Appendix 8 - Arc of Views from Greenbelt/ Cam Valley/ South Cambridge CA
- Appendix 9 - Vu City Views – Viewpoint 8
- Appendix 10 - Landscape Assessment Methodology
- Appendix 11 - Viewpoint Assessments Comparison Tables

1.33 The landscape proof of evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

2.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (revised July 2021) is entitled 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.'. Paragraph 174 provides (so far as relevant):

Para 174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*

Paragraph 130 further provides (again so far as relevant):

130. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) 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);*

2.2 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations

indicate otherwise. The Development Plan in this instance consists of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. The relevant landscape and design policies from the Development Plan are set out below. In addition, the landscape reason for refusal makes reference to Policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018).

2.3 **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (Adopted) - Policies**

2.4 Policy HQ/1: Securing High Quality Design / Design Principles

2.5 Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character

2.6 Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure

2.7 Policy NH/8: Mitigating the Impact of Development In and Adjoining the Green Belt

2.8 Policy SC/7: Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments

2.9 Policy SS/4: Cambridge Northern Fringe East and Cambridge North railway station

2.10 The relevant policies are set out below with my underlining to emphasise key points in relation to this proposal with regard to landscape and visual impacts.

2.11 **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (Adopted)**

2.12 **Securing High Quality Design - Policy HQ/1 Design Principles**

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. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:

- a. Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;
- b. Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting;
- c. Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;
- d. Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;

- e. Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces;
- f. Achieve a permeable development with ease of movement and access for all users and abilities, with user friendly and conveniently accessible streets and other routes both within the development and linking with its surroundings and existing and proposed facilities and services, focusing on delivering attractive and safe opportunities for walking, cycling, public transport and, where appropriate, horse riding;
- g. Provide safe and convenient access for all users and abilities to public buildings and spaces, including those with limited mobility or those with other impairment such as of sight or hearing;
- h. Ensure that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues;
- i. Provide safe, secure, convenient and accessible provision for cycle parking and storage, facilities for waste management, recycling and collection in a manner that is appropriately integrated within the overall development;
- j. Provide a harmonious integrated mix of uses both within the site and with its surroundings that contributes to the creation of inclusive communities providing the facilities and services to meet the needs of the community;
- k. Ensure developments deliver flexibility that allows for future changes in needs and lifestyles, and adaptation to climate change;
- l. Mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on development through location, form, orientation, materials and design of buildings and spaces;
- m. Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation;
- n. Protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development that is overlooking, overbearing or results in a loss of daylight or development which would create unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust;

- o. Design-out crime and create an environment that is created for people that is and feels safe and has a strong community focus.

2.13 **Policy NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character**

2.14 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.

2.15 **Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure**

- 1) The Council will aim to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district. Proposals that cause loss or harm to this network will not be permitted unless the need for and benefits of the development demonstrably and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the district's green infrastructure network.
- 2) The Council will encourage proposals which: a. Reinforce, link, buffer and create new green infrastructure; and b. Promote, manage and interpret green infrastructure and enhance public enjoyment of it.
- 3) The Council will support proposals which deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and which deliver local green infrastructure.
- 4) All new developments will be required to contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network within the district. These contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs.

2.16 **Policy NH/8 Mitigating the Impact of Development in and Adjoining the Green Belt**

- 1) 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.

- 2) Where development is permitted, landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained, will be attached to any planning permission in order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.
- 3) Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality.

2.17 Policy SS/4: Cambridge Northern Fringe East and Cambridge North railway station

- 1) The Cambridge Northern Fringe East and Cambridge North railway station will enable the creation of a revitalised, employment focussed area centred on a new transport interchange.
- 2) The area, shown on the Policies Map, and illustrated in Figure 6, is allocated for high quality mixed-use development, primarily for employment within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 as well as a range of supporting uses, commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses (subject to acceptable environmental conditions).
- 3) The amount of development, site capacity, viability, time scales and phasing of development will be established through the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the site. The AAP will be developed jointly between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, and will involve close collaborative working with Cambridgeshire County Council, Anglian Water and other stakeholders in the area. The final boundaries of land that the joint AAP will consider will be determined by the AAP.
- 4) All proposals should:
 - a) Take into account existing site conditions and environmental and safety constraints;
 - b) Demonstrate that environmental and health impacts (including odour) from the Cambridge Water Recycling Centre can be acceptably mitigated for occupants.
 - c) Ensure that appropriate access and linkages, including for pedestrians and cyclists, are planned for in a high quality and comprehensive manner.
 - d) Recognise the existing local nature reserve at Bramblefields, the protected hedgerow on the east side of Cowley Road which is a City Wildlife Site, the First

- Public Drain, which is a wildlife corridor, and other ecological features, and where development is proposed provide for appropriate ecological mitigation, compensation, and enhancement measures either on-or off-site; and
- e) Ensure that the development would not compromise opportunities for the redevelopment of the wider area.

2.18 **Cambridge Local Plan (October 2018)**

2.19 **Policy 60: Tall buildings and the skyline in Cambridge**

2.20 Any proposal for a structure that breaks the existing skyline and/or is significantly taller than the surrounding built form will be considered against the following criteria:

- a. location, setting and context – applicants should demonstrate through visual assessment or appraisal with supporting accurate visual representations, how the proposals fit within the existing landscape and townscape;
- e. public realm – applicants should show how the space around tall buildings will be detailed, including how a human scale is created at street level.

Further advice on tall buildings and the skyline and the requirements of the assessment criteria for proposals is set out in Appendix F and further guidance is contained in 'The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)' published by Historic England in December 2017 (or its successor document).

- 2.21 The policy framework puts great importance of considering landscape and visual impacts on surrounding Greenbelt, conservation, and landscape character areas. In particular as highlighted above considering height, mass, scale, and impact on skyline are all important considerations when assessing a planning application.
- 2.22 In addition, ensuring a thorough understanding of impacts through a landscape led approach which considers the impact of alternative development scenarios to inform the height of buildings is important. The LVIA appears to have tested one development scenario and in my view underestimates the landscape and visual harm.
- 2.23 Consideration of this and how proposals conflict with the above policies is explored in more detail in Chapter 6 of this proof of evidence.

2.24 **Other Material Planning Considerations**

2.25 **North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP)**

2.26 South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council are jointly preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for North East Cambridge (NEC).

2.27 The area east of Milton Road, within which the site lies, is one of the last remaining significant brownfield sites in Greater Cambridge, extending to almost a square kilometre. It has long been an ambition of the local councils to take advantage of the opportunity this site affords to regenerate this part of the city and to support the continued economic success of the local economy.

2.28 Policy 15 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 and Policy SS/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 allocate the area for high quality mixed-use development, primarily for employment uses such as B1, B2 and B8, as well as a range of supporting commercial, retail, leisure, and residential uses (subject to acceptable environmental conditions).

2.29 The local plans do not specify the amount of development, site capacities, or timescales for development, deferring such matters to the preparation of the joint AAP.

2.30 Since the local plans were adopted the City Council as landowner, in partnership with Anglian Water as owners of the CWWTP, has sought to secure funding, through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), to relocate the CWWTP off site. The vacated CWWTP site together with land around the new Cambridge North station, the Cambridge Business Park, St John's Innovation Park, the Cambridge Science Park and other land, will provide the opportunity for the creation of a new urban quarter to the city which can make a significant contribution to the future housing and employment needs of Greater Cambridge.

2.31 In recognition of this opportunity, the councils are preparing a joint AAP to guide the type, mix and location of development, ensuring this is coordinated, manages transport requirements, and delivers on a shared future vision of the place.

2.32 The councils recognise the component parts of the NEC area will be developed out separately and at different times, potentially several years apart. While the councils wish to see early delivery on NEC, the councils consider it important that the ambition in the adopted Local Plan for comprehensive mixed-use development is achieved.

2.33 **AAP Evidence Base**

2.34 A full suite of evidence base studies has nevertheless been prepared for the AAP. These have been reported to the relevant committees of the councils alongside the Proposed Submission AAP and are published on the councils' shared planning webpages. North East Cambridge AAP Document Library (greatercambridgeplanning.org).

2.35 The studies are considered to provide up-to-date evidence of the existing context of NEC and its surrounds. As such, they may be a relevant consideration which attracts weight if and to the extent that it is material to the application of adopted development plan policies. Where the evidence base is considered material to the consideration of this appeal it is highlighted within this proof.

2.36 **North East Landscape Character and Visual Impact Appraisal: Development Scenarios – December 2019 (TEP) (CD 5.13)**

2.37 The TEP Report provides a Landscape Character and Visual Impact Appraisal (LCVIA) of three development scenarios on land including the appeal site. The appeal site forms parcel 4 considered within the study. The TEP Report provides an appraisal of existing landscape character and visual amenity and an appraisal of the potential effects of high, medium, and low development height scenarios to allow a better understanding of the height of development that could potentially be accommodated.

2.38 The TEP Report summarises its Landscape and Visual Baseline as follows with my emphasis underlined:

“The Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment and the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study identified some of the characteristics, special qualities and sensitivities of the River Cam corridor and fringes of the Site (paragraphs 4.38, 4.42 and 4.54). In addition, fieldwork observations indicate that the sensitive areas of landscape, townscape and visual amenity lie to the northeast, east and southeast of the Site and can be summarised as follows:

- The River Cam corridor with its network of recreational routes and green infrastructure;
- *The Commons of Ditton Meadows and Stourbridge Common that are important to the green network and provide important areas of open space enclosed by built form;*
- The open, rural fenlands to the north of the A14 and east of Fen Ditton that form the setting to northeast Cambridge;
- The horizontal emphasis of the skyline in views towards the Site from the northeast;
- *The fact that Cambridge is largely 'hidden' from view behind vegetation and landform in views from the north and east;*
- *The influence of the A14 corridor on perceptual and aesthetic qualities of landscape and views and its influence on movement through the landscape; and*
- *The absence of notable historic skyline features in views towards the Site from the north and east.”*

2.39 The TEP Report tested three development scenarios for the NEC Area based on low, medium, and high height parameters. It also refined the scenarios related to different numbered blocks. The appeal site sits in Block 4 (See appendix 4 – NEC LVIA figures 5.1/ 5.2/ 5.3)

2.40 Initially for block 4 the scenarios tested were low height (12-18m / 4 to 6 storeys), medium height (12 - 27m/ 4 to 9 storeys) and high height (12 - 36 m / 4 to 12 storeys) (See table 1, P. 13).

2.41 Para 2.24 identifies that the initial appraisal identified the eastern and northern edges of each development scenario as resulting in substantial overall effects on the landscape and views to the east and north of the study area. The model for each development height scenario was then amended to give alternative height options in order to reduce the effects on the landscape character and views to the east and north of the study area and on the Fen edge landscape. This involved sub-dividing blocks 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 12 and 15 and adjusting building heights to allow a graduation from low in the east and the north (the more sensitive landscape edge) to higher in the west and south (less sensitive).

2.42 For block 4 the amendment to the model was as follows:

“Variable height within the Block with the same configuration for all options. Up to four storeys at the eastern edge grading up to six storeys in the northern part of the Block and up to seven storeys adjacent the Cambridge North Station Local Centre.”

2.43 For each of the low, medium, and high models block 4 was therefore modelled at up to 21m as set out in Table 3. However, Block 4 is further refined as to block heights in figures 5.1/5.2/5.3 which sets out low heights of 12 m adjacent to the railway line, medium height 18 m to the north of the site and higher 21 m to the west of the site. This refinement shows a desire for proposals on the appeal site to vary in height between 12- 21 m with the highest part of development to be on the western part of the site and adjacent to Cambridge North Station and then declining in height to the north and to the railway in the east. This is shown in diagrammatic form and reproduced at Appendix 4 to this proof of evidence. This is not achieved when you look at the building heights parameter plan 06 Building Heights Plan (CD1.77f)

2.44 The proposed building heights of the appeal site including plant will range between approximately 14- 30.8m and are therefore in parts way in excess of the heights modelled in the TEP Report for block 4.

2.45 The proposals also do not respond fully with the refinement of heights in relation to location within Block 4 as follows:

- In the northern part of the site buildings are 8 storeys and 30m in height where figures 5.1/ 5.2/5.3 show the refinement of heights within block 4 of up to 6 storeys or 18m
- In the eastern part of the site buildings are 4-5 storeys and between 14.15 and 22.1 m in height where figures 5.1/ 5.2/5.3 show the refinement of heights within this location within block 4 to be up to 4 storeys or 12 m in height.
- In the western part of the site buildings are up to 7 storeys and up to 30.8m in height where figures 5.1/ 5.2/5.3 show the refinement of heights within this location within block 4 to be up to 7 storeys or 21 m in height.

2.46 The height in metres for all areas of the site within Block 4 exceed that shown within figures 5.1/5.2/5.3 of the NEC LVIA. Storey heights are also higher in the northern part of the site.

The transition from lower heights in the north and east with the west and south of the site being slightly higher is not achieved.

- 2.47 It must also be noted that the proposed storey heights in metres on the appeal site way exceed the block heights in metres shown within figures 5.1/ 5.2/5.3 which range between 12- 21 m and the proposed development is between 14.1 – 30.8m in height. The highest buildings propose are 9.8 m higher than the figures with the NEC LVIA.
- 2.48 Table 5 Viewpoint 1 Ditton meadows on NCN Route 51(p.44) identifies for appraisal of height option high and medium a **medium to high** magnitude of change and **moderate major adverse impact** with block 4 highlighted as a prominent element with development becoming a new focal point in views from Ditton Meadows where currently views have a rural character reflecting the character of the River Cam.
- 2.49 Table 7 Viewpoint 3 Harcamlow Way River Cam (p.47) identifies for appraisal of height option high and medium a **medium to high** magnitude of change and **moderate major adverse impact** and states the skyline would be strongly influenced by built form in the right of the view. It goes on to state in the overall conclusions for this view ‘all three options would change the character of the views experienced at this point on the Harcamlow Way. The high option would result in substantial change and built form would tend to dominate the skyline in views. The medium option also would tend to dominate skyline views.
- 2.50 Para 5.11p. 69 goes on to explain:
- “ The height and massing of buildings should avoid dominating views of the skyline from the east and should avoid creating an abrupt transition from development to rural edge. The consented hotel and office buildings of up to eight storeys in height at the Cambridge North Station Local Centre present an opportunity for further medium or high development in this location. However, the height and massing of further development would need careful consideration to avoid compromising the quality and character of views and landscape in the River Cam Corridor LCA and the western part of the Eastern Fen Edge LCA and to avoid extending development across the skyline.”
- 2.51 The report identifies in para 5.16 that areas of landscape focus should be considered particularly on the eastern edge to the site where there is a transition to the countryside of the River Cam Valley and views to the east. This is something that is further explored

in chapter 9 of this proof when considering the approach to landscape design.

2.52 In my view the proposals do compromise the quality and character of views and landscape in the River Cam Corridor LCA and the western part of the eastern Fen Edge LCA and does not avoid extended development across the skyline. This is further explored in chapters 6 and 7 of this proof of evidence.

2.53 The conclusion of the Report in para 6.4, 6.5 states:

“6.4 The appraisal of effects indicates that the High development height option would give rise to **Major** overall effects on the six viewpoints used in the LCVIA. The High option would also result in **Major or Moderate** overall effects on landscape character in a limited geographical area.

6.5 The Medium option would result in **Major or Moderate** overall effects on five of the six viewpoints used in the LCVIA. It would result in **Moderate** overall effects on Site landscape character and Moderate overall effects on the Eastern Fen Edge LCA and River Cam Corridor LCA in a limited geographical area.”

2.54 In my view the proposed development significantly exceeds the recommended height parameters in figures 5.1 / 5.2 / 5.3 which recommend heights for block 4 between 12-21m compared to the 14 – 30.8m proposed.

2.55 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

2.56 The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) have been adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council Landscape in New Developments

2.57 **The Landscape in New Developments SDP** was adopted in March 2010 to ensure that landscape is fully integrated into a design. The SPD provides additional advice on landscape, whilst supporting the objective:

2.58 "To protect and enhance the character of appearance and natural heritage."

2.59 The SPD promotes a 'Landscape Scheme' which is stated to assist in achieving the following objectives related to this LVA:

- Promote Landscape Character

- Promote 'A Sense of Place'
- To reduce the visual impact of development
- To provide opportunities for recreation

2.60 **Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)**

2.61 The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy was prepared in 2011, updating the previous 2006 study. In relation to specific Green Infrastructure elements within Cambridgeshire, the Site is located in the 'Cambridge and surrounding areas' Strategic Area and more specifically the Cambridge Target Area

2.62 The Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies the following opportunities for the Cambridge Target Area:

- Heritage: by the protection and enhancement of the historic built and natural environment
- Landscape: by ensuring that the growth of Cambridge protects and enhances the setting of the historic City and enhances the character of the City through maintaining and contributing to green corridors linking the wider countryside within the heart of Cambridge; and
- Rights of Way: by ensuring that all communities have access to sustainable modes of movements and enhanced links to the wider countryside as required by the plans for the major developments to provide for countryside recreation.

2.63 **Fen Ditton Conservation Area – South Cambridgeshire**

2.64 The Fen Ditton Conservation Area, encompassing the village of Fen Ditton, was first designated on 2 March 1973 before being extended on 24 September 1991.

2.65 Fen Ditton is approximately 0.6km to the southeast of the site. It is a linear village, almost completely absent of backland development, except for a few modern houses. The River Cam creates a well-defined western edge to the village which has a rural setting.

2.66 Fen Ditton is surrounded by agricultural land of good to moderate quality (Natural England, 2011) and distinctive water meadows lie between the village and the river, visually separating the village from the city.

2.67 In the west of the village there are views of the Church of St Mary the Virgin and the Old Rectory which are visible above the water meadows and mature tree canopy. The

grouping of these buildings along with a war memorial create a village focal point.

- 2.68 Ditton Hall, a Grade II Listed building is located on rising ground overlooking Ditton Meadows, connected to the village High Street via its garden walls. A Scheduled Monument is located to the east of Fen Ditton, comprising a multi-phased settlement.
- 2.69 It should be noted that St Mary's church which is mentioned above will be screened by proposed new development from the western part of the site. This is explored further along with other landmarks which are screened as a result of development in chapter 7 of this proof of evidence.

3.0 THE PROPOSED SITE: LOCAL CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

3.1 Historic Context

3.2 The starting point for any site should be to understand the historic context of a site within the landscape. Historically the site has been situated in a rural location on the edge of the River Cam Valley with clear separation between open countryside and Fen Ditton and the settlement of Chesterton which has now been incorporated into the growth of Cambridge. The site in the 1920's was a marsh area in the floodplain of the River Cam and in the 1960's became railway sidings and it is not until recently that new employment and business parks have developed to the north of the site and the new station with associated development has been put in place (See Appendix 1: Historic Plans)

3.3 This historic context is important as it sets the context of what the historic landscape was like and what was important about it that still needs to be enhanced and protected for example the separation of settlement such as Chesterton and Fen Ditton, the rural character of the river corridor and to develop an understanding of what has been lost and what is important to the historical narrative of the site and how that may be interpreted into development and landscape proposals going forward.

3.4 Landscape Context

3.5 The landscape context has been defined by a number of national, regional, and local character appraisals which are explored in more detail in chapter 5 of this proof of evidence. It is also defined by its policy context including the large swathe of Green Belt which sits to the east and south of the site. (See appendix 3 – Landscape character areas and designation)

3.6 Site Context

3.7 The site comprises an irregular wedge of land measuring approximately 9.9 ha, located between the railway to the east and Cambridgeshire Guided Busway ("the busway") to the west, and bisected by Milton Avenue. The site is generally level ranging from approximately 5.4-7.1m AOD Newlyn.

3.8 The site has previously been developed with a historical use for railway sidings prior to the construction of the Cambridge North station. The western part of the site has largely been cleared, with limited scrub vegetation. The northern and central parts of the site contain more mature scrub and trees whilst a surface car park serving the Cambridge

North station is located along the eastern side of the site. There is also a temporary construction compound towards the northern end of the site.

- 3.9 The primary road serving this area, and the only vehicular route into the application site, is Cowley Road / Milton Avenue which connects with Milton Road just south of its interchange with the A14 and terminates at the Cambridge North station.
- 3.10 The railway station, a hotel, and an office building are located to the south.
- 3.11 The eastern boundary of the site is formed by the railway tracks immediately abutting the site, with the river Cam and the village of Fen Ditton beyond. The land between the tracks and the river Cam is currently occupied by a low-density, low-rise development of caravan parks and low-grade industrial units accessed from Fen Road. Beyond the river, the village of Fen Ditton is a designated Conservation Area. Further south, the river and the large open spaces associated with it form a green corridor with public access that link the Fen landscape with the heart of the city. They form an important aspect of the character and setting of Cambridge and are designated Conservation Areas.
Furthermore, land to the east of the site is located within the Cambridge Green Belt.
- 3.12 The boundary to the southwest is formed by the guided busway. South of the guided busway are Nuffield Road Allotments and Bramblefields Local Nature Reserve which, together with a band of dense vegetation along the bus corridor, forms a green buffer to the residential area of Chesterton. Chesterton consists primarily of low-density, two-storey family housing.
- 3.13 The Cambridge Business Park bounds the site to the north-west. This consists predominantly of large 3 to 4 storey office buildings surrounded by large areas of surface car parking. Adjoining and beyond the site to the north and west are further industrial uses including the Cowley Road Industrial Estate, Aggregate Works, and Waste Water Treatment Plant, all of which are safeguarded sites in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2021.

4.0 PLANNING APPLICATION

4.1 This section considers relevant planning history, planning application submission, consultation responses and the officer's report in brief.

4.2 Planning Submission

4.3 Planning history on this site is as set out in section 4 of Committee Report (March 2023). planning permission is sought for:

- a) An outline application (all matters reserved apart from access and landscaping) for the construction of: three new residential blocks providing for up to 425 residential units and providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)); and two commercial buildings for Use Classes E(g) i (offices), ii (research and development) providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)), together with the construction of basements for parking and building services, car and cycle parking and infrastructure works.
- b) A full application for the construction of three commercial buildings for Use Classes E(g) i (offices) ii (research and development), providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)) with associated car and cycle parking, the construction of a multi storey car and cycle park building, together with the construction of basements for parking and building services, car and cycle parking and associated landscaping, infrastructure works and demolition of existing structures.

Consultation Responses - Greater Cambridge Shared Planning - Landscape Officer Comments

4.4 Landscape Officer - Objection

4.5 The proposals under provides on formal open space. A number of issues with the open spaces are raised in particular:

- Wild Park - It is unclear what purpose the park provides to the overall development. The proposals are for the creation of Open Mosaic Habitat across a large area as well as the introduction of a wetland/pond. We question then, the appropriateness of also layering children's play into the area at this point. There

is concern over the lack of overlooking of the area and the poor accessibility from the residential development.

- Chesterton Gardens – Overall the proposed external spaces associated with the residential development are acceptable in design terms, however, the previous comments on Open Space consider that there is not enough space for the size development.
- Cowley Road circus – Concerns regarding the design of the road and pedestrian and cycling routes.
- Chesterton Square – it is considered that this space is struggling to find its identity while flanked by two very differently styled buildings of differing design and materiality. It is felt the space needs more detailed design review and tissue studies comparing its size and scale with other similar sized open spaces in the area would be helpful in assessing whether it is large enough or small enough to serve the potential future residential and commercial users.
- Station Row and Station Row Piazza – Overall the swale and its presence is supported. It is considered however that the Piazza space could work harder as a public space. South-facing, it could be a nice suntrap for the colder months. In its current form there is a sense that it is only a place where routes converge rather than a place of its own.
- Lab Pocket Parks – These spaces have always been constrained by their width (lack of) or the imposing size of the buildings to either size. They are urban and due to their orientation will be shadowed much of the time.
- Design of streets and their hierarchy is questioned.
- A number of other issues are raised in relation to cycle storage, use of planter, meanwhile uses.
- The LVIA assessment proposed that ‘the Proposed Development does not result in any significant effects. [...] a proposal that appropriately responds to its context.’ The Landscape team considers that this assessment is unfairly concluded. It is considered that the hotel and office building do not set a precedent for development in the area but form the focus of a tall development cluster at the North Station, while the areas within the Proposed Development must be seen to be subservient and respectful to the existing development around it and the sensitive receptors discussed.

4.6 **Third Party Objections**

4.7 **Landscape and visual impacts**

- The scale and heights of buildings results in adverse impacts on the rural setting of the meadows and the edge of the city.
- The importance of the River Cam corridor as green infrastructure and recreational use, this will be impacted.
- The view from The Plough Public House has been ruined by the hotel, which is too big, too high and inappropriately lit.
- The existing hotel is an eyesore which impacts skyline of Cambridge.
- The existing buildings (hotel and office) shouldn't be a justification for this development but a warning of how intrusive the development will be.
- There is minimal tree planting within the site and what is proposed will not provide any significant screening for such large buildings.
- The scale and density and result in over development which not in keeping with the character of the area.
- Design of the buildings lacks imagination and desire to enhance Cambridge.
- The development of the wider NEC AAP area should not be relied upon when addressing the visual impact.
- Trees and vegetation along the towpath in Fen Ditton should be looked after and replaced; replenishing willow trees would assist with screening the development.
- Should be more of a human scale.

4.8 **Committee Report – Landscape and visual impact conclusions**

4.9 The eastern edge of the site is particularly sensitive due to its long views over the River Cam towards the City and its location within the Cambridge Green Belt. 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 in keeping with the site's sensitive context in the wider landscape.

- 4.10 The height and massing of the proposed development is not in keeping with the scale, density and massing of the surrounding areas which comprise primarily low level and low-density development. Accordingly, the development is not in keeping with 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 on Discovery Way.
- 4.11 Whilst the proposals have some merit in terms of architecture and provision of open space it is considered that the proposals lack sufficient thought and detail to make the place a high-quality environment for people to live and work. In particular, Chesterton Square, the Piazza and the Wild Park are not considered to create high quality environments with a strong sense of place. Station Row is similar to Milton Avenue in terms of scale, linearity and proportion of hard versus soft landscaping, this comprises legibility of the key routes and impacts its sense of place. The spaces between the mobility hub and Building S6 and between Buildings S6 and S7 lack any real public function and do not create high quality spaces.

5.0 LANDSCAPE BASELINE APPRAISAL

5.1 This section considers the site in the context of national, regional and local landscape character assessments. It will set out the baseline context against which I have reviewed the development design presented in the Appellant's application documents.

National Landscape Character Assessment

5.2 The Site is in the northeast of NCA 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands. It is described in the NCA Profile as: '...sparsely populated...A feeling of urbanisation is brought by the numerous large towns, including...Cambridge...and major transport routes, including the M1, A1 and A14 and the Midlands and East Coast mainline railways. Tranquillity within the NCA has declined, affected by visual intrusion, noise and light pollution from agriculture, settlement expansion and improvements in road infrastructure.' P.3

5.3 Many areas, however, retain a rural feel and there are numerous opportunities for nearby urban communities to enjoy quiet, informal recreation. P.3

5.4 Key characteristics of the NCA of relevance to this LCVIA include:

- 'Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.
- Variable scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the northwest representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.
- Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.
- Wide variety of semi-natural habitats supporting a range of species – some notably rare and scarce – including sites designated for species associated with ancient woodland, wetland sites important for birds, great crested newt and species of stonewort, and traditional orchards and unimproved grassland supporting a rich diversity of wild flowers.
- Rich geological and archaeological history evident in fossils, medieval earthworks, deserted villages, and Roman roads. A number of historic parklands, designed landscapes and country houses...

- Diversity of building materials including brick, render, thatch, and stone...
- Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads.
- Major transport routes cross the area, including the M1, M11, A1, A6, A5 and A14 roads, the East Coast and Midlands mainline railways, and the Grand Union Canal.
- Recreational assets include Grafham Water, the Grand Union Canal, Forest of Marston Vale Community Forest, Chilterns AONB, woodland and wetland sites, an extensive rights-of-way network and two National Cycle Routes. The cities of Cambridge and Peterborough and several of the historic market towns in the NCA are popular tourist destinations.'

5.5 Regional and Local Landscape Character

5.6 Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (2003)

5.7 The Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment was adopted in 2003 in order to:

- Understand and identify the key resources – the 'Defining Character' - which make up and are essential to the spirit of Cambridge. This indicates areas or features which are so important to the Cambridge environment and setting that they should remain undeveloped; and represent Defining Character.'
- Identify and describe the essential character of the townscape and its rural hinterland into Character Types and Character Areas. This will enable judgements to be made to ensure that new development will take account of the existing character and where possible achieve environmental or visual improvement.

5.8 While it is noted that the document is somewhat dated and the landscape and townscape of Cambridge have evolved since its publication, some elements identified in this assessment are still considered to be relevant. It is also noted that the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 still references this assessment's findings, validating its relevance. This is something the Bidwell LVIA agrees with.

5.9 A principal term utilised in the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment is that of 'Defining Character'. This term refers to the 'key resources that are essential to the special qualities of Cambridge and its setting. If these resources were jeopardised or removed Cambridge and its setting would be compromised.'

- 5.10 Generally, Cambridge is defined as a collegiate city in a rural setting, with good accessibility to the countryside and green corridors. The Assessment considers that the city's compactness and sense of arrival are important features and 'where the edges are positive, and the City is anticipated by glimpsed and distinctive views to the skyline or landmarks, this is a Defining Character of views and setting.' However, it is acknowledged that, although intrinsic to the quality of Cambridge, the notion of compactness and sense of arrival is difficult to define.
- 5.11 The Assessment identifies six physical features that are 'Defining Character' of Cambridge; the following are relevant to the understanding of the Site and study area.
- Green fingers and corridors
 - Water courses and bodies
 - Separation
 - Edges
 - Local views
 - Ecology Natural History and Landscape Structure
- 5.12 **Green Fingers and Corridors.**
- 5.13 It is noted within the Assessment that green corridors penetrating the urban fabric of the city are an important feature of Cambridge. It states that: 'The corridors provide a landscape framework for the whole City and Cambridge owes much of its very special character to the way these spaces penetrate the urban fabric and the unique association between the built spaces and green space.'
- 5.14 Furthermore, these green corridors contribute to the assimilation of the countryside into the urban area, blurring the distinction between the landscape with the townscape.
- 5.15 The green corridor to the south of the Site is described as: 'The green space that sweeps in 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.'
- 5.16 **Water Courses and Bodies.**
- 5.17 Water courses are an important element of the Cambridgeshire countryside as well as crucial environmental features due to the associated flood plains.

5.18 **Separation.**

5.19 One of the main purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt is to prevent the communities around Cambridge from merging with one another and with Cambridge itself. Consequentially, ‘where the separation between the city and the necklace villages is much reduced, the remaining areas represent Defining Character.

5.20 The aspects of Supporting Character relevant to the assessment of the development are as follows.

5.21 **Edges.**

5.22 The Assessment identified a ‘Negative Edge’ to the north of the Site (Figure 12.3). A ‘Negative Edge’ is defined as: ‘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.’

5.23 **Local Views.**

5.24 Views within and into the urban fabric are also a ‘significant to the character of Cambridge...Important landmarks may be visible at a local scale such as fine panoramic views to church spires and towers, college and other buildings.’ For this reason, it is important to identify positive and negative landmarks (Figure 12.4).

5.25 **Ecology, Natural History and Landscape Structure.**

5.26 The Ecology and Natural History Supporting Character refers to the numerous County and City Wildlife Sites, Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserves located within the urban extent of Cambridge. These features become Defining Character by association when located within such areas.

5.27 The Assessment continues with the definition of Cambridge Character Types and Areas. According to this, the Site is located in the ‘Industrial – Railway Corridor’ character type, which is not a Defining Character. Although, as noted in the local setting analysis (12.68), the railway townscape character has experienced substantial modern changes, it is useful to understand how the evolution of this character type originated and highlights discrete elements that are still relevant to the Site and study area.

5.28 The Assessment states that ‘the position of the railway line bought not only industry directly associated with rail, but also created a hinterland – mostly unsuited to housing – where industrial buildings and sheds, storage warehouses and large retail concerns have taken advantage of this land.’

- 5.29 Railway corridors have been acknowledged within the assessment as potentially valuable habitats for plants and animals, with a number designated as City Wildlife Sites. Characteristic features of this Character Type are:
- ‘Large warehouses and derelict sites.
 - Derelict and underused large urban spaces – gradually passing out of this phase.
 - Rail corridor gives poor impression to those entering the city; and
 - Disused track beds are often important for wildlife.’
- 5.30 The Assessment considers that pressures on the Character Type include:
- Development pressures from industrial to residential; and
 - Development pressures on disused track bed for transport corridors.’
- 5.31 The Assessment considers that pressure on the Character Type include: The assessment then presents the following as some opportunities for enhancement of character type:
- Development pressures from industrial to residential; and
 - ‘Through development opportunities in the station area especially to improve and create a new district with its own character;
 - Make further provisions for access to railway station;
 - Alternative rapid transport opportunities;
 - Development to put derelict areas to good use;
 - Seek mitigation where sites important for wildlife are developed;
 - Take Biodiversity Action Plans into account in future development or management plans; and
 - In association with new development, encourage the use of trees and shrubs which are appropriate to the character type.’
- 5.32 **The River Corridor LCA**
- 5.33 Para 3.1.1 states: ‘This is a varied landscape that is unified by the dominant feature of the River Cam. The river lies in a broad flat valley. It is typically lined with willows, many of them ancient pollards.’
- 5.34 ‘The River Corridor Open Rural is a key resource and essential to the special qualities of Cambridge. It is a Defining Character of Cambridge.’
- 5.35 Characteristic Features
- Shallow valley landscape

- Ancient hedgerows, veteran trees including pollard willow and important habitat including river bank and associated flood meadows; and
- views over the water meadows, across the floodplain and to the river, especially where it is lined with willows.

5.36 Pressures

- Pressure from development on adjacent and overlooking land. Generally development close to these areas should ensure that the essential character remains. Protecting views habitats and settings.

5.37 The proposed development is a good example of this pressure that this character area assessment identified and need to be protected from.

5.38 **Cambridge Green Infrastructure strategy (2021)**

5.39 Reference is made to NPPF Para 138, and the five tests set out as the purpose of green belts as follows:

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

5.40 Para 2.15 states

5.41 'The origins of the Cambridge Green Belt go back to the Plan for Cambridge produced by Professor Sir William Holford and H. Miles Wright in 1950,' ...

5.42 It goes on in para 2.16 to emphasise the importance of the green wedges along the river should be kept open to keep the countryside near the centre.

5.43 In para 2.30 it notes that the impact of taking out areas of green belt due to urban extensions has put greater importance on the value of green belt areas which are still designated.

5.44 The established purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are set in the Cambridge and South Cambridge Local Plan. In addition, a number of factors that define the special character of Cambridge are listed as follows:

- Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;

- A soft green edge to the city;
- A distinctive urban edge;
- Green corridors penetrating into the city;
- Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting;
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages; and
- A landscape that retains strong rural character

5.45 Despite the site not being in the green belt its visual impacts can be seen and experienced within the green belt and therefore should take into consideration the above factors that need to be protected and enhanced.

Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (February 2021 – Chris Blandford Associates)

5.46 The Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (February 2021) breaks down landscape character types into 9 landscape character types and 33 landscape character areas.

5.47 Although the site is situated within the urban area consisting of former railings sidings it is the adjacent landscape character areas to the east of the site which have a strong character and sensitivity that need to be considered in relation to potential landscape impacts.

5.48 Relevant to this appeal are the following landscape character types and character areas:

- Type 6 Fen Edge Chalklands
- Area 6a Fen Ditton Edge Chalklands
- Type 9 River Valleys
- Area 9a Cam River Valley Cambridge

5.49 Table 4.2 of the assessment p.31 identifies landscape condition and strength of character of the Landscape Character Type of the Fen Edge Chalklands as both moderate with the landscape condition of the Landscape Character Type of River Valley as Good with a Strong landscape character.

5.50 Principles for Managing Positive Landscape Change are set out in para 4.51 –

“With regards to the design of development and land management proposals, it is recommended that the following overarching principles for managing positive landscape change are considered. In all cases, the character information about the Greater Cambridge landscape ... should be used to inform proposals and decision making:

- As the local planning authorities, the Councils should use the relevant character information to assist in the development management process. Development assessed as having potential to have a significant adverse effect on valued characteristics may be a candidate for refusal or require planning conditions that ensure important features/qualities are not diminished.
- ...
- ...Consideration should be given to the scale of development.
- ...The impact of development on key landscape features and characteristics should be assessed and where impacts are found to occur, appropriate scheme modification or mitigation measures should be required to avoid, reduce or compensate for potential adverse impacts.”

5.51 **Landscape Character Type 6: Fen Edge Chalklands** is a settled, transitional landscape with scattered villages and historic parkland, characterised by long, open views over predominantly arable fields between the low-lying Fens and rising land to the east and southeast of Cambridge.

5.52 **Landscape Character Type 6: Fen Edge Chalklands Key Characteristics**

- Low-lying, gently undulating landform.
- Generally open landscape with long views across large fields.
- Predominantly arable landscape dominated by late enclosures, with limited woodland cover and low, hawthorn hedge or ditch boundaries.
- A variety of parkland landscapes in proximity to the historic villages.
- Vegetation comprises scattered woodland copses and shelterbelts across the higher landform, with a concentration of woodland around settlements forming part of remnant parkland landscape.

- Settlement comprises generally small villages with strong, historic, linear form and traditional vernacular.
- Vertical features including the high voltage pylon lines to the northeast and east of the city, telegraph poles and masts are very prominent in the gently undulating landscape.

5.53 Landscape Character Type 6: Fen Edge Chalklands - Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural open character of the landscape.
- Long, open views across this landscape, from adjoining LCTs towards Cambridge.
- Scattered landscape features of ecological and historical value.
- Traditional, linear form of the villages with parkland estates and moated sites.
- Chalk grassland on Fleam Dyke.

5.54 Landscape Character Type 6: Fen Edge Chalklands - Guidance for Integrating Development into the Landscape

5.55 Page 123 sets out the guidance for integrating development into the landscape as follows:

- Conserve the overall rural character, with dispersed, linear Fen Edge villages, farms and long views across open fields.
- Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern of the area and its local context.
- ...

5.56 Within LCT 6 is Landscape Character Area 6A: Fen Ditton Fen Edge Chalklands. This is described as a settled landscape with small, linear villages and discordant influences introduced due to the proximity of the urban edge of Cambridge. Its key characteristics are:

- Irregular pattern of large, rectilinear fields contrasts with small scale, more regular field patterns around settlement edges.
- Well-trimmed hedges, boundary trees and shelterbelts provide a distinctive localised vegetation pattern near villages.

- Settled rural landscape comprising small villages with historic linear cores and isolated farms.
- Urban influences due to proximity to the urban edge of Cambridge including large scale transport infrastructure and hospitals.

5.57 The specific landscape sensitivities include:

“In addition to the generic landscape sensitivities for this landscape character type, the following sensitivities are specific to this character area:

- Small scale pastoral fields, shelter belts and associated vegetation including floodplain grazing marsh at village edges and adjacent to the River Cam”

5.58 Page 127 sets out specific landscape guidelines for Fen Ditton Chalklands including:

- Ensure development is in keeping with the open, rural character.

5.59 Key to protecting the Fen Ditton chalklands character area is protecting this open and rural character and long views across open fields. The proposed development will be visible from this character area from Node viewpoints 24 and 25.

5.60 **Landscape Character Type 9: River Valley Cambridge** is located along the floodplains of three rivers within the Study Area, namely River Cam, River Rhee and River Granta. Its character is intimate and small scale, derived from a pattern of flat grazing meadow and wet woodland.

5.61 Its **Key Characteristics** are:

- Intimate, small-scale riverine landscape.
- Flat, low-lying, broad valleys cut through the chalkland landscape.
- Shallow river valleys have a rich mosaic of grazing meadow and wet woodlands with lines of willows along the rivers.
- Clusters of deciduous woodland scattered through the valleys, including willow and poplar along the course of the rivers.
- Generally unsettled landscape, with occasional mill buildings providing local features and historic village edges on the lower river terraces.

- Remnants of historic parkland, former mills, manor houses and moated sites dispersed along the rivers.
- Generally strong rural character that is occasionally disrupted by major roads that cut across the valleys in places.

5.62 The **Key Landscape Features** are identified as follows:

- Intimate, small-scale pastoral landscape.
- Largely unsettled with distinctive former mill buildings, manor houses and moated sites.
- Tranquil rural qualities created by the presence of water through the unsettled meadowlands.
- Rich mosaic of grazing meadow and wet woodlands of high ecological value.

5.63 **Key Landscape Sensitivities**

- Small scale, enclosed landscape.
- Rich, floodplain landscape of small-scale, grazed pastures, riparian vegetation and valley woodlands.
- Tranquil, rural landscape away from the main roadways that cross it.

5.64 **Guidance for Landscape Management**

- Conserve and enhance the tranquility and rural qualities of the river landscape.
- Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows.

5.65 **Landscape Character Area 9a: Cam River Valley Cambridge**

5.66 is described as being part of a distinctive green corridor along the River Cam as it enters and leaves Cambridge, contributing to the unique setting of the city and providing links with the wider rural area.

5.67 The Character Area occurs in two locations, southwest of Cambridge, where the Cam enters the urban area, and northeast of Cambridge, where the Cam leaves the urban area. It is the northeast part of the Character Area which is relevant to the site. The LCA is part of the distinctive green corridor penetrating the Cambridge Urban Area and follows the

narrow, flat floodplain of the River Cam on a roughly southwest to northeast course, generally below 5m AOD. The River Cam in this location is a slow flowing, gently curving river in a wide valley.

- 5.68 The LCA has a rural and pastoral character, providing a unique landscape setting even close to the city centre. It largely comprises small, pastoral grazing meadows enclosed by mature hedgerows and wet woodlands. Lines of willows and poplars mark the course of the River Cam and combine with hedgerow trees and scattered individual trees to create a well treed, intimate appearance, contrasting with the wider townscape. Characteristic views within this small scale LCA include intimate views over the meadows towards the willow lined river, and longer framed views towards the landmark towers and spires of Cambridge.
- 5.69 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. This LCA enriches the setting of Cambridge through the relationship between built and green spaces and the historic association between the city and its river. The river, riverbanks and the towpath have strong historical and cultural associations with University life. The river landscape is aesthetically pleasing and is well used by people, both on and off the water. The stretch between Jesus Lock in Cambridge and Baits Bike Lock east of Milton is a popular location for rowing, and there are a number of residential boats in this area. Vertical elements occasionally interrupting the flat landscape include chimneys, pylons, poles, masts, and church spires. On the whole, the LCA is well balanced and historic urban elements separated by green spaces within this LCA contribute towards a harmonious, intimate, and tranquil landscape.
- 5.70 The river corridor forms a distinctive approach to Cambridge along green corridors into the city. The E2 European Long Distance Route passes through the southwestern section and in the northeast the Fen Rivers Way, Harcamlow Way and Sustrans Route 11 all follow the river course towards The Fens, providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside. Occasional footbridges have an industrial character in keeping with the railway bridge. Roads are limited, but the elevated Fen Causeway forms the northern boundary of the southern section, and the A14 and railway line both cross the northern part of the LCA on bridges, introducing localised noise and interrupting views.

5.71 Key Characteristics

- Distinctive green corridor within the Cambridge urban area.
- Scattered mature trees, hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide a strong sense of enclosure.
- Sparsely settled, with occasional vertical elements and views of built form on the urban edge visible in framed and filtered views between trees.
- Historic association between the city and its river enriches the setting of Cambridge.
- Well used landscape for recreation with strong historical and cultural associations

5.72 Specific Landscape Sensitivities

5.73 In addition to the generic landscape sensitivities for this landscape character type, the following sensitivities are specific to this character area:

- Green corridor forming an approach to Cambridge from the southwest and northeast and contributing to the distinctive landscape setting of the city.
- Pressure for recreation and housing.

5.74 Specific Landscape Guidelines

5.75 In addition to the generic landscape guidelines for this landscape character type, the following guidelines are specific to this character area:

- Development should ensure that the essential character remains, protecting views, habitat, and setting.
- Ensure development enhances existing landscape features, creates links between settlements and recreational assets and is in keeping with the intimate, pastoral character.

5.76 This emphasis on protecting views and character of landscape character 9 a River Cam valley is not being achieved by the proposed development due to impacts on skyline and rural nature of this character area with buildings of a scale and mass of up to 30.8m in height. The importance of recreational activity, people living in river boats and the emphasis on long distance footpath routes along the River Cam also signifies the importance and sensitivity of the River Cam Corridor as a key landscape receptor. This is dealt with in more detail in chapters 6 and 7 of this proof of evidence.

**5.77 North East Cambridge Landscape Character and Visual Impact Appraisal (LCVIA)
Development Scenarios**

5.78 See previous section in chapter 2, para 2.37-2.51

6.0 APPRAISAL OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

6.1 This section will consider firstly the overall landscape characteristics of the site and its context followed by a review of landscape effects as presented in the Appellant's LVIA. I shall set out my own conclusions on landscape effects, and where applicable my disagreement with the Appellant's conclusions in their LVIA. For clarity I have produced a comparison table

Overall Landscape Characteristics

6.2 The character of the site itself is influenced greatly by its surrounding townscape and landscape features. In particular by the following:

- Railway Corridor and infrastructure.
- The River Cam corridor to the east.
- Employment uses to the north.
- Residential uses to the south and west.

6.3 The site should always be considered as part of a wider whole and despite currently being part of an urban area it does lie adjacent to the River Cam Corridor to the East which forms an important strategic green sinuous space from the northeast of Cambridge all the way through to the city centre and out towards the southwest. The site sits on River Terrace deposits adjacent to the low-lying alluvium deposits of the River Cam. (See appendix 2: Landscape Character Appraisal 2003 figures)

6.4 Historically the site was open countryside and later being raiing sidings which were separated from the urban form by open countryside. The distinct settlement and conservation area of Fen Ditton with its many listed building historically can be seen as a village set in a rural context of the River Cam Corridor.

6.5 This historical landscape character should not be forgotten despite the pressures for development and growth. It should be the starting point of understanding place and what could potentially be lost through incremental development which over time can erode that important landscape character.

6.6 The LVIA appears to take this urban context as the most important aspect of current character. Although it is not disputed that the site is in an urban context. It is more important from a landscape perspective to consider what elements of the site and wider context character should be protected, enhanced, and mitigated. This needs to be considered not only from a landscape character perspective but that of a landscape visual

and design perspective which I will come back to later in my proof of evidence in chapters 7 and 8.

- 6.7 The site itself does have some existing landscape character and should not just be seen as a series of plots awaiting development to occur and for everything to be removed or its history eradicated.
- 6.8 It is not a typical site for example with large mature tree specimens and hedgerows that have value that need to be protected but the site does have an emerging pioneer landscape of native species such as birch and shrubs colonising parts of the site which could either be integrated into the design or reimagined as part of landscape design proposals.
- 6.9 From an ecology and design perspective the idea of nature reclaiming areas and creating unique habitats that suit its location is a useful context to think of in both landscape value and design terms.
- 6.10 The LVIA does not recognise this value and the design does not embrace existing woodland blocks within the development area.
- 6.11 The LVIA does consider in table 12.3 and 12.4 P.336 – 338 landscape/ townscape sensitivity, value and susceptibility, magnitude of effects and significance of effects against a range of different landscape receptors which represent different landscape character areas and types.
- 6.12 To understand the differences between my assessment and Bidwell's Assessment in the LVIA I have prepared a summary comparison table which can be found in para 6.41 p.47-48.
- 6.13 **Predicted Landscape/ Townscape Effects – Construction/ Year 1/ Year 15**
- 6.14 It can be seen from the table on p.47- 48 seven landscape character areas have been considered within Bidwell's LVIA. These are as follows:
- NCA88 Bedfordshire and Cambridge Claylands LCA
 - LCA 9A Cam River Valley LCA
 - The Railway Corridor
 - The Skyline of Cambridge
 - The Landscape setting of Fen Ditton Conservation Area
 - The Townscape setting of riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area

- 6.15 I agree with the landscape sensitivity, magnitude, and significance of effects for three of the character area as follows:
- **The Railway Corridor**
 - **The Landscape setting of Fen Ditton CA**
 - **The townscape setting of Riverside and Stourbridge Common CA**
- 6.16 The significance of effects on the railway corridor will be moderately beneficial as new development next to a new station is anticipated as you arrive and depart from the station itself.
- 6.17 The significance of the landscape setting of Fen Ditton Conservation Area will be moderately adverse. As the LVIA concludes at page 339 the proposed development “will intensify the urban influence on the receptor, eroding its rural quality. Consequentially, there would be a detriment to the sense of remoteness and detachment from the city, altering the receptor’s distinctiveness.”
- 6.18 The significance of the townscape setting of Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation area will be minor neutral in landscape terms due to the distance from the site and intervening landscape and buildings which separate the intervisibility between this area and the site.
- 6.19 However, I disagree with the assessment of four of the landscape character areas as below:
- **NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridge Claylands**
 - **LCA9A Cam River Valley, Cambridge**
 - **The Local residential area**
 - **The skyline of Cambridge**
- 6.20 **NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridge Claylands**
- 6.21 The LVIA identifies the NCA 88 as being of medium value. My assessment based on my methodology is that it had Good value as the landscape character area is of high quality with medium capacity to accept change. It has a clear pattern of characteristic elements with local and regional importance. Having looked at both methodologies Medium and Good represent similar judgement on value. The LVIA identifies the susceptibility as low. I disagree with this assessment and identify susceptibility as low/ medium because the character area does have good landscape structure despite having some detracting

features such as road infrastructure. Overall, the LVIA identifies the sensitivity of the receptor as being medium-low whereas in my assessment the sensitivity is medium.

- 6.22 Turning to magnitude, the LVIA assesses the magnitude of effects as being low whereas I assess those effects as being low / medium. The reason for this difference is because the scale and mass of the proposed development will impact on the NCA 88 particularly in close proximity to the site. It is accepted that National landscape character areas are large, but impacts are greater closer to the site and should not be diluted due to the scale of the character area.
- 6.23 Overall, I therefore assess the significance of effects on NCA88 as being **minor / moderate adverse**. In my judgment the LVIA's assessment of **minor adverse** underestimates the significance of the effects because when you take low to medium sensitivity against a low / medium magnitude of change the significance of effects is minor/moderate adverse. (See Appendix 10 Table 5.7.)
- 6.24 The difference in opinion with regard to NCA88 Bedford and Cambridge Claylands is the national character area the site sits in and it expands to the east of the site including the River Cam Corridor and rather the significance of effects being just minor adverse my view is that they will be minor/ moderate adverse as the proposed development does impact greater than the LVIA suggest on this character area particular in close proximity to the site and in relation to the following key characteristics
- 'Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.
 - Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.
 - Recreational value of the character area which can be seen with the amount or recreational users using the River Cam Corridor.
- 6.25 It is interesting to note that the NEC LVIA for the medium/ high categories identifies medium magnitude change to this character area and overall effects **low to moderate adverse** which aligns with my assessment of impacts on NCA 88 (see p.57 of NEC LVIA).

6.26 **LCA9A Cam River Valley, Cambridge**

6.27 The LVIA assesses LCA9 as having a high value. I agree with this assessment. However, the LVIA assesses the susceptibility of the receptor as medium whereas in my judgment the susceptibility should be high. This is because the landscape has a strong landscape structure, with a low capacity to accept change. It is a strong defining characteristic of Cambridge and of regional importance.

6.28 Therefore, I differ from the LVIA in terms of sensitivity as I consider the sensitivity to be high whereas the LVIA assesses it as medium / high because when you take a good landscape value and a high susceptibility to change it creates a high landscape sensitivity (See Appendix 10 table 5.4)

6.29 Turning to magnitude of effects, the LVIA assesses the magnitude of effects as **low** whereas in my judgment the magnitude of effects is **medium**. I have reached this view because it will result in a moderate alteration to key landscape characteristics including the rural and open character of this landscape character area.

6.30 Overall, in my judgment the significance of effects is **moderate / major adverse** because when you have a high sensitivity of change against a medium magnitude of change the impacts are moderate to major adverse. (See appendix 10 fig 5.7) In my view the LVIA underestimates the significance of effects in ascribing only a **moderate – minor adverse** impact because it underestimates the sensitivity and magnitude of change for the reasons given above.

6.31 The difference in opinion regarding LCA 9A Cam River Valley is I believe the proposed development significance of effects on the character area will be **Moderate/ Major Adverse not Minor/ Moderate Adverse** because of the proximity of the site to the character area, its importance as a defining characteristic of Cambridge, its importance as a recreational and nature corridor.

6.32 **The Local residential area**

6.33 The LVIA assesses the local residential area as having low value and medium susceptibility resulting in low – medium sensitivity. However, in my view the value of the local residential area is ordinary the susceptibility is medium and therefore I conclude that the sensitivity is medium.. I ascribe a higher sensitivity because when you have an ordinary landscape value and a medium susceptibility to change it creates a medium landscape sensitivity. (See Appendix 10, fig 5.4)

6.34 Turning to magnitude, I agree with the LVIA that the magnitude of effects is high.

- 6.35 I agree with the LVIA that the proposed development will result in a sense of disproportion of the large scale-built form against the low-lying residential areas. However, I disagree that the mitigation measures will significantly lessen that sense of disproportion. I disagree that the nature of effects is neutral and consider that the significance of effects will be **moderate/ major adverse**.
- 6.36 The difference in opinion with regard to the local residential area is that I believe it will have a moderate/ major adverse significance of effect on existing residential areas due to the change in scale and mix of uses proposed including commercial development not a moderate neutral effect as the LVIA suggests. Much of the residential character area in this part of Cambridge is 2-3 storeys in height. The proposed development is up to 8 storeys so is significantly different to traditional building heights in this part of Cambridge.
- 6.37 **The Skyline of Cambridge and Urban/ Rural Fringe**
- 6.38 The LVIA identifies the skyline of Cambridge as highly valued as it is strongly associated with distinctive heritage and landscape features. Whilst the LVIA appears to focus on the city centre, in my view the appreciation of the skyline of Cambridge is not confined to the city centre but starts on the rural / urban fringe.
- 6.39 The difference in opinion with regards to significance of effects on the skyline of Cambridge is that I believe the proposed development would have a Moderate/ Major adverse effect on the skyline of Cambridge not a moderate neutral impact. The reason for this is the skyline of Cambridge is that of a low-rise city with a few important higher landmarks. The appreciation of the skyline of Cambridge is not just in the city centre but starts on the rural/ urban fringe of the city where this site sits.
- 6.40 The proposed development also due to its height will screen views of both Fen Ditton Church and St George’s Chesterton Church which does not appear to have been considered with the LVIA.
- 6.41 **PREDICTED LANDSCAPE/ TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS – CONSTRUCTION/ YEAR 1/ YEAR 15* – COMPARISON TABLE 1**

Character Area	Bidwell Landscape Sensitivity	Node Landscape Sensitivity	Bidwell Magnitude of effects	Node Magnitude of Effects	Bidwell Significance of effects	Node Significance of effects
NCA 88: Bedfordshire and	Medium/ low	Medium	Low	Low/ Medium	Minor Adverse	Minor/ Moderate Adverse

Cambridge Claylands						
LCA9A Cam River Valley, Cambridge	High/ Medium	High	Low	Medium/ High	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Moderate/ Major Adverse
The Railway Corridor	Low	Low	High	High	Moderate Beneficial	Moderate Beneficial
The Local residential area	Low/ Medium	Medium	High	High	Moderate Neutral	Moderate / Major Adverse
The skyline of Cambridge	High/ Medium	High/ Medium	Medium	Medium/ High	Moderate Neutral	Moderate/ Major Adverse
The Landscape setting of Fen Ditton CA	High/ Medium	High/ Medium	Medium	Medium/ High	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ Major Adverse
The Townscape setting of Riverside and Stourbridge Common CA	Medium	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Minor Neutral	Minor Neutral

*It should be noted that I agree with the LVIA at 12.186 that the landscape effects at Y15 would remain the same as those at Y1.

Summary of Landscape Effects

6.42 The Bidwell LVIA concludes in para 12.221 the following:

6.43 'In terms of landscape and townscape effects, the Proposed Development does not result in any significant effects. The evolution of the master plan considered the sensitivities highlighted in the LVIA process, resulting in a proposal that appropriately responds to its context. Nonetheless, it is noted that the sensitivity of the eastern edge of the Site is sufficient to give rise to moderate adverse effects on the landscape setting of the Fen

Ditton CA, aligned with the significant effects on receptors at viewpoint 8. However, these effects should be read in conjunction with the lack of adverse visual effects on viewpoints 5 and 24, indicating that the change in townscape terms is not perceived equally across the receptor. As a result, the effect on the landscape setting of the Fen Ditton CA is not considered to be significant.'

6.44 I disagree with this statement that no significant landscape effects for the purpose of decision making in terms of landscape and townscape will occur as I consider that **significant moderate/ major adverse effects** on the following landscape receptors will be felt as follows:

- The landscape sensitivity of Landscape character Area 9a River Cam is **high** the magnitude on impacts in **medium / high** and significance of effects are **moderate/ major adverse which is significant**.
- The Landscape setting of Fen Ditton CA has medium/high sensitivity as Bidwell LVIA also states and that the magnitude of change is **medium to high**, and significance of effects are **moderate/ major which is significant**. The Bidwell LVIA refers to viewpoint 5- 20 but it failed to consider worst case scenarios from Fen Ditton meadow within the conservation area and from the Plough Public house beer garden also in the Fen Ditton Conservation Area (see Appendix 5 node viewpoints 1, 2,20, 22 and 23 and appendix 11 -Viewpoint assessment comparison table)
- The impact on Cambridge skyline is much greater than stated with the LVIA which states the effects are **moderate neutral**. My view is that the effects will be **moderate/ major adverse** as both Fen Ditton church and St George's church will be screened by the height and mass of development from a number of locations including from the western part of the site and from Viewpoint 20 in the Fen Ditton Conservation Area. **This is a significant landscape effect**. (see Appendix 7 Views to landmark buildings on Skyline)
- The impact on local residential area is **moderate/ major** adverse due to the scale, mass and height of proposed development on a prevailing low height residential context with development proposed being much higher and dominant within this character type.

7.0 APPRAISAL OF VISUAL EFFECTS

7.1 This section considers the assessment of visual impact of proposals by considering the following:

- 1) The size, scale, mass, and orientation of development
- 2) Impact of development on Cambridge Skyline and landmark buildings
- 3) Impact of development on Greenbelt/ Cam River Valley and South Cambridge Conservation Area and Fen Ditton
- 4) Impact of development on existing residential development
- 5) The approach to and the assessment and findings within the LVIA

The size, scale, mass, and orientation of development

7.2 The size and scale of development needs to be considered in relation to footprint, height, mass, and orientation of buildings.

The site and footprint of buildings

7.3 The proposed development is for a hybrid application which includes residential, commercial and multi storey car park/ mobility hub. The site area is 9.9 hectares, and the main part of the site is approximately 430 m in length from north to south and 275m in width at the centre of the site from east to west. The site should also be seen in the context of the existing built Cambridge North Station, Hotel and Commercial development to the south of the appeal site. This phase of development is approximately 150 metres in length from north to south and is much narrower at approximately at 125 metres at its middle point as it tapers to a point between railway line and Cambridge Guided Busway. The height of the existing development at the station ranges between approximately 17m – 30m in height with the commercial development at the back of the station being the highest buildings.

7.4 The proposed new development consists of seven blocks of new development which range in height from approximately 14- 30.8 m in height including plant. The highest building proposed with plant is S4 which is a commercial building and will be 30.8m high which will be slightly higher than the highest development already built out.

- 7.5 Scale is highly significant, as the larger the scale, the greater the potential for landscape, visual and cumulative impacts. The larger the scale, the more viewpoints and public rights of way can be affected. The larger the scale, the greater the opportunity to affect more landscape visual receptors, including residential properties. The larger the scale, the greater chance that the overall mass will be high, and dominant within the landscape, including breaking the skyline and creating impacts on landscape character areas, Cambridge Green Belt and Conservation Areas.
- 7.6 The layout of building blocks is also important as it can reduce the visual permeability of a proposed development. If blocks are aligned in a grid, it allows both north/ south views and east / west views through a development. If the blocks are staggered, then views down streets terminate in other buildings which reduces visual permeability through a site. This proposed development has staggered blocks and at no point from the eastern or western edges of the site and beyond can clear visual connections through the site be made to either landmarks, the wider countryside, or residential areas beyond.
- 7.7 The combination of the footprint and layout of buildings and scale/ height has implications for the overall mass of development. The proposed mass of this development on the edge or the rural fringe of the River Cam valley and Cambridge Green Belt is significant and its visual impacts, as will be discussed later, are **moderate / major adverse** which is significant.
- 7.8 The mass of proposals is also a combination of actual length of proposed and existing development in relation to height. Currently the length of existing new higher built development at Cambridge North Station, mainly made up by hotel and commercial uses, is from north to south approximately 80 m in length. The proposed development will add approximately an additional 220m in length of proposed mass which will be clearly seen in particularly in an eastern arc to the east of the site along the River Cam Valley. This arc extends from the A14 in the north to Fen Ditton Meadow in the south a distance of approximately 1.5-2km (see Appendix 8 – Arc of views, Appendix 5 and 6 for Node viewpoints and Appendix 9 for VU city Viewpoint 8).
- 7.9 It clear already from the existing development including the hotel and commercial that adverse impacts to the landscape visual impacts to the east of the site have already occurred. The proposed development will not mitigate those impacts but will significantly increase them. The existing development does not set a precedent for what is acceptable

but rather highlights the proposed scale, height and mass and implication of landscape visual impacts particularly to the east. The proposed development will increase the appearance of mass by **2.75** times. The existing development is already having negative and adverse visual impacts to the east of the site along the River Cam Valley and on the Fen Ditton Conservation Area. proposals to increase these impacts by 2.75 times will create significant visual impacts.

- 7.10 The height of buildings proposed varies across the site with the highest buildings being the residential corner to the north of the site building S17-21 and the commercial office building to the south S4. The buildings adjacent to the railway line appear lower at approximately 18-22 m in height including plant. Although lower these are still substantial commercial 4 storey buildings with commercial floor to height ceilings making them appear taller than say a 4 storey residential block.
- 7.11 The NEC Landscape Character Visual Appraisal development scenarios produced by TEP (Dec 2019) which considered in this location block 4 low (21m), medium (21m) and high (21m) height options with recommendation for lower buildings adjacent to the railway to the north in Block 3. (See table 3 and Figure 12.3 from NEC LVIA)
- 7.12 The height of proposed building as part of the appeal site for the majority of building is over the medium and high development scenarios with only the car park/ mobility hub being lower at 18.31 m. The NEC LVIA identifies moderate and major adverse impacts to the east of the site which are significant for building heights of 21 m. When the proposed development including plant has heights of 31 m it will be much higher much than proposed maximum height scenarios as set out within the NEC LVIA for Block 4
- 7.13 The decreasing of height adjacent to the railway line of buildings seems an attempt to respond to the NEC LVIA. Figure 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 of NEC LVIA which shows a refinement of block 4 development scenarios for the site of up to 4 storeys (12m) adjacent to the railway line, up to 6 storeys (18m to north of the site) and to the west of the site up to 7 storeys (21 m)
- 7.14 However, the proposed height of buildings is in discrepancy with the NEC LVIA which range from 12- 21 m as the proposed development is between 14.15m and 31m. Even if you look at building heights within the NEC LVIA it talks of a maximum 7 number of storeys but the proposed development is up to eight storeys.

- 7.15 In addition, in my view decreasing the height of buildings on the eastern edge does little to overcome visual impacts to the east when you have higher buildings behind. The flattening effect of medium and longer distance views from the east results in buildings seen not individually but as an overall mass with the highest of the building being seen as the most prominent element against the skyline.
- 7.16 In my view the height of buildings needs to be reduced more in line with the NEC LVIA with heights of between 12 – 21 m with corresponding storey heights to reduce visual landscape impacts particularly to the east.
- 7.17 The heights of building also in my view needs to step down from south to north to reduce overall mass with higher buildings closer to the station and lower buildings to the north. This will also help to emphasise the station and its immediate uses as the landmark on the skyline.
- 7.18 A sense of differentiation will allow landscape impacts to be reduced again particularly to the east.

Impact of development on Cambridge Skyline and landmark buildings

- 7.19 The LVIA in my view does not give enough regard to the Cambridge Skyline and landmarks within the city and beyond.
- 7.20 Despite the development not impacting on any protected views identified within policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan which is more focused on impact of views on the city centre landmarks consideration still needs to be given to two key elements as follows:
- Local Landmarks and views
 - The transition of skyline from rural to urban on the edge of Cambridge

7.21 Local Landmark and Views

- 7.22 Local Landmark and views are important in the context of any proposed development site, and it is not the place of policy to consider and protect all local landmarks and views by identifying them all on a plan. It is something that in the policy context falls to be considered on all proposed development sites and identified within the LVIA which can then be considered by the proposed development in order that impacts can be mitigated.

- 7.23 Local landmarks and views are important as they help legibility and orientation particularly in locations which are generally flat and do not have topographical features which allow a sense of where you are within a landscape or city.
- 7.24 Two local landmarks are visible across the site and from landscape receptors both close and further from the site. These include St Mary's Fen Ditton Church and St George's Church, Chesterton which are both listed buildings. These two spires / towers stand out because they are much higher than the prevailing height of buildings.
- 7.25 These two landmarks do not appear to have been considered within the LVIA and development layout and appear to have been either forgotten about or dismissed because of distance from the site.
- 7.26 In Appendix 7 to this proof of evidence I have located both St Mary's Fen Ditton Church and St George's Church Chesterton and identified two important view lines from identified landscape viewpoint receptors (Appendix 6 - Node viewpoints 11, 20). This is not to say other view lines don't exist, but these identify locations where the layout could potentially be altered to accommodate these views across the site.
- 7.27 This has not been the case and the proposed height and mass of development and permeability of views across the site east to west will result in these views to important landmarks being obscured by proposed development. The implication of which is a loss to orientation and appreciation of the location of Fen Ditton Village in relation to the site and the neighbourhood of Chesterton within Cambridge.

The transition of skyline from rural to urban on the edge of Cambridge

- 7.28 The transition of the skyline from rural to urban on the edge of Cambridge is very important. Characteristically Cambridge is a low-rise city with key landmarks generally creating slender silhouettes on both landscape and townscape with traditional Cambridge colleges and churches being the dominant features. It is anticipated that towards the city centre building heights and densities will increase but the appeal site despite being a railway station is in a rural/ urban fringe location dominated by the River Cam Valley.
- 7.29 Any development which is higher than the prevailing height of buildings within Cambridge will stand out on the skyline. This, as already has been discussed, includes the existing development at Cambridge North Station. Proposals do need to consider mass and height of buildings carefully at this rural / urban interface and with the sensitivity of receptors

particularly to the east of the site. The only real way to reduce or mitigate impacts on skyline, particular in location which are generally flat, is to reduce the height of buildings, reduce the mass or improve the permeability of views through a site. Mitigation planting as the LVIA clearly states has no impacts on reducing landscape visual impacts in the longer term where heights of buildings are greater than the height of trees and planting proposed. The Bidwell LVIA states in para 12.203 “Therefore, although the significance of visual effects at year 1 would remain unchanged at year 15, the proposed vegetation on the eastern edge would help the proposed development for receptors to the east of the site.”

- 7.30 This might be the case if you are on the edge of the site itself but not from medium distance views from the east. If the proposed mitigation planting was effective, you would likely reduce visual impacts at year 15. The LVIA has not done this so must think that the mitigation planting does not warrant a reduction in impacts.
- 7.31 In my view the LVIA is right not to reduce visual impacts due to mitigation planting as it is very narrow between 5-10 m wide, and buildings are much higher than the planting.
- 7.32 One only has to look at the VU city Model viewpoint 8 to see the visual impact of proposed Cambridge skyline (See appendix 9) and anticipate impacts by looking at Node viewpoints 1, 2 3,18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 (see appendix 5, 6 and 11) which is a significant number of viewpoints to the east of the site with **Moderate and Major visual impacts** which will be explored later in more detail within this proof of evidence.
- 7.33 **Impact of development on Greenbelt/ Cam River Valley and South Cambridge/ Fen Ditton Conservation Area.**
- 7.34 In my view, and to some extent a view shared by the Bidwell LVIA, the largest landscape visual impacts of the proposed development are from sensitive landscape receptors to the east of the site which include the following:
- Cambridge Greenbelt
 - Landscape character area 9a - River Cam Valley
 - South Cambridge Conservation Area
 - Fen Rivers Way Long Distance Footpath
 - Harcamlow Way Long Distance footpath
 - Ditton Meadows

- Fen Ditton Village/ The Plough Inn
- Fen Road

- 7.35 All of the above are important landscape receptors with high levels of sensitivity made greater by the amount of recreational activity and enjoyment of open countryside alongside and on the River Cam. This includes walking, running, cycling, rowing, pleasure boats etc. along this corridor.
- 7.36 The openness of the Cambridge Greenbelt, the key defining landscape characteristics already identified of the local landscape character area 9a River Cam Valley and Fen Ditton Conservation area should be protected and enhanced and taken into account when considering proposed new development.
- 7.37 Fen Rivers Way and Harcamlow Way are long distance footpaths which are located on both sides of the River Cam. These are important public rights of way with high sensitivity. The Fens Rivers Way is a 48 mile walk from Kings Lynn to Cambridge. This route also forms a small part of European Long-Distance Path from Nice to Galway. The Harcamlow Way is a figure of eight route from Harlow to Cambridge. This route is one of the earliest of the waymarked walking trails in this part of the country. It was developed by Fred Matthews and Harry Bitten of the West Essex Ramblers' Association in the 1970's. (See Appendix 6 which shows viewpoints and public rights of way)
- 7.38 The significance of which is that these routes are not only used by local people for recreation but by people from further afield undertaking more long-distance trails. Some people's first impression of Cambridge may be formed as they travel along these routes and enjoyment of the route may be adversely impacted by incongruous development on the appeal site which is out of character with prevailing scale and mass of development in this location within Cambridge.
- 7.39 The Bidwell LVIA and VU City modelling does not assess any viewpoints in detail from the western side of the River Cam on the Fen Rivers Way and only a couple of viewpoints on the Harcamlow Way to the east of the River Cam between Ditton Meadow and the A14 in the north.
- 7.40 Consideration does need to be given to the sequential sequence of kinetic views as you travel from north to south along the River Cam particularly between the A14 and Ditton Meadows. The Node assessment takes into consideration ten viewpoints which include

both eastern and western banks of the River Cam including the Fens Rivers Way and Harcamlow Way (see appendix 5 and 6 viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 19, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23) in order to understand the scale of the landscape and visual impacts from these sensitive receptors.

- 7.41 The LVIA gives the impression that the only moderate / major impacts to the east of the development site are limited to one view, viewpoint 8, which is not the case.
- 7.42 The implications of this are that it underplays the landscape impacts on these sensitive landscape receptors and other receptors to the east of the proposed development site.
- 7.43 In reality, as can be seen in my overall assessment of landscape visual impacts to the east the scale of moderate / major impacts is not just from one point but from a sequence of kinetic viewpoints between A14 and Ditton Meadows. See appendix 8 Arc of views of the site from Greenbelt / Cam River Valley and South Cambridge Conservation Area.
- 7.44 What this shows is a kinetic arc of visibility for a distance of between 1.5 - 2 km along the River Cam Corridor where at a number of location the proposed development as shown by viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 16, 17, 19 ,20 ,21, 22, 23 become prominent in the view with **moderate / major to major visual impacts** which are significant.
- 7.45 Consideration has also not been given to sensitive receptors such as The Plough Inn beer garden which is a publicly accessible place where people sit to enjoy the view of the River Cam and the countryside beyond. The existing hotel development is already highly visible from this location with moderate / major adverse visual impacts (see Appendix 5 and 6 Node viewpoints 21/ 22/ 23) which would be worsened with further with major adverse visual impacts by the proposed development.
- 7.46 In conclusion this lack of emphasis and lack of effective mitigation in the design to reduce impacts of scale, height, and mass results in moderate / major to major adverse impacts. Mitigation planting has limited benefits from these locations.
- 7.47 A comparison of assessment with Bidwell's LVIA and Node's assessment is undertaken in this proof of evidence from para 7.52-7.69.
- 7.48 **Impact of development on existing residential development**
- 7.49 The other areas where I believe landscape visual impacts are significant are in the following location:

- Fen Road and traveler site
- Discovery Way
- Bourne Road/ Fairburn Road

7.50 My assessment for Fen Road and traveler site considers two location viewpoints 16 and 17 My assessment is that impacts from these locations will be **moderate / major adverse** which is consistent with Bidwells LVIA and is significant. (See Appendix 5, 6, 11)

7.51 My assessment of landscape visual impacts from Discovery Way and Bourne / Fairham Road is **moderate / major adverse** during construction and **moderate adverse** at year 15. (See Appendix 5, 6, 11)

The approach to the assessment and findings within the LVIA

7.52 Having reviewed the appellant's LVIA, visited the site, taken panoramas and undertaken my own visual impact assessment, I have identified several findings:

- i) Limited number of locations at which assessment of visual impacts were considered along the River Cam Valley
- ii) Viewpoints not at locations that consider all worst case scenarios.
- iii) No assessment of impacts at construction stage.
- iv) Assessment underestimates visual impacts.
- v) VU City visualisations numbering and LVIA assessments seem to have been carried out as separate exercise by different parties without a common numbering approach and assessment.

7.53 Landscape visual assessment comparison

7.54 The following table provides a comparison of a number of visual receptors between my assessment and that of the LVIA to summarise where the main differences lie and where agreement exists to narrow the focus of discussion on visual impacts.

7.55 This table should be read in conjunction with viewpoint locations, panoramas, and visual assessment in Appendix 5 and 6 to this proof of evidence.

7.56 It should be noted that the Bidwell’s LVIA Does not assess construction impacts individually but refers to them being just temporary in nature.

7.57 It also should be noted that Bidwell’s LVIA Photo panoramas only appear to assess year 1 and not year 15 post mitigation separately but it does state in Para 12.186 of LVIA ‘However, this mitigation would be insufficient to reduce the predicted adverse townscape effects, such that the effects would remain the same as those at Year 1.’

7.58 **PREDICTED LANDSCAPE VISUAL EFFECTS – CONSTRUCTION/ YEAR 1/ YEAR 15 – COMPARISON ASSESSMENT TABLE 1**

7.59 Please refer to commentary and Node LVIA methodology in Appendix 10 on how the impacts have been calculated in relation to landscape value, susceptibility, sensitivity, and magnitude of change.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Ditton Meadow/ Harcamlow Way Node Viewpoint 1, 2, 3 Bidwell Viewpoint 5	No Specific Assessment	Major Adverse	None	Moderate/ Major Adverse	None	Moderate /Major Adverse

Commentary - Ditton Meadow/ Harcamlow Way

The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) assessed the receptor sensitivity of Viewpoint 5 as High but magnitude of change as None and significance of visual effects as None. In my view this view is not representative of views from Ditton Meadow. See Node viewpoints 1, 2 and 3. My assessment is the landscape value is good, sensitivity of the view is high, and magnitude of change is medium which leads to a **Moderate/ Major Adverse** effect at Year 15.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Railway/ Stourbridge Common Node Viewpoint 5/6 Bidwell Viewpoint 16	No Specific Assessment	Minor/ Moderate Adverse	Minor Neutral	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	Minor Adverse

Commentary - Railway/ Stourbridge Common

The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) assessed the receptor sensitivity of Viewpoint 16 as High but magnitude of change as Negligible and significance of visual effects as Minor Neutral. In my view this view does not take into consideration alongside the view from Stourbridge Common the view from the pedestrian footbridge which elevates your viewing position. See Node viewpoint 5. My assessment is the landscape value is good, sensitivity of the view is high and magnitude of change is low which leads to a **Minor Adverse** effect at Year 15.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Pedestrian Bridge over River Cam Node Viewpoint 7 Bidwell Viewpoint E1	No Specific Assessment	Minor/ Moderate Adverse	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible (Neutral)	Negligible

Commentary - Pedestrian Bridge over River Cam

The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) assessed the receptor sensitivity of Viewpoint E1 as High but magnitude of change as Negligible and significance of visual effects as Negligible Neutral. My assessment is the landscape value is ordinary, sensitivity of the view is high, and magnitude of change is low/ negligible which leads to a **Negligible** impact. There is no dispute on residual impacts from this viewpoint

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Residential Properties Fairham / Bourne Road Node Viewpoint 8/9 Bidwell Viewpoint 2	No Specific Assessment	Moderate/ Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse

Commentary - Residential Properties Fairham / Bourne Road

The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) assessed the receptor sensitivity of Viewpoint 2 as Medium/High, magnitude of change as Medium and significance of visual effects as Moderate (Adverse). My assessment is the landscape value is ordinary, sensitivity of the view is medium, and magnitude of change is medium which leads to a **Moderate adverse** impact. There is no dispute on residual impacts from this viewpoint.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15

Cambridge Bus Guided Route/ Residential Discovery Way Node viewpoint 11 Bidwell Viewpoint E5	No Specific Assessment	Moderate/ Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse

Commentary - Cambridge Bus Guided Route/ Residential Discovery Way

The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) assessed the receptor sensitivity of Viewpoint E5 as Medium, magnitude of change as Medium and significance of visual effects as Moderate (Adverse). My assessment is the landscape value is ordinary, sensitivity of the view is medium, and magnitude of change is medium which leads to a **Moderate adverse** impact. There is no dispute on residual impacts from this viewpoint.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Milton Road Node Viewpoint 12 Bidwell Viewpoint 14	No Specific Assessment	Minor Adverse	Minor (Neutral)	Negligible	Minor (Neutral)	Negligible
Milton Road/ Cowley Park Node Viewpoint 13	No Specific Assessment	Negligible	Moderate (neutral)	Negligible	Moderate (neutral)	Negligible

Bidwell Viewpoint 4						
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Commentary - Milton Road/ Cowley Park
There is no dispute on residual impacts from the above viewpoint.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Fen Road/ Travelers Site Node Viewpoint 16/17 Bidwell Viewpoints E6	No Specific Assessment	Moderate/ Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ Major Adverse

Commentary - Fen Road/ Travelers Site
The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) assessed the receptor sensitivity of Viewpoint E6 as Low, magnitude of change as Medium and significance of visual effects as Minor/ Moderate (Neutral). My assessment is the landscape value is ordinary, sensitivity of the view is medium as it is on a vehicular / pedestrian route that connects to PROW and the River Cam. The magnitude of change is medium because the scale of development from these viewpoints will be clearly seen above the traveler’s site which leads to a Moderate/ Major adverse impact. This viewpoint has not been modelled in the VU City software to show the true visual impacts from this location. The omission of not undertaking these views results in an underestimation of the real impacts from this location.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
A14 Bridge over River Cam Node Viewpoint 18 Bidwell Viewpoint 20	No Specific Assessment	Moderate Adverse	Minor/Moderate (Neutral)	Minor/Moderate adverse	Minor/Moderate (Neutral)	Minor/Moderate Adverse

Commentary - A14 Bridge over River Cam

There is no dispute on residual impacts from the above viewpoint but clearly some **minor/moderate adverse** impacts.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
River Cam Fen Rivers Way Node Viewpoint 19/21	No Specific Assessment	Major Adverse	No Specific Assessment	Major Adverse	No Specific Assessment	Major Adverse

Commentary - River Cam Fen Rivers Way

The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) does not assess equivalent Node Viewpoints 19/ 21 or any locations on the west bank of the River Cam which I believe is a major omission from the assessment which results in an underplaying of visual impacts. The west side of the River Cam consists of a long distance footpath – The Fen Rivers Way and is a high sensitivity landscape receptor and landscape value is good. The magnitude of change from these viewpoints will, be high which results in **Major Adverse** visual impacts.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Plough Inn, Fen Ditton Node Viewpoint 22/23	No Specific Assessment	Major Adverse	No Specific Assessment	Major Adverse	No specific Assessment	Major Adverse

Commentary - Plough Inn, Fen Ditton

The Bidwell LVIA (see table 12.5) does not assess equivalent Node Viewpoints 22/ 23 which I believe is a major omission from the assessment which results in an underplaying of visual impacts from the east of the site. The Plough Inn public beer garden has a clear view of the proposed development across the River Cam. It is a location where people go and sit with a drink to enjoy the rural river view which if the appeal was allowed would be dominated by up to 7 storey development on the skyline. The Plough Inn Public Garden is a high sensitivity landscape receptor where the landscape value is good. The magnitude of change from these viewpoints will, be high which results in **Major Adverse** visual impacts.

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Footpath 85/6 Fen Ditton Node Viewpoint 20 Bidwell Viewpoint 6	No Specific Assessment	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Major Adverse

Commentary - Footpath 85/6 Fen Ditton

There is no dispute on residual impacts from the above viewpoint. Both my assessment and Bidwells assessment identify **major adverse** impacts from this viewpoint which is significant for decision makers. The reason for this is the landscape value is good, sensitivity is high, and magnitude of change is high. Development proposed also blocks views towards St George's, Chesterton. See Node viewpoint 20 in Appendix 6 and VU city Viewpoint 8 which has been reproduced in appendix 9

Visual receptor	Bidwell Construct phase	Node Construct phase	Bidwell Short Term Year 1	Node Short Term Year 1	Bidwell Long Term Year 15	Node Long Term Year 15
Field Lane / Horningsea Road B1047 Node Viewpoint 24/25	No Assessment	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	Minor Adverse

Bidwell Viewpoint 9						
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Commentary
There is no dispute on residual impacts from the above viewpoint.

7.60 Landscape and Visual Effect Conclusions

7.61 In summary the Bidwell’s LVIA identified one **major adverse landscape visual** impact from viewpoint number 6 – Footpath 85/6 Fen Ditton (see table 12.5- Year 1 visual impacts in Bidwell’s LVIA and para 12.203 about residual year 15 impacts being the same as year 1). This view is also highlighted in VU city Viewpoint 8 (see my appendix 9 and in my viewpoint 20 (see appendix 5 and 6). This **major adverse** residual landscape impact is significant.

7.62 My assessment is that **five** viewpoints have **major adverse** residual visual landscape impacts as follows:

- Footpath 85/ 6 Fen Ditton – Node Viewpoint 20
- Fen Rivers Way – Node Viewpoints 19, 21
- Plough Inn, Fen Ditton Node Viewpoints 22, 23

7.63 This is significant in landscape terms and demonstrates the Bidwell LVIA has underestimated views from the east.

7.64 My assessment is that five views are **moderate/ major adverse** which is significant and includes viewpoints 1, 2 and 3 Ditton Meadows and viewpoints 16 and 17 from travelers’ site and from Fen Road. The Bidwell LVIA does not have any moderate/ major adverse impacts.

7.65 Bidwell’s LVIA also identifies **moderate adverse** impacts for two viewpoints as follows:

- Viewpoint 2 Bramblefield LNR
- Viewpoint E5 – Discovery Way

7.66 My assessment is that **three** views are **moderate adverse** visual impacts as follows:

- Node Viewpoints 8/9 – residential Properties – Bourne Road
- Node Viewpoint 11 – Discovery Way/ Cambridge Guided Bus Route

7.67 Locations where I anticipate lower residual visual impacts i.e., **minor adverse/ negligible** in the longer term are from longer distance views, as shown in Node viewpoints 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 24 and 25. This is generally consistent with the findings of the LVIA.

Mitigation

- 7.68 Having considered mitigation proposed in relation to the planning application it does not change my assessment of visual impacts.
- 7.69 Although it is accepted that proposed mitigation could have some benefits when close to the site, it will not screen the proposal particularly from medium distance views to the east and in the winter.
- 7.70 The Bidwell LVIA also accepts as already highlighted that the proposed mitigation will not change visual impact from year 1 to year 15.
- 7.71 The only thing that could mitigate landscape visual impacts and reduce the adverse impacts is to reduce the height and mass of the proposed development significantly more in line with the parameters of the NEC LVIA which sets out heights of 12-21 m in figure 5.1.

8.0 LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 In this Chapter I consider the following landscape design issues in relation to the reasons for refusal including the following key elements:
- Vision/ uniqueness/ local identity
 - Design principles
 - Landscape character areas
 - Access and location open space
 - Hard and soft landscaping
 - Underground basements
- 8.2 This section should be read alongside the landscape officers consultation responses from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (CD3.31b) who was involved in the pre application discussions and saw the process evolving over a period of time.
- 8.3 I have not sought to repeat all these comments but undertake my own independent review of the approach to landscape design and its outcomes to identify some of the key issues that impacts on the approach to landscape design and the acceptability of proposals.
- 8.4 Proposals have not taken into consideration existing landscape features such as the pioneer woodland on site. It does not have a strong vision based on the history of the site and relies on generic design principles rather than site specific design principles that respond to the site and LVIA. The location of children's play space and compromises created by basement parking and size and location of buildings does create a landscape design which is compromised.
- 8.5 The scheme is not landscape led. The landscape design is fitted around building rather than buildings responding to landscape. The layout of the site should have related to the landscape appraisal and LVIA to establish specific design principles to respond to the landscape baseline appraisal work. This has not occurred as existing landscape features picked up in the appraisal on p.7 such as the existing tree vegetation in the centre of the site (see Appendix 5 and 6 - Node viewpoint 15) which is not an insubstantial tree belt is removed rather than buildings being designed to retain this feature.
- 8.6 The landscape design appraisal plan should have picked up the need for a substantial landscape buffer to the east of the site to reduce visual impacts. A disconnect with different landscape architects doing design and LVIA appears to have occurred.

- 8.7 It is also for the landscape architect to influence building design and location and heights of buildings not to create impacts on microclimate, over shadowing of public space and impacts of basement parking on the landscape design.

Vision

- 8.8 The overarching vision for the landscape design is not clearly set out. I am not aware of an overarching vision statement within the landscape documents. P. 337 of the design and access statement has landscape vision as a title but then dives straight into design principles.
- 8.9 It is important to have an overarching vision to ensure unique and successful place making based on location, history, and future. If this is not set at the outset you can end up with a design that could be anywhere, that is not unique and is generic in its design approach.
- 8.10 This site in my view could have had a more unique landscape vision that shouts 'This is Cambridge'. The railway sidings and original pattern of the lines could have been incorporated as a strong element in the design rather than just a few paving details. The wild element of the design should not have been limited to the waste ground to the north but could weave its way through the design itself as a stronger ecological and design feature. The scheme as designed feels quite formal in parts and does not stand out as being different or unique. A bold vision would have helped to create unifying elements rather than the spaces being broken down into multiple character areas.

Design principles

- 8.11 I cannot argue with the sentiment of all the landscape design principles as set out. All of which seem generally sensible. What is lacking is design principles for this scheme. No sense is given to how the landscape design principles have impacted on the layout and design of this scheme. I would have liked to see more specific design principles such as:
- Create a substantial landscape buffer to eastern part of the site to reduce visual impact of proposals from the east.
 - Interpret the history of the site by looking to use historic pattern of railway lines in the design.
 - Retain existing landscape features on the site and design spaces to accommodate them.
 - Create east west visual spaces/ links through the site to give more visual permeability.

- Ensure views towards St Mary's church in Fen Ditton and St George Church in Chesterton are aligned with streets or open spaces.
- Provide a transition of spaces from the wild park to the station by...
- Ensure children's open space requirements are met fully within a building block without the need to cross any busy access roads.
- Avoid conflicts between ecology, access and play in the wild park area.

8.12 The above are only examples and are not definitive but make the point that landscape design needs to respond to place, influence layout and buildings rather than landscape just responding to buildings footprints given.

8.13 I cannot see any development options where landscape design has influenced the building footprint and layout. It may have been beneficial to have more open space within the centre of the site and shift buildings back into the wild park area. We don't know because it does not appear to have been explored.

Landscape Character Areas

8.14 The development seems to have been split into 8 landscape character areas as follows:

- Chesterton Square
- Station Row
- Chesterton Gardens
- Courtyards
- Milton Way
- Piazza
- Wild Park

8.15 I understand the need to break the site down into different areas, but they should not really be called character areas. The site should be a character area in itself. i.e., Cambridge North Station Railway District. If it is to be split maybe that should relate to either use or function of buildings and spaces for example:

- Living quarter
- Commercial quarter
- Wild Park

8.16 This then allows a clear distinction for sub areas as part of a wider character area. Although only a small point the naming of spaces can misappropriate existing places to places that are elsewhere. This is a new place not a historic part of Chesterton in Cambridge. The use of names such as Chesterton Square and gardens does not seem appropriate as it weakens the identify of what was and is Chesterton. It is much better to name these spaces to something new or to refer back to the history of the site i.e., Railway Sidings Square, St Mary's church view. Naming a space piazza also feels very generic which ties into concerns that the landscape has become generic, not rooted in place, and not influenced by specific design principles for this site.

Access and location of open space

8.17 The landscape officer raises concerns over the amount of open space provided as part of the development and in particular formal children's open space. It is my understanding that some of these concerns on quantum was a result in the amount of formal children space being provided for example in Chesterton Gardens not meeting the open space standards for children's play.

8.18 As I understand matters, to meet the formal children open space standards relatively late in the day additional play space was provided in the wild park so technically proposals do meet the required quantum of open space.

8.19 What is in dispute is the design implication of meetings standards in this way. This is because of two key points as follows:

- Access to these additional formal children play space.
- Conflicts between combing an ecological park with encouraging formal children's play space in the same location.

8.20 The first point relates to the fact that the largest residential block is located to the west of Milton Avenue which is the main access road to the station and that children will need to cross both this busy road and additional road to the north of the development to access the wild park and formal children's play space to the north. This has implications for both safety in terms of crossing roads and natural visual surveillance from residential properties being lost.

8.21 The preferred solution should be to provide all formal children open space to the west of Milton Avenue adequately.

8.22 The second point relates to proposals which encourage wildlife, biodiversity, and ecological benefits in a space and the conflicts which arises when you also encourage the

same space for formal play space. This could be solved by providing the correct amount of children's play space within the main part of the site rather than relying on the area to the north where conflicts exist.

Hard and Soft Landscaping

- 8.23 I appreciate landscape design can be subjective and to one person a more organic and ecological approach might be the right way to go and to another person a more formal approach may be appropriate.
- 8.24 However, it is important to have a strong vision for both hard and soft landscape design. Consideration also needs to be given to the practicalities of the design, maintenance and not only what the design looks like today but in future years as well.
- 8.25 Landscape is a dynamic element within any design and changes over seasons and time. Proposals for hard and soft landscape design as has already been set out is determined and influenced by building footprints and building design. Choice of species and depth of planting is influenced by space that is available. This is impacted upon by things such as basement car parking under landscape spaces, the width of streets etc.
- 8.26 These are important points to mention as they can limit, particularly on the soft landscaping side, what can be achieved. For example, you cannot create a woodland edge if you only have a 5-10 m strip of space for planting. Instead, you can probably create an avenue of trees with some underplanting.
- 8.27 In my view the soft landscaping proposals have been compromised particularly to the east of the site by an access road and a very narrow strip of planting. This is where a wider strip would have allowed a more natural woodland buffer typically found alongside railway lines could have been provided. This would have had the added benefit of helping to deal with landscape visual issues coming out of the LVIA and VU city work. Larger trees species could have been planted to provide greater mitigation in this location.
- 8.28 The swale provided down Station Row is in principle a good idea from a sustainable drainage perspective but often without having constant water running through can become a litter trap and can look unsightly if it is not well maintained.
- 8.29 Overall, the soft landscaping proposals appears to include a diverse range of trees, shrubs and perennial planting. Sometimes it is formal, sometimes it is not. For example, Chesterton Square appears very formal and Station row is trying to be informal, Milton Avenue is formal, Chesterton Gardens is trying to be informal. Should more of a transition

occur from the formal elements near the station to more informal as you go out to the wild park?

8.30 Hard landscaping seems to propose high-quality materials of which I don't take much issue with. What is probably more important is the function of spaces and if they are clearly defined. For example, what will Chesterton Square be used for? As 2 Milton Square is to the south of Chesterton Square how much overshadowing is created in this space particularly later in the day. This does not appear to be demonstrated with the landscape and open space reports for this and other spaces.

8.31 **Underground Basements**

8.32 As can be seen on the overall landscape masterplan and within cross sections provided (see CD 1.78 Landscape Masterplan, CD 128.001 Chesterton Square Cross Section) large underground car park basements can be found under the majority of Chesterton Square and to the north of 1 Milton Avenue.

8.33 This site is in a location which has highly accessible public transport and its raises the question whether these basements need to be extended below streets and public spaces. The implications of these basements is that you end up with in effect a podium landscape rather than planting straight into the ground. This limits your planting choices particularly large trees and can create spaces which are a bit stark within the landscape.

8.34 Ideally these basements would be limited to the footprint of buildings rather than being extended into the public realm.

8.35 **Landscape Design Conclusions**

8.36 So, in conclusion on landscape design matters I make the following observations:

- No strong conceptual landscape design vision for the site. It feels generic rather than unique.
- It feels very much as a landscape design that is fitted around building rather than buildings responding to landscape.
- No specific design principles that respond to this actual site, but a generic list of design principles have been provided.
- A disconnect between the LVIA and landscape design process. The landscape design has not sought to create east west view lines or larger buffer along eastern boundary of the site.
- A lack of landscape design influencing the layout of the site.

- Too many character areas.
- Poor location of some formal children's open space in relation to location and access.
- Conflicts between formal children's play space and ecology and biodiversity goals.
- Soft landscaping proposals not being strongly formal or informal giving confused concept.
- Potential management and maintenance issues with the swale.
- Potential lack of consideration of microclimate and overshadowing of public spaces by buildings.
- Naming of places feels generic and not appropriate.
- Some spaces like Chesterton Square don't seem to have a clear function.
- Having underground basement under key public spaces limits landscape design options

8.37 Overall, despite the level of detail provided for me it is the lack of a more landscape led approach to the layout of buildings, having specific design principles for this site that influence the architects and the disconnect between LVIA process and design decisions that results in an inferior approach to landscape design rather than specific detail of individual areas of hard and soft landscaping.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

9.1 This Chapter summarises my conclusions and serves as my Summary Proof of Evidence.

9.2 Scope of Evidence

9.3 Node were appointed by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning in April 2023 to prepare a landscape proof of evidence in respect of the appeal against refusal of permission.

9.4 My evidence addresses the visual and landscape reason for refusal alongside the landscape design and open space reason for refusal.

9.5 The Site and Context

9.6 Historic Context

9.7 The starting point for any site should be to understand the historic context of a site within the landscape. Historically the site has sat in a rural location on the edge of the River Cam Valley with clear separation between open countryside and Fen Ditton and the settlement of Chesterton which has now been incorporated into the growth of Cambridge. The site in the 1920's was a marsh area in the floodplain of the River Cam and in the 1960's became railway sidings and it is not until recently that new employment and business parks have developed to the north of the site and the new station with associated development has been put in place (See Appendix 1 : Historic Plans)

9.8 This historic context is important as it sets the context of what the historic landscape was like and what was important about it that still needs to be enhanced and protected for example the separation of settlement such as Chesterton and Fen Ditton, the rural character of the river corridor and to develop an understanding of what has been lost and what is important to the historical narrative of the site and how that may be interpreted into development and landscape proposals going forward.

9.9 Landscape Context

9.10 The landscape context has been defined by a number of national, regional and local character appraisals which are explored in more detail in chapter 5 of this proof of

evidence. It is also defined by its policy context including the large swath of Green Belt which sits to the east and south of the site. (See appendix 3 – Landscape character areas and designation)

9.11 **Site Context**

9.12 The site comprises an irregular wedge of land measuring approximately 9.9ha, located between the railway to the east and Cambridgeshire Guided Busway (“the busway”) to the west, and bisected by Milton Avenue. The site is generally level ranging from approximately 5.4-7.1m AOD Newlyn.

9.13 The site has previously been developed with a historical use for railway sidings prior to the construction of the Cambridge North station. The western part of the site has largely been cleared, with limited scrub vegetation. The northern and central parts of the site contain more mature scrub whilst a surface car park serving the Cambridge North station is located along the eastern side of the site. There is also a temporary construction compound towards the northern end of the site.

9.14 The primary road serving this area, and the only vehicular route into the application site, is Cowley Road / Milton Avenue which connects with Milton Road just south of its interchange with the A14 and terminates at the Cambridge North station.

9.15 The railway station, a hotel, and an office building are located to the south.

9.16 The eastern boundary of the site is formed by the railway tracks immediately abutting the site, with the river Cam and the village of Fen Ditton beyond. The land between the tracks and the river Cam is currently occupied by a low-density, low-rise development of caravan parks and low-grade industrial units accessed from Fen Road. Beyond the river, the village of Fen Ditton is a designated Conservation Area. Further south, the river and the large open spaces associated with it form a green corridor with public access that link the Fen landscape with the heart of the city. They form an important aspect of the character and setting of Cambridge and are designated Conservation Areas. Furthermore, land to the east of the site is located within the Cambridge Green Belt.

9.17 The boundary to the southwest is formed by the guided busway. South of the guided busway are Nuffield Road Allotments and Bramblefields Local Nature Reserve which,

together with a band of dense vegetation along the bus corridor, forms a green buffer to the residential area of Chesterton. Chesterton consists primarily of low-density, two-storey family housing.

- 9.18 The Cambridge Business Park bounds the site to the north-west. This consists predominantly of large 3 to 4 storey office buildings surrounded by large areas of surface car parking. Adjoining and beyond the site to the north and west are further industrial uses including the Cowley Road Industrial Estate, Aggregate Works and Waste Water Treatment Plant, all of which are safeguarded sites in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2021.

Landscape Effects

Summary of Landscape Effects

- 9.19 The Bidwell LVIA concludes in para 12.221 the following:
- 9.20 'In terms of landscape and townscape effects, the Proposed Development does not result in any significant effects. The evolution of the master plan considered the sensitivities highlighted in the LVIA process, resulting in a proposal that appropriately responds to its context. Nonetheless, it is noted that the sensitivity of the eastern edge of the Site is sufficient to give rise to moderate adverse effects on the landscape setting of the Fen Ditton CA, aligned with the significant effects on receptors at viewpoint 8. However, these effects should be read in conjunction with the lack of adverse visual effects on viewpoints 5 and 24, indicating that the change in townscape terms is not perceived equally across the receptor. As a result, the effect on the landscape setting of the Fen Ditton CA is not considered to be significant.'
- 9.21 I disagree with this statement that no significant landscape effects in terms of landscape and townscape will occur as I believe significant effects on the following landscape receptors will be felt as follows:

- The landscape sensitivity of Landscape character Area 9a River Cam is **high** the magnitude on impacts in **medium / high** and significance of effects are **moderate/ major adverse which is significant**.
- The Landscape setting of Fen Ditton CA has medium/high sensitivity as Bidwell LVIA also states and that the magnitude of change is **medium to high**, and significance of effects are **moderate/ major which is significant**. The Bidwell LVIA refers to viewpoint 5- 20 but it failed to consider worst case scenarios from Fen Ditton meadow within the conservation area and from the Plough Public house beer garden also in the Fen Ditton Conservation Area (see Appendix 5 node viewpoints 1, 2,20, 22 and 23 and appendix 11 -Viewpoint assessment comparison table)
- The impact on Cambridge skyline is much greater than stated with the LVIA which states the effects are **moderate neutral**. My view is that the effects will be **moderate/ major adverse** as both Fen Ditton church and St George's church will be screened by the height and mass of development from a number of locations including from the western part of the site and from Viewpoint 20 in the Fen Ditton Conservation Area. **This is a significant landscape effect**. (see Appendix 7 Views to landmark buildings on Skyline)
- The impact on local residential area is **moderate/ major** adverse due to the scale, mass and height of proposed development on a prevailing low height residential context with development proposed being much higher and dominant within this character type.

Landscape and Visual Effect Conclusions

- 9.22 In summary the Bidwell's LVIA identified one **major adverse landscape visual** impact from viewpoint number 6 – Footpath 85/6 Fen Ditton (See table 12.5-Year 1 visual impacts in Bidwell's LVIA and para 12.203 about residual year 15 impacts being the same as year 1). This view is also highlighted in VU city Viewpoint 8 (see my appendix 9 and in my viewpoint 20 (see appendix 5 and 6). This **major adverse** residual landscape impact is significant.
- 9.23 My assessment is that **five** viewpoints have **major adverse** residual visual landscape impacts as follows:
- Footpath 85/ 6 Fen Ditton – Node viewpoint 20
 - Fen Rivers Way – Node Viewpoints 19, 21

- Plough Inn, Fen Ditton – Node Viewpoints 22, 23

9.24 This is significant in landscape terms and demonstrates the Bidwell LVIA has underestimated views from the east.

9.25 My assessment is that five views are **moderate/ major adverse** which is significant and includes viewpoints 1,2, 3 Ditton Meadows and Viewpoints 16 and 17 from travelers' site and from Fen Road. The Bidwell LVIA does not have any moderate/ major adverse impacts.

9.26 Bidwell's LVIA also identifies **moderate adverse** impacts for two viewpoints as follows:

- Viewpoint 2 Bramfield LNR
- Viewpoint E5 – Discovery Way

9.27 My assessment is that **three** views are **moderate adverse** visual impacts as follows:

- Node Viewpoints 8/9 – residential Properties – Bourne Road
- Node Viewpoint 11 – Discovery Way/ Cambridge Guided Bus Route

9.28 Locations where I anticipate lower residual visual impacts i.e., **minor adverse/ negligible** in the longer term are from longer distance views, as shown in Node viewpoints 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 24 and 25. This is generally consistent with the findings of the LVIA.

Mitigation

9.29 Having considered mitigation proposed in relation to the planning application it does not change my assessment of visual impacts.

9.30 Although it is accepted that proposed mitigation could have some benefits when close to the site, it will not screen proposal particularly from medium distance views to the east and in the winter.

9.31 The Bidwell LVIA also accepts as already highlighted that the proposed mitigation will not change visual impact from year 1.

9.32 The only thing that could mitigate landscape visual impacts and reduce the adverse impacts is to reduce the height and mass of the proposed development significantly more in line with the parameters of the NEC LVIA which sets out heights of 12-21 m in figure 5.1.

Landscape Design Conclusions

- 9.33 This section should be read alongside the landscape officers consultation responses from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (CD3.31b) who was involved in the pre application discussions and saw the process evolving over a period of time.
- 9.34 Proposals have not taken into consideration existing landscape features such as the pioneer woodland on site. It does not have a strong vision based on the history of the site and relies on generic design principles rather than site specific design principles that respond to the site and LVIA. The location of children’s play space and compromises created by basement parking and size and location of buildings does create a landscape design which is compromised.
- 9.35 The scheme is not landscape led. The landscape design is fitted around building rather than buildings responding to landscape. The layout of the site should have related to the landscape appraisal and LVIA to establish specific design principles to respond to the landscape baseline appraisal work. This has not occurred as existing landscape features picked up in the appraisal on p.7 such as the existing tree vegetation in the centre of the site (see Appendix 5 and 6 - Node viewpoint 15) which is not an insubstantial tree belt is removed rather than buildings being designed to retain this feature.
- 9.36 The landscape design appraisal plan should have picked up the need for a substantial landscape buffer to the east of the site to reduce visual impacts. A disconnect with different landscape architects doing design and LVIA appears to have occurred.
- 9.37 It is also for the landscape architect to influence building design and location and heights of buildings not to create impacts on microclimate, over shadowing of public space and impacts of basement parking on the landscape design.

Vision

- 9.38 The overarching vision for the landscape design is not clearly set out. I am not aware of an overarching vision statement within the landscape documents. P. 337 of the design and access statement has landscape vision as a title but then dives straight into design principles.
- 9.39 It is important to have an overarching vision to ensure unique and successful place making based on location, history, and future. If this is not set at the outset you can end up with a design that could be anywhere, that is not unique and is generic in its design approach.

9.40 This site in my view could have had a more unique landscape vision that shouted this is Cambridge North Station on the edge of the River Cam. It would have been nice to see the railway sidings and original pattern of the lines being a strong element in the design rather than just a few paving details. It would have also been good to see the wild element of the design not just limited to the waste ground to the north but weaving its way through the design itself as a stronger ecological and design feature. The scheme as designed feels quite formal in parts and does not stand out as being different or unique. A bold vision would have helped to create unifying elements rather than the spaces being broken down into multiple character areas.

Design principles

9.41 I cannot argue with the sentiment of all the landscape design principles as set out . All of which seem generally sensible. What is lacking is design principles for this scheme. No sense is given to how the landscape design principles have impacted on the layout and design of this scheme. I would have liked to see more specific design principles such as:

- Create a substantial landscape buffer to eastern part of the site to reduce visual impact of proposals from the east.
- Interpret the history of the site by looking to use historic pattern of railway lines in the design.
- Retain existing landscape features on the site and design spaces to accommodate them.
- Create east west visual spaces/ links through the site to give more visual permeability.
- Ensure views towards St Mary's church in Fen Ditton and St George Church in Chesterton are aligned with streets or open spaces.
- Provide a transition of spaces from the wild park to the station by...
- Ensure children's open space requirements are met fully within a building block without the need to cross any busy access roads.
- Avoid conflicts between ecology, access and play in the wild park area.

- 9.42 The above are only examples and are not definitive but make the point that landscape design needs to respond to place, influence layout and buildings rather than landscape just responding to buildings footprints given.
- 9.43 I cannot see any development options where landscape design has influence the layout and footprint of buildings. It may have been beneficial to have more open space within the centre of the site and shift buildings back into the wild park area. We don't know because it does not appear to have been explored.

Landscape Character Areas

- 9.44 The development seems to have been split into 8 landscape character areas as follows:
- 9.45 Chesterton Square
- Chesterton Square
 - Station Row
 - Chesterton Gardens
 - Courtyards
 - Milton Way
 - Piazza
 - Wild Park
- 9.46 I understand the need to break the site down into different areas, but they should not really be called character areas. The site should be a character area in itself. i.e., Cambridge North Station Railway district? If it is to be split maybe that should relate to either use or function of buildings and spaces for example:
- Living quarter
 - Commercial quarter
 - Wild Park
- 9.47 This then allows a clear distinction for sub areas as part of a larger wider character area. Although only a small point the naming of spaces can misappropriate existing places to places that are elsewhere. This is a new place not a historic part of Chesterton in

Cambridge. The use of names such as Chesterton Square and gardens does not seem appropriate as it weakens the identify of what was and is Chesterton. Much better to name these spaces to something new or to refer back to the history of the site i.e., Railing Sidings Square, St Mary's church view. Naming a space piazza also feels very generic which ties into concerns that the landscape has become generic, not rooted in place, and not influenced by specific design principles for this site.

Access and location of open space

- 9.48 The landscape officer raises concerns over the amount of open space provided as part of the development and in particular formal children's open space. It is my understanding that some of these concerns on quantum was a result in the amount of formal children space being provided for example in Chesterton Gardens not meeting the open space standards for children's play.
- 9.49 As I understand to meet the formal children open space standards relatively late in the day additional play space was provided in the wild park so technically proposals do meet the required quantum of open space.
- 9.50 What is in dispute is the design implication of meetings standards in this way. This is because of two key points as follows:
- Access to these additional formal children play space.
 - Conflicts between combing an ecological park with encouraging formal children's play space in the same location.
- 9.51 The first point relates to the fact that the largest residential block is located to the west of Milton Avenue which is the main access road to the station and that children will need to cross both this busy road and additional road to the north of the development to access the wild park and formal children's play space to the north. This has implications for both safety in terms of crossing roads and natural visual surveillance from residential properties being lost.
- 9.52 The preferred solution should be to provide adequate formal children open space to the west of Milton Avenue which I believe is not the case.
- 9.53 The second point relates to the fact that to encourage wildlife, biodiversity, and ecological benefits a conflict or tension exists where you encourage greater use for play. This could

be solved by providing the correct amount of children's play space within the main part of the site rather than relying on the area to the north where conflicts exist.

Hard and Soft Landscaping

- 9.54 I appreciate landscape design can be subjective and to one person a more organic and ecological approach might be the right way to go and to another person a more formal approach may be appropriate.
- 9.55 However, it is important to have a strong vision for both hard and soft landscape design. Consideration also needs to be given to the practicalities of the design, maintenance and not only what the design looks like today but in future years as well.
- 9.56 Landscape is a dynamic element within any design and changes over seasons and time. Proposals for hard and soft landscape design as has already been set out is determined and influenced by building footprints and building design. Choice of species and depth of planting is influenced by space that is available. This is impacted upon by things such as basement car parking under landscape spaces, the width of streets etc.
- 9.57 These are important points to mention as they can limit particularly on the soft landscaping side what can be achieved. For example, you cannot create a woodland edge if you only have a 5-10 m strip of space for planting. Instead, you can probably create an avenue of trees with some underplanting.
- 9.58 In my view the soft landscaping proposals have been compromised particular to the east of the site by an access road and a very narrow strip of planting. This is where a wider strip would have allowed a more natural woodland buffer typically found alongside railway lines could have been provided. This would have had the added benefit of helping to deal with landscape visual issues coming out of the LVIA and VU city work. Larger trees species could have been planted to provide greater mitigation in this location.
- 9.59 The swale provided down Station Row is in principle a good idea from a sustainable drainage perspective but often without having constant water running through can become a litter trap and can look unsightly if it is not well maintained.
- 9.60 Allotment provision and growing in planters in the public realm may work but has its pitfalls in relation to watering, ownership, and vandalism. It should not be a substitute for proper provision on site.
- 9.61 Overall, the soft landscaping proposals appears to include a diverse range of trees, shrubs and perennial planting. Sometimes it is formal, sometimes it is not. For example,

Chesterton Square appears very formal and Station row is trying to be informal, Milton Avenue is formal, Chesterton Gardens is trying to be informal. Should more of a transition occur from the formal elements near the station to more informal as you go out to the wild park?

- 9.62 Hard landscaping seems to propose high-quality material of which I don't take much issue with. What is probably more important is the function of spaces and if they are clearly defined. For example, what will Chesterton Square be used for? As 2 Milton Square is to the south of Chesterton Square how much overshadowing is created in this space particularly later in the day. This does not appear to be demonstrated with the landscape and open space reports for this and other spaces.

Underground Basements

- 9.63 As can be seen on the overall landscape masterplan and within cross sections provided (see CD 1.78 Landscape Masterplan, CD 128.001 Chesterton Square Cross Section) large underground car park basements can be found under the majority of Chesterton Square and to the north of 1 Milton Avenue.
- 9.64 This site is in location which has highly accessible public transport and it raises the question whether these basements need to be extended below streets and public spaces. The implications of these basements is that you end up with in effect a podium landscape rather than planting straight into the ground. This limits your planting choices particularly large trees and can create spaces which are a bit stark within the landscape.
- 9.65 Ideally these basements would be limited to the footprint of buildings rather than being extended into the public realm.

Landscape Design Conclusions

- 9.66 So, in conclusion on landscape design matters I make the following observations:
- No strong conceptual landscape design vision for the site. It feels generic rather than unique.
 - It feels very much as a landscape design that is fitted around building rather than buildings responding to landscape.
 - No specific design principles that respond to this actual site but a generic list of design principles have been provided.

- A disconnect between the LVIA and landscape design process. The landscape design has not sought to create east west view lines or larger buffer along eastern boundary of the site.
- A lack of landscape design influencing the layout of the site.
- Too many character areas.
- Location of formal children's open space in relation to location and access.
- Conflicts between formal children space and ecology and biodiversity goals.
- Soft landscaping proposals not being strongly formal or informal giving confused concept.
- Potential management and maintenance issues with allotments and swale.
- Potential lack of consideration of microclimate and overshadowing of public spaces by buildings.
- Naming of places feels generic and not appropriate.
- Some spaces like Chesterton Square don't seem to have a clear function.
- Having underground basement under key public spaces limits landscape design options

Final Landscape Conclusion

9.67 Having considered both landscape effects and landscape visual impacts of proposals as well as landscape design, I conclude in summary the following:

- The weight to this harm and the applicable planning policy conflicts are addressed in the Planning Proof of Evidence.
- From landscape office comments as part of pre application discussions the LVIA process has followed the presentation of development.
- A lack of a landscape led approach to the layout of buildings.
- A disconnect between LVIA process and design decisions that results in an inferior approach to landscape design rather than specific detail of individual areas of hard and soft landscaping.
- Development that is between 14-30.8m in height which is 9.8 m higher that identified for block 4 in the NEC LVIA.

- Development that increases the mass and length of existing development by 220 m or 2.75 times that of the existing proposed development at North Cambridge Station when looking from the east.
- The reduction in heights of building on the eastern edge with higher building heights behind which does not reduce the overall mass of development looking from medium distance views from the east.
- Development that has no east- west visual permeability allowing views to break up the mass created by staggered blocks.
- A lack of landscape vision and generic design principles
- Development that has no substantial landscape buffer to the east of the site.
- Deficiencies in the location of formal children's play space
- Impacts of basement car parking on landscape spaces
- A loss of views across the site towards St Mary Church and St George Church in Chesterton which are both listed buildings and landmarks on the skyline.
- **Moderate/Major Adverse** impacts on Landscape Character Area 9a River Cam, on Skyline of Cambridge and local residential areas.
- Five identified Node viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 16, 17 which have residual **moderate/ major adverse** impacts which is significant.
- Five identified Node viewpoints 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 which have residual **major adverse** impacts which is significant.

9.68 In Conclusion I agree with Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Committee that there will be a significant level of harm/adverse effect arising from the development in landscape effects, landscape visual impacts and in relation to landscape design as set out in reason for refusal 1 and 3 and as set out in this proof of evidence in relation to NPPF and adopted policies set out earlier within this proof of evidence.