

# **Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review**

for

## **Land South of High Street, Hauxton, Cambridgeshire**

on behalf of

Redrow Homes Limited

**November 2021**

The Landscape Partnership Ltd is a practice of Chartered Landscape Architects, Chartered Town Planners and Chartered Environmentalists, registered with the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment & the Arboricultural Association

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Appraisal has been prepared by The Landscape Partnership Ltd on behalf of Redrow Homes Ltd in relation to land to the south of High Street, Hauxton, Cambridgeshire (hereafter referred to as “the Site” or “the Hauxton site”). The reports supersedes an earlier report prepared in November 2019 which related to a larger site which incorporated this Site as well as additional land further to the south and east.
- 1.2 The focus of the report is to undertake a Green Belt review of the site against the five purposes as set out within the NPPF and in the light of the ‘Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (2021)’ (GBA) and the published ‘Greater Cambridge Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (2021)’ (HELAA). The report also incorporates a brief Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the site.
- 1.3 These two different, but related, tasks are approached through:
- Providing an appraisal of the landscape features and characteristics for the Site.
  - Identifying details of statutory designations (relevant to landscape and visual amenity).
  - Establishing the character of the landscape, as defined at a district scale along with an assessment of landscape character at a local scale.
  - Identifying the visual envelope of the Site and the degree of visual enclosure.
  - Appraising the potential landscape and visual impacts associated with the potential development of the Site.
  - Establishing the visibility of the Site from the surrounding area, the main views towards and of the Site, and any potential effects on these views arising from any future residential development.
  - Assessing the role of the Site within the Green Belt and its contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt.
  - Considering the suitability of the Site for development from a landscape and visual perspective and its possible release from the Green Belt to accommodate residential development.
- 1.4 This appraisal has been undertaken through a combination of a desktop study of relevant mapping and background documents combined with a visit to the Site and the surrounding area. No consultations with the Local Planning Authority or other statutory consultees were undertaken.

- 1.5 It is understood that the findings of this report will form part of the evidence base for the promotion of the Site for residential development as part of the new local plan process for Greater Cambridgeshire.

## 2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

### Site location

- 2.1 The Site is located on the eastern margins of Hauxton, one of the 'Necklace' villages that surround Cambridge which is located to the north of the Site (refer to Figure 01). The Site lies within the Cambridge Green Belt and to the west of the M11 Motorway just south of Junction 11.

### Site Description

- 2.2 The Site comprises an area of land c. 3.4ha in size and consists of one field currently down to arable use. The Site is effectively embraced by residential and education development along its southern and western boundaries and along approximately 75% of its northern boundary. An existing mature hedgerow that is aligned in a broadly south west to north east direction defines the remaining site boundary to the south east.
- 2.3 The western site boundary is defined by the well-treed settlement edge of Hauxton whilst a section of the short north east site boundary adjoins High Street which links Hauxton to Little Shelford which is located to the east of the motorway. A fragmented, remnant and visually permeable hedgerow defines a short section of the northern site boundary where it adjoins the High Street. Allotment gardens extend north from the northern side of the High Street and contribute to the perception of the settlement edge of Hauxton village extending eastwards towards the foot of the motorway embankment.
- 2.4 The Site is obviously indented into the settlement of Hauxton such that it is well-enclosed to the south, west and north by the existing mature vegetation associated with the settlement edge and rear gardens. The Site is effectively level with no more than a nominal variation of 1m.

### Historical change – brief overview of the Site and the locality

- 2.5 Whilst an appraisal of the historical development and any heritage significance of the Site falls outside the scope of this study a brief initial review of early Ordnance Survey mapping of the local area has been undertaken to enable a broader understanding of the Site and the immediate locality and the nature of change that has taken place within the local landscape over the last hundred years or so.
- 2.6 The 1:2,500 OS County Series from 1886 shows the Site with recognisable site boundaries and located within an area of small/medium sized fields set within a landscape where fields are intermittently divided by shelterbelt planting, copses and larger areas of woodland. The railway line to Cambridge (the Cambridge & Shepreth Branch) is already in place as is the road linking Hauxton Mill to Little Shelford which defines the northern site boundary. The hedgerow which defines the south east site boundary is also identifiable.

- 2.7 By the 1888-1891 1:10,560 OS County Series Hauxton and Hauxton Mill appear little changed in their extent and the link down The Lane to London Road is clearly shown. Field boundaries within and around the Site remain the same with small blocks of woodland dotted around the local landscape, in particular to the east and south west of the Site. Hauxton is shown as a small hamlet surrounded by woodland and located just to the south of the River Cam or Granta.
- 2.8 The landscape and settlements appear to change little over the next 40 to 50 years or so although by the time of the 1938-1951 1:10,560 OS County Series changes in the distribution of woodland is evident as are the small changes in the linear development of Hauxton. Changes in woodland cover include the emergence of a new woodland block to the west of The Lane and south of Hauxton and the woodland block to the north of the Obelisk located on the locally higher ground of St Margaret's Mount to the south of the Site. These are counterbalanced by the loss of woodland/parkland to the northern margins of Hauxton. The western edge of Little Shelford has also extended towards Hauxton with residential properties extending to the north of the railway line. The field patterns remain largely unaltered and the Site is still identifiable.
- 2.9 By the 1960s the area of woodland to the south and west of Hauxton is developing, the settlement remains clearly linear and Harston is expanding along London Road. The Site still remains identifiable with the field pattern unaltered. By 1974 Hauxton is no longer a single linear settlement having now also extended southwards along The Lane. Infill residential development along London Road has consolidated the northern edge of Harston and the disused pits between Hauxton and Harston allowed to develop as woodland. The settlement gap between Hauxton and Little Shelford has narrowed as Hauxton has crept eastwards along the southern edge of High Street with the allotment gardens now established on the opposite side of the road.
- 2.10 The 1982 1:10,000 OS Plan now shows the M11 Motorway in place physically and visually separating Hauxton and Little Shelford, with Hauxton spreading eastwards from The Lane. The field boundaries associated with the Site are less well defined and some smaller copses within the vicinity of the site have disappeared.

### **Sensitivity of the Site**

- 2.11 Table 2.1 below provides a summary appraisal of the identified value, susceptibility to change and underlying sensitivity of the landscape and visual attributes of the Site consistent with the guidance set out within GLVIA3 (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Landscape Institute and IEMA).

**Table 2.1 – Appraisal of Site Sensitivity**

Factors contributing to Susceptibility to Change	Appraisal and commentary
<b>Landscape susceptibility to change</b>	
Topography	Low: the Site is flat with no topographical variations and typical of much of the surrounding landscape. This would effectively remain unaltered through development.
Enclosure by vegetation	Moderate – High: the Site is indented into Hauxton and has a good level of enclosure along its southern, western and northern site boundaries. It’s south eastern boundary is predominantly defined by an established and mature, albeit tree-less, hedgerow. The existing vegetation around the Site boundary would assist in reducing potential landscape and visual effects associated with development of the Site.
Scale and complexity	Low: the Site is of simple character, small scale and with few defining elements. It comprises a single field currently down to arable use.
Historic character	Low interest: the Site contains no designated historic features.
Landscape condition	Low - Moderate: the Site forms an area with low-moderate strength of character and moderate landscape condition. Boundary vegetation and field hedgerows are present and generally intact. There are many mature trees and tree groups around the Site’s southern, western and northern boundaries most of which appear to be in reasonable condition.
<b>Visual susceptibility to change</b>	
Openness to public view	Low - Moderate: the Site is generally well-contained visually and substantially surrounded by existing residential development. It’s greatest area of visual exposure is from the north where it is seen to contribute to the setting and context of the eastern edge of Hauxton. There are also potentially limited and more distant views available from the south (0.5km+), otherwise the Site is well contained visually with no public rights of way within close proximity that afford views of the Site.
Openness to private view	Low - Moderate: private residential properties adjacent to the western boundary of the Site have close proximity views across the site from windows to the rear of properties. These appear to be largely screened/filtered by garden vegetation. There are also likely to be some longer distance views from upper storey windows of residential properties.
Views towards landmark buildings/features	Limited: limited medium distance views towards the rising ground of St Margaret’s Mount to the south of the site



	otherwise no other distinctive landmark features (aside from the adjoining motorway embankment).
Relationship with existing built form	Moderate: the Site adjoins the eastern edge of Hauxton and is wedged between the settlement and open agricultural land and the M11 corridor to the east. Development on the Site could be closely associated with the existing settlement.
<b>Overall Susceptibility to Change</b>	<b>Low - Moderate</b>

<b>Factors contributing to Landscape Value</b>	<b>Assessment and commentary</b>
Presence of landscape, biodiversity, historic and open space designations	Low: there are no landscape, historic or open space designations affecting the Site and limited existing vegetation within the Site itself.
Scenic beauty (ie sense of place, impact of landform, aesthetic appeal, level of visual interest and presence of attractive views)	Low – Moderate: although flat and with no obvious site features beyond the south eastern boundary hedgerow, the Site contributes to the local landscape setting to Hauxton when approaching from the north east. It also contributes to separating the village from the M11 corridor.
<b>Overall Landscape Value</b>	<b>Low - Moderate</b>

2.12 Overall, the Site is considered to be of Low - Moderate landscape value and Low – Moderate susceptibility to change indicating no more than a Low – Moderate sensitivity. Whilst the Site is of simple composition with few defining elements to distinguish it, it is well enclosed by established off-site vegetation with a relatively intact historic field pattern that presently contributes to defining the settlement edge of Hauxton.

### 3 SITE CONTEXT AND IMMEDIATE SETTING

3.1 Turning to the Site's immediate context and setting, this comprises a mix of land uses which are summarised below.

#### **Access Routes and Rights of Way**

- 3.2 The key transport routes in the vicinity of the Site are shown on Figure 01 and include:
- The M11 motorway which follows a broadly north-south alignment approximately 75-250m to the east of the Site. The motorway is locally raised on an approximately 20-25m wide embankment over a length of c2.5km as it traverses the River Cam floodplain.
  - Church Road/High Street/Hauxton Road which links the A10 Cambridge Road to the west, passing along the northern edge of the Site boundary to Little Shelford.
  - The Lane which forms the other principal road within Hauxton and provides access to the residential properties to the south of the High Street. Beyond the southern edge of Hauxton The Lane follows a broadly north-south alignment and becomes an unsurfaced ByWay which connects to the B1368 London Road at c750m to the south west of the Site.
  - Shelford Road follows a broadly east-west alignment to the south of the Site coming to within c 600m of the southern site boundary at its closest point.
  - The Cambridge to Kings Cross mainline railway is located approximately 270m from the southernmost site boundary.
- 3.3 There are no public rights of way that cross the Site or come within immediate proximity to any of its boundaries. The nearest public right of way is The Lane (Byway no.6) located at least c220m to the west of the Site (refer to Figure 04). Public right of way no 5 (located 700m to the south of the Site) provides public access from Shelford Road up to the Obelisk on ST Margaret's Mount. Both of these fall within the identified potential zone of visual influence of the site as identified on Figure 04. Other public rights of way are located further afield but lie outwith the zone of visual influence.
- 3.4 The only current access into the Site is via two farm access points off the High Street at either end of the Site's northern boundary.

#### **Surrounding land uses**

3.5 The Site is located on the eastern edge of Hauxton with the residential properties of Hauxton and the associated perimeter vegetation providing a clear distinction between adjoining land uses. Arable fields adjoin the site to the east beyond which lies the M11 motorway embankment. Whilst the landscape to

the west and east of the motorway corridor forms part of the same local landscape character areas (refer to Figure 03), the motorway embankment and the maturing vegetation provides a noticeable linear division within the local landscape around the Site.

- 3.6 Woodland and shelterbelt planting are a characteristic of the local setting to the Site, the largest area being the area of woodland now established within the area of disused pits between Hauxton and Harston. North of the High Street, Hauxton, vegetation is also characteristic of the local area with mature vegetation extending northwards towards the River Cam and beyond the allotments.
- 3.7 Hedgerows also occur within the rural landscape around the Site although these are in varying states of repair with evidence of some having been removed in the past. Mature hedgerows with trees characterise many of the local roads including London Road, Shelford Road and stretches of the High Street as well as The Lane Byway. In this regard the motorway embankment planting relates appropriately to local routes. Smaller areas of woodland are also common within the landscape setting of the Site with the most notable being the rectangular area on St Margaret's Mount to the south of the Site and the triangular area adjoining the motorway to the east of this.
- 3.8 To the north of the Site, allotment gardens extend along the High Street upto the foot of the motorway embankment. Whilst not built form, this enhances the perception of Hauxton extending further east beyond the existing settlement limits.

### **Topography and Hydrology**

- 3.9 Whilst there is no obvious visual connection between the Site and the course of the River Cam/Granta the Site is located within low-lying land that relates to the river, albeit within a different landscape character area as identified within the 2021 Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment . The Site lies at or below 15m AOD with the River Cam/Granta coming to within c250m of the site boundary to the north beyond the allotment gardens.
- 3.10 The majority of the surrounding local landscape that provides the context and setting for the Site is similarly broadly flat and low-lying. A localised area of notable higher ground occurs at c650m to the south of the Site at St Margaret's Mount where land rises to 43m AOD. This contained area of higher ground is twinned to the west by a similarly sized area, Rowley's Hill, which rises to 50m AOD. Both areas of higher ground are notable variations to the otherwise prevailing flat landscape within the locality. A further area of higher ground with a defined ridgeline occurs further west of the Site but this is beyond the immediate context and local setting for the Hauxton Site.

## 4 POLICY CONTEXT AND DESIGNATIONS

- 4.1 The Site lies within South Cambridgeshire District Council and, although there is an emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan which will combine the Local Plans for Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council to deliver a joint Local Plan for the two areas, the adopted SCDC Development Plan remains and comprises a range of documents. Those that are relevant to the Site and the immediate locality include the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and the Cambridgeshire Southern Fringe Area Action Plan 2008, supported by the Adopted Policies Map, February 2019 update.
- 4.2 Whilst only the defined Cambridge Green Belt applies to the Site itself various other designations are found within the wider setting of the Site. These are identified on Figure 02.

### Designations

- 4.3 Landscape-related designations/definitions which apply to the Site and the local surrounding areas are illustrated on Figure 02 and a summary of the nearest designations is provided in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1 – Summary of key designations affecting the Site and surrounding area** (not exhaustive)

Designation/Definition	Importance	Distance (closest points)
Cambridge Green Belt	National	Within and around the Site
Conservation Areas	National	130m to the NW (Hauxton) 620m to the E (Little Shelford) 1.37km to the E (Great Shelford)
Listed Buildings	National	140m to the NW (Hauxton – 6 no LBs) 650m to the W (Harston – London Road) 870m to the W (Little Shelford – 24 no LBs) 950m to the S (Obelisk, St Margaret’s Mount) 1.23km to the NW (Hauxton Mill – 4 no LBs) 1.5km to the SW (Harston – 5 no LBs)
Scheduled Monuments	National	340m to the NE 475m to the N
SSSI	National	3.0km to the SE
Employment Allocation	District	2.95km to the NE (South of Addenbrooks)
Improved Landscaping	District	1.3km to the NW (Trumpington)

Designation/Definition	Importance	Distance (closest points)
		1.85km to the NE (South of Addenbrooks)
Country Parks	Local	1.3km to the NW (Trumpington)
Local Green Space	Local	100m to the SW (Hauxton) 1.55km to the SW (Harston) 3.7km to the W (Haslingfield)
Important Countryside Frontage	Local	400m to the W (Hauxton) 1.6km to the SW (Harston) 1.7km to the NE (Great Shelford) 2.35km to the S (Newton)

### Relevant Local Planning Policy Context

- 4.4 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 sets out the adopted planning policies within South Cambridgeshire. Chapter 2 of the Local Plan sets out the Spatial Strategy for the district and summarises the development strategy over the last twenty years and specifically references the importance of the Green Belt. Policy S/4: Cambridge Green Belt states the commitment to maintaining the Green Belt, acknowledges some minor revisions to its inner boundary and, of relevance to the Hauxton Site, acknowledges revisions to the boundaries around some inset villages. The policy also reasserts the primacy of the NPPF noting that new development in the Green Belt will only be approved in accordance with Green Belt policy as set out within the NPPF.
- 4.5 Chapter 6 addresses the matter of protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and paragraph 6.2 highlights how the Green Belt is seen *"as vital to retaining the rural character of land and villages around Cambridge."* The same paragraph also identifies the *"particular importance"* of the visual link between villages and the surrounding countryside and highlights the range of heritage assets which include historic landscapes.
- 4.6 Other key policies of relevance to the Site and potential development include:
- Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character. This policy states that "Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which it is located." The accompanying paragraphs tie the policy back to the NPPF, the National Character Areas and the finer-grained district landscape character. The opportunity for landscape enhancement, particularly in the growth areas, is also referenced.

A demonstrably positive and sensitive response to this policy could help facilitate potential development of the Site.

- Policy NH/3: Protecting Agricultural Land. This policy seeks to protect agricultural land from development unless it is allocated for development in the Local Plan or sustainability considerations and the need for development are considered to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land. The potential conflict between the good quality agricultural land that lies around Cambridge and the larger settlements with the need to identify the most sustainable locations for future development is identified within the accompanying explanatory paragraphs. The importance of farmland, be it arable or pastoral, for biodiversity is also identified. The wording of this policy and the accompanying explanatory paragraphs suggest that the current use of the Site would not preclude it from potential development.
- Policy NH/4: Biodiversity. This policy requires that new development must "*..aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity.*" It also states that where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity development proposals will be permitted. Accompanying explanatory paragraphs recognise that sensitively located and carefully designed developments can provide the opportunity for meaningful biodiversity enhancements and the creation of new habitats. It is considered that an appropriately designed layout that makes an evident and positive contribution through its landscape structure to biodiversity enhancement could be delivered in accordance with the requirements of this policy.
- Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure. This policy serves to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district. Of relevance to the potential development of the Site is item 2 which states "*The Council will encourage [development] 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.*" The character of the areas surrounding the Site, in particular the extent and location of areas of existing woodland and vegetation, suggest that development of the Site could provide meaningful opportunities for contributing to strengthening green infrastructure subject to a detailed review of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy. Figure 7 in the Local Plan indicates that the landscape around Hauxton is on the periphery of the identified Green Infrastructure Strategy Network which includes the River Cam (refer to Figure 02).
- Policy NH/8: Mitigating the Impact of Development In and Adjoining the Green Belt. This policy sets out three criteria relating to potential development within the Green Belt. These state:

- a) *"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.*
- b) *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.*
- c) *Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality."*

Collectively, these highlight the importance of having an appropriate and considered landscape scheme integrated into the development proposals. Explanatory paragraph 6.34 notes that *"There are no villages within the Cambridge Green Belt, each is an 'island' inset within the Green Belt with its own defined development framework boundary."* Para 6.35 goes on to state *"Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and will not be approved except in very special circumstances and in accordance with the approach set out in the NPPF (2012)."* As the Site is located within land currently defined as Green Belt the need to demonstrate compatibility with Chapter 13, Protecting Green Belt land, of the NPPF will be integral to the potential development of the Site. This is addressed more fully within Chapter 7 of this report.

- NH/12: Local Green Space. This policy states that Local Green Spaces will be protected from development that would adversely impact on their character and significance to the local community. A locally-designated Local Green Space is located approximately 95m to the south of the southern site boundary with existing residential housing extending between such that there is no intervisibility between the Site and the Local Green Space (LGS). LGS is a recognised designation within the NPPF and designated LGSs are protected from inappropriate development *"...that would adversely impact on the character and particular local significance placed on such green areas which make them valued by their local community."*
- NH/13: Important Countryside Frontage. This policy seeks to protect these areas from development where such development would compromise the purposes of their designation which are defined as *"...where land with a strong countryside character either a. Penetrates or sweeps into the built-up area providing a significant connection between the street scene and the surrounding rural area; or b. Provides an important rural break between two nearby but detached parts of a development framework."* Hauxton has a short stretch of 'Important Countryside Frontage' located just to the south of Church Road, 380m to the west of the site

boundary although there is no prospect of intervisibility between the Site and the designated frontage. Further stretches of 'Important Countryside Frontage' are located within Harston, Newton and Great Shelford but similarly have no physical or visual connection with the Site.

- 4.7 Further documents of relevance include the District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (March 2010) and the Landscape in New Developments SPD (March 2010) which both serve to ensure that development respects the distinctiveness of the local and national landscape character areas. Both documents remain a material consideration in planning decisions.



## 5 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

### National landscape character context

- 5.1 At a national level, the landscape character of England is set out in National Character Area Profiles produced by Natural England. The Site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 87, East Anglian Chalk (Natural England (2014)).
- 5.2 NCA 87 is a narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs broadly south west to north east across southern England. The area extends from Letchworth Garden City in the south, to the south of Cambridge and north east as far as Newmarket. The landscape character area is described as visually simple and consisting primarily of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large regular fields enclosed by low hedges with few trees. This provides the backcloth for an understanding of landscape character which is then detailed more fully at a district level.

### District and local landscape character context

- 5.3 An updated assessment of landscape character covering the Site and surrounding landscape within and around Cambridge was published in February 2021. The recently published 2021 Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment supersedes the earlier April 2003 Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment.
- 5.4 The updated LCA identifies the Site as being located within the Lowland Farms typology and LCA 3D Cam and Granta Tributaries Lowland Farmland. These extend across the local landscape either side of the banks of the Rivers Cam and Granta (see Figure 03). The character area is distinguished by its wooded appearance and the relatively built up and suburban character of its villages which render the LCA more visually enclosed than the other areas of Lowland Farmlands. The key characteristics are identified as:
- *"Wider floodplain of the River Cam or Rhee and River Cam or Granta*
  - *Shelterbelts and scattered blocks of deciduous woodland including historic parkland at Sawston Hall provide visual enclosure*
  - *Dense pattern of large commuter villages with a suburban character and industrial influences, eroding rural character*
  - *Transport networks including railway and major road networks fragment the area*
  - *Green corridor including Hobson's Park and the rising foothills of the Gog Magog Hills to the east contributes to the setting of Cambridge"*

- 5.5 The area is described as a gently undulating and low lying area characterised by generally large to medium rectangular fields in an irregular pattern that are divided by low, fragmented hedgerows with few trees. Shelterbelts and areas of woodland give a wooded appearance and provide visual enclosure. Where views across fields occur these are commonly curtailed by treed horizons.
- 5.6 Many of the attributes referenced within the LCA description are applicable to the local landscape surrounding the Site. These include the characteristic topography, the relatively suburban character of some of the neighbouring villages, the wooded character, the relatively enclosed character and the restricted views. Proposed development of the Site would have a limited and contained effect upon this LCA due to the extent of visual enclosure afforded by the existing edge of Hauxton into which the Site is indented, the motorway embankment and surrounding existing vegetation.
- 5.7 In terms of specific landscape sensitivities to the character area the prevalence of scattered blocks of deciduous woodland and shelterbelts providing visual enclosure is noted. The LCA also identifies a range of forces for change applicable to the generic typology and provides guidance for ongoing landscape management. These provide an important reference for potential development to both be informed by and to respond to. Further generic guidance for the typology is provided with respect to how most appropriately to integrate development into the landscape (GCLCA, page 74). In terms of LCA 3D further specific landscape guidelines state the need to:
- *"Ensure development enhances existing landscape features, creates links between villages and recreational assets and is in keeping with the rural character*
  - *Conserve and manage woodland to maintain a visually enclosed character and separation*
  - *Conserve parkland and enhance the specific features that give character and its context within the wider landscape in areas where it has been fragmented "*
- 5.8 Figure 04 illustrates the approximate zone of visual influence of the Site indicating the containment to the east and west in particular, whilst Figure 05 provides an appraisal of the Site and the elements within the surrounding landscape that contribute to the degree of enclosure. Whilst the Site itself would be physically altered visual influences beyond the Site's boundaries would be noticeably limited and further contained by a well-considered landscape scheme that builds upon the existing landscape fabric.
- 5.9 Accordingly, it is considered that development of the Site will not significantly affect the key characteristics of LCA3D, the Cam and Granta Tributaries Lowland Farmlands Landscape Character Area.
- 5.10 Beyond the Site to the north, Landscape Character Area 9B, Cam River Valley extends to within approximately 130m of the Site at its closest, just to the northern edge of the allotment gardens to

the north of High Street. This LCA is not anticipated to be affected either physically or visually by any development of the Site due to the distance to the Site and the extent of intervening vegetation that curtails potential visibility.

- 5.11 The only other landscape character type that may be marginally visually affected by development of the Site is Landscape Character Area 7D, Newton Chalk Hills which lie to the south of the Site beyond the east-west aligned Shelford Road.
- 5.12 This LCA is located approximately 600m to the south of the Site and includes areas of the surrounding landscape to the south of the Site and from within which there is likely to be some limited views of development within the Site (refer to Figures 03 and 04).
- 5.13 Figure 06, Viewpoint 4, illustrates the view available from the public footpath en route to the Obelisk on St Margaret's Mount which is located within the Newton Chalk Hills and indicates the very limited potential visibility there will be of development within the Site due to the location of the site, its indentation into the existing settlement edge and the extent of intervening and surrounding existing mature vegetation.
- 5.14 The LCA describes the Newton Chalk Hills as follows:

*"The Newton Chalk Hills Landscape Character Area (LCA) is a simple, rural landscape characterised by arable farmland on low hills with beech copses on high ground. It is the lowest part of the Chalk Hills."*

- 5.15 Specific landscape guidelines for the area include the objective of conserving the sense of rural isolation and separation between Newton and Harlston and ensuring that new development is integrated into the landscape sympathetically. The objective of enhancing views towards villages from within the wider landscape is also identified. Collectively, these indicate that any proposed development of the Site should minimise potential effects upon the visual attributes of this landscape character area and changes in the relationship between villages and the rural landscape. This LCA is also not anticipated to be affected either physically or visually by any development of the Site due to the location of the Site and the minimal intervisibility between the Site and the Newton Chalk Hills.

## 6 VISUAL CONTEXT AND VISUAL RECEPTORS

- 6.1 Despite its flat topography the Site has a strong sense of visual enclosure which has been summarised in earlier sections and is illustrated in Figure 05. The Site is strongly enclosed by the established existing vegetation associated with the residential properties and their rear gardens along its southern, western and much of its northern boundary with its south eastern boundary being defined by an existing managed hedgerow.
- 6.2 The Site's south eastern boundary adjoins a neighbouring arable field with further agricultural land extending to the south. Fields to the south, whilst divided by hedgerows in varying states of repair, help fragment potential visibility back towards the Site. Views towards the Site from the south are also restricted by the more distant mature hedgerows and trees that line Shelford Road to the south. Visual enclosure along the short stretch of the site boundary that adjoins High Street is limited due to the gappy remnant hedgerow that lines the southern side of the High Street. However, views out of the Site to the north are relatively contained by the mature trees and scrub vegetation associated with the River Cam/Granta margins and the smaller fields that adjoin the river immediately to the north of the allotment gardens.
- 6.3 Figure 04 illustrates the maximum potential zone of visual influence, identified through the on-site appraisal, associated with the Site. This figure also indicates those areas to the south of the Site from where there may be filtered views available towards the site. These areas are resited to limited locations along Shelford Road where gaps in the existing mature hedgerow with trees that lines the northern side of Shelford Road permits (see viewpoint 4).
- 6.4 The flat topography of the Site and the surrounding area means that any intervening built form or vegetation will assist in limiting/fragmenting potential visibility both towards and out of the Site. Even from the more elevated land to the south of the Site visibility of the Site is very limited and the Site difficult to identify within the panorama. Limited long distance views that take in the Site as well as the southern edge of Cambridge on the horizon line are potentially available from a limited stretch of the public footpath that leads from Shelford Road to the Obelisk on St Margaret's Mount (viewpoint 4 again).
- 6.5 Overall, the predominantly enclosed nature of the Site means that the number and distribution of visual receptors likely to be affected by any future residential development within the Site would be noticeably restricted.
- 6.6 The principal visual receptors with views towards, and into, the Site will be limited to:

- Local motorists (with Medium sensitivity) and cyclists (with Medium-High sensitivity) travelling along High Street between the eastern end of Hauxton and the bridge under the motorway who will have oblique views towards the Site (see viewpoint 1).
- Local motorists (with Medium sensitivity) travelling along Shelford Road between the bridge under the motorway and the junction with London Road who may have very intermittent, filtered and glimpsed oblique views across towards the Site (see viewpoint 3).
- Those travelling by train (with Low sensitivity) who will have views across towards the Site when passing to the west of the motorway.
- Local residents (with High sensitivity) along the eastern fringe of Hauxton who will have filtered views into the Site and of any new development.
- Users of public footpath no. 5 (with High sensitivity) as it rises towards the right-angled turn that then leads to the Obelisk on St Margaret's Mount who may have distant, filtered views towards the Site in the middle distance with views of the southern built edge of Cambridge around Trumpington also visible beyond (see viewpoint 4).
- Allotment holders (with Medium sensitivity) to the north of High Street who will have available views of the northern edge of the Site and any development within it.

### **Visual Envelope**

- 6.7 From within the Site views out over the surrounding landscape are generally confined. Filtered views are available from the northern section of the Site towards the allotment gardens to the north of High Street but, beyond the allotment gardens, these are then limited by mature existing vegetation. Views out of the site to the east are interrupted by the existing mature hedgerow that defines the south east site boundary and are then wholly curtailed by the motorway embankment and associated vegetation. Views to the west are curtailed by the built edge of Hauxton and the extent of mature existing vegetation that defines rear gardens and other associated areas.
- 6.8 As Figure 04 conveys, the extent of visual influence of the Site is considerably contained by a combination of the flat terrain which affords elevated views from only a single location, the extent of mature existing vegetation and built development surrounding the Site and the M11 motorway embankment and corridor.
- 6.9 Consequently there are a wide range of visual receptors who will be unaffected by any proposed development of the Site. These include:

- 
- Residents of Little Shelford, residents of Harston and the majority of the residents of Hauxton, except for those whose properties back onto the Site.
  - All users of the public rights of way network within the vicinity of the Site except for those on a short section of public footpath (no. 5).
  - All residents, workers and footpath users to the north of Church Road and the High Street, Hauxton.
  - Motorists along the A10 south of Junction 11 with the motorway.
- 6.10 Figure 06 includes a set of four viewpoint photopanel which are representative of the existing views towards the site available to a range of these visual receptors.
- 6.11 **Viewpoint 1:** is representative of the views available looking south west towards the Site from High Street just west of the bridge under the M11. The viewpoint itself is located at the end of the hard surface that gives access into the adjoining field to the east of the Site. The view illustrates the flat landform of the Site and the mature hedgerow that defines its south eastern boundary. The photopanel also illustrates the well-vegetated eastern edge of Hauxton.
- 6.12 This view is representative of the view across the site that will be available to those travelling High Street including local motorists, cyclists and pedestrians (who are also most likely to be local residents). These receptors will have different levels of sensitivity to change ranging from Medium (motorists) to High (local residents and pedestrians). Development of the Site would bring about a Major change to the view with the existing simple composition of open agricultural fields set against a backcloth predominantly of existing established vegetation with filtered views of residential dwellings being replaced by a mix of new residential development and infrastructure set within a landscape framework.
- 6.13 The open attributes of the existing view would be reduced although the visible separation of the motorway from and the built edge of Hauxton would remain. However, development would clearly relate to the village and, depending upon the design and the disposition of new built form with areas of open space and framework landscape planting, views into the Site need not be inconsistent with the local landscape and townscape character.
- 6.14 The magnitude of overall visual change would be High which, taking account of the sensitivity of those visual receptors anticipated to experience the view, would result in a Major or Major-Moderate significance of effect upon visual receptors and the view. This would initially be an Adverse effect during the construction stage and upon completion but, with a well-conceived layout and an appropriate landscape scheme, this could ease to Moderate significance and become Neutral as the

landscape scheme matures and views of built development are increasingly filtered and the development absorbed into the local landscape setting.

- 6.15 **Viewpoint 2:** is located on the westernmost edge of Little Shelford and is representative of the absence of any view of the Site or development within it from High Street/Hauxton Road east of the bridge under the M11 motorway. The photopanel shows how the motorway embankment and existing vegetation combine to prevent views of the Site from the edge of Little Shelford.
- 6.16 This view is also representative of the view that will be available to those travelling High Street/Hauxton Road to the east of the M11 including local motorists, cyclists and pedestrians (who are also most likely to be local residents). These receptors will have different levels of sensitivity to change ranging from Medium (motorists) to High (local residents and pedestrians). Development of the Site will remain undetectable and wholly screened from view by the existing motorway embankment and its associated maturing vegetation combined with the mature vegetation that lines the southern edge of the local road.
- 6.17 There would consequently be no magnitude of change to the view and no effect upon visual receptors resulting in no significance of effect once complete. Any effects during the construction stage would be limited to Negligible visual effects associated with construction traffic activity from vehicles approaching and leaving the Site.
- 6.18 **Viewpoint 3:** is representative of the view looking northwest towards the Site from a gap in the hedgerow giving access to the field just to the west of the motorway bridge across Shelford Road. The view shows the limited visibility of properties on the southern edge of Hauxton against which development on the Site would be set with limited filtered distant views towards the development set behind the existing established hedgerow that defines the south eastern site boundary.
- 6.19 This view is representative of the oblique, glimpsed view that will be available to those travelling Shelford Road including local motorists, cyclists and any pedestrians (who are also most likely to be local residents). These receptors will have different levels of sensitivity to change ranging from Medium (motorists) to High (local residents and pedestrians). Development of the Site would bring about a small to negligible change to the view in the middle distance and beyond. The prevailing simple composition of open agricultural fields set within a well-vegetated landscape will remain with the addition of filtered views through intervening vegetation towards the development available over a small sector of the available view. The extent of visibility of development will depend upon the apportionment and layout of dwellings in conjunction with the associated landscape scheme. However, the new development would be seen as relating to the existing village edge.

- 6.20 The magnitude of overall visual change would be Low which, taking account of the sensitivity of those visual receptors anticipated to experience the view, would result in a Moderate to Minor significance of effect or lower upon visual receptors and the view. This would initially be an Adverse effect during the construction stage and upon completion but, with a well-conceived layout and an appropriate landscape scheme, would soon ease to Minor significance and become Neutral as the landscape scheme matures and views of built development is increasingly filtered and the development absorbed into the local landscape setting.
- 6.21 **Viewpoint 4:** is representative of the elevated view that is available to visual receptors from just off the public footpath that leads to the Obelisk on St Margaret's Mount. It shows the extensive vegetation that lines the motorway corridor and the wider wooded context. The hedgerow-lined Shelford Road is seen defining the far edge of the arable field that extends across the foreground. The new development around Trumpington is also identified beyond the Site.
- 6.22 This view is obtained by those taking the public right of way that leads south from Shelford Road up to the Obelisk. These visual receptors will have a High sensitivity to change. The view is taken from slightly off the public footpath as this gives the clearest window towards the Site. Development of the Site would bring about a small change to the view with residential development extending across the existing agricultural landscape well beyond the railway line that traverses the view. The prevailing open agricultural character of the existing view would be retained with the development difficult to perceive and set tight against the existing built edge of Hauxton.
- 6.23 The magnitude of overall visual change would be Low which, taking account of the High sensitivity of the users of the public footpath, would result in a Minor significance of effect upon visual receptors and the view. This would be an Neutral which would ease to Minor - Negligible as the landscape scheme matures and the views of built development are increasingly filtered such that the development is increasingly absorbed into the local landscape setting.



## 7 THE GREEN BELT

7.1 The Site falls within the Cambridge Green Belt which forms part of an extensive area of undeveloped land which was established with the purpose of controlling development in and around the Cambridge built up area, to prevent the coalescence of nearby villages and to preserve the historical character of the city. Protection of the Green Belt remains a key element of national planning policy and the former PPG2 set out five functions of the Green Belt which have been brought forward in Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land, of the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

7.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018 (July 2021)) sets out the protection of Green Belt land in Section 13, in which it identifies that *"The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence."* (paragraph 137). It sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt as:

- a) *"to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land"*(paragraph 138).

7.3 The NPPF highlights the importance that Government attaches to Green Belts and their fundamental aim of keeping land permanently open through their essential characteristics of openness and permanence. At para 140 the NPPF states that *"Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified..."*.

7.4 The NPPF highlights that, by definition, inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (Paragraph 147). However, the NPPF does recognise that Green Belt boundaries may be altered stating that *"...Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans."*(para 140).

7.5 As Figures 01 and 02 illustrate, the Site is located within, and surrounded by, Green Belt and Hauxton is one of many 'necklace' villages within the vicinity which the Green Belt aims to protect. The

contribution of the Site to the key Green Belt purposes as defined within the NPPF is considered further below.

**Methodology for the Green Belt appraisal**

- 7.6 There is currently no statutory guidance as to how to approach an analysis of the contribution that a site may make to the Green Belt although there are a number of recent and emerging studies that provide a useful reference and steer as to how this may be undertaken. The approach adopted below draws upon these as appropriate.
- 7.7 This appraisal of the Site’s contribution to the Green Belt functions focuses upon the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out in para 140 of the NPPF. The fifth purpose (“to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land”) was not included as this purpose is equally applicable to all Green Belt land and thus does not influence the relative importance of different areas within the Green Belt.
- 7.8 Table 7.1 below sets out the criteria relating to each of the purposes as considered within this appraisal.

**Table 7.1: Green Belt appraisal criteria**

Purpose	Criteria	Level of Openness/Contribution of Site to Green Belt Purpose
Openness	1) Is the Site free from built development and other urbanising elements?	<p><i>High</i> – Site is free of built development and urbanising elements and is fully open in Green Belt terms.</p> <p><i>Moderate</i> – Site is partially developed and is partially open in Green Belt terms.</p> <p><i>Low</i> – Site is substantially developed and has low sense of openness in Green Belt terms.</p>
Purpose 1 - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	<p>2) Does the site act, in itself, as an effective barrier to prevent sprawl from large built-up areas within or outside the District</p> <p>3) Does the site contribute, as part of a wider network of parcels, to a strategic barrier against the sprawl of built-up areas?</p> <p>4) Would development in this site lead to ribbon development?</p>	<p><i>Substantial</i> – Site adjoins a large built-up area and forms an effective edge/barrier between the built-up area and countryside.</p> <p><i>Partial</i> – Site adjoins a large built-up area but does not form a strategic barrier against sprawl.</p> <p><i>Limited</i> – Site not adjoining a large built-up area but close.</p>

	<p>5) Do natural and physical features provide a good existing edge/barrier between the existing urban area and countryside? If development breached this barrier would it contribute to sprawl?</p>	<p><i>Insignificant</i> – Site is neither adjoining nor close to a large built-up area.</p>
<p>Purpose 2 - to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p>	<p>6) Does the site provide, or form part of, a gap or space between existing key settlements (neighbouring towns/villages)?</p> <p>7) What is the distance of the gap between the settlements?</p> <p>8) Is there evidence of ribbon development on major route corridors?</p> <p>9) What is the visual perception of the gap between settlements from major route corridors?</p> <p>10) Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms?</p>	<p><i>Substantial</i> – Site forms all or a key part of a physical and perceived gap between existing neighbouring towns. Development would result in coalescence between towns or significant substantial reduction in physical or perceived separation.</p> <p><i>Partial</i> – Site forms part of a physical and perceived gap between neighbouring towns. Development would result in a reduction in the gap between settlements but a perceived sense of separation between the towns would remain intact.</p> <p><i>Limited</i> – Site forms a small part of a physical and perceived gap between neighbouring towns. Development would result in a minor reduction in the gap between settlements but the perceived sense of separation between the towns would not be significantly affected</p> <p><i>Insignificant</i> – Site does not form part of a physical and perceived gap between neighbouring towns.</p>
<p>Purpose 3 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p>	<p>11) What countryside / rural characteristics exist within the Site, including agricultural land uses, and how is this recognised in established national and local landscape designations?</p> <p>12) Has there already been any significant encroachment by built development or other urbanising elements?</p>	<p><i>Substantial</i> – Site has a strong rural character, contains little or no built development or urbanising characteristics and is rural countryside typical of the local landscape character.</p> <p><i>Partial</i> – Site contains some built development or urbanising characteristics but retains a rural character.</p> <p><i>Limited</i> – Site contains significant areas or elements of built development/ urbanising features which has erode the rural character of the Site.</p>

		<i>Insignificant</i> – The site contains significant areas of built development and is predominantly urban or suburban in character.
Purpose 4 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	<p>13) Does the Site contribute to preserving the setting and special character of Cambridge and, if so, to what extent?</p> <p>14) What are the attributes of the Site that contribute to this purpose of the Green Belt?</p>	<p><i>Substantial</i> – Site is integral to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns</p> <p><i>Partial</i> – Site has an important contributory role in preserving the setting and special character of historic towns</p> <p><i>Limited</i> – Site makes a peripheral contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns</p> <p><i>Insignificant</i> – Site makes a minimal contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns</p>

**Contribution to Green Belt Functions**

7.9 An appraisal of the existing contribution of the Site to the NPPF Green Belt functions is provided in Table 7.2 below.

**Table 7.2: Green Belt appraisal of the Site**

Purpose	Commentary	Level of Contribution of Site to Green Belt Purpose
Openness	<p>The Site is indented into the existing settlement edge of Hauxton. It is down to arable use and is free from any built development. Urbanising influences are primarily the filtered views of residential housing available along the southern, western and northern Site boundaries; and the proximity of the M11 motorway corridor (in particular the noise).</p> <p>The Site itself is open and its openness is most readily perceived from a maximum 120m section of High Street to the north of the Site as well as from the rural landscape immediately to the south, potential over a distance of up to approximately 900m. This includes areas within the vicinity of St Margaret’s Mount. The sense of openness and the Site’s contribution to the</p>	Low - Moderate

	<p>setting of Hauxton is most evident from these limited locations.</p> <p>In terms of the setting of Cambridge the Site’s contribution to this is primarily registered from a small area of higher ground around St Margaret’s Mount where there are few visual receptors aside from the users of the public footpath. The Site, however, is located in the middle distance of views towards Cambridge.</p>	
<p>Purpose 1 - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p>	<p>The Site is not located within an area where large built-up areas dominate nor does it adjoin such an area. Rather, it is located within the Green Belt and is contiguous with adjoining agricultural land to the south east. It forms a portion of the open area of landscape that separates Hauxton from Little Shelford to the east (also separated by the M11 corridor) but neither settlement can be classed as a large built-up area. On a strategic district scale it does, through its definition as Green Belt, contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of Cambridge but, in this context, its role is much diluted.</p> <p>As a village, Hauxton is largely contained around its boundaries by river floodplain, woodland, built development to the north west and infrastructure, except for to its south and east where open arable farmland defines the Site and the neighbouring landscape. To the east of the Site, the M11 corridor with its embankment acts as the key element to checking unrestricted sprawl.</p> <p>As such the site does not play a significant role in checking unrestricted sprawl.</p>	<p>Limited</p>
<p>Purpose 2 - to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p>	<p>The Site occupies a portion of an important land parcel that physically separates Hauxton from Little Shelford, contributing to approximately 10-15% of the separation distance between the two villages (overall separation gap is approximately 350m, including the M11 motorway corridor).</p> <p>The gap between the settlements is well defined and consolidated by the M11 corridor and its wooded embankments.</p> <p>Elsewhere, Hauxton is separated from Harston by the large area of woodland associated with the disused pits to the west and south west of the village. The corridor of the River Cam ensures separation from development/road infrastructure to the north of Hauxton whilst redevelopment of land around Hauxton Mill to the north west is also separated from</p>	<p>Partial</p>

	<p>Hauxton by a short stretch of farmland (over approximately 120m along Church Road).</p> <p>As the Site is largely indented into the existing settlement edge of Hauxton its development would have only a limited effect in narrowing the physical separation of settlements, this being confined to an approximate 50m closing of the existing 350m separation from Little Shelford to the east. An approximate 85m gap where open agricultural land abuts High Street would still remain to the west of the M11.</p>	
Purpose3) - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<p>Whilst the Site is evidently rural in that it is wholly down to arable use , it is noticeably enclosed by existing development against three of its boundaries. It is also well-contained visually with only limited visual connectivity with the surrounding countryside to the east (due to the intervening M11 corridor) and to the south. As such its role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment is limited.</p>	Limited
Purpose 4 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	<p>Both Hauxton and Little Shelford contain historic buildings and conservation areas (see Figure 02) although there is no intervisibility of either historic centres with the Site. The lack of intervisibility suggests that the contribution that the Site makes to preserving the setting and special character of these historic centres is limited but this is more appropriately the domaine of a cultural heritage specialist.</p> <p>The Site does make a very minor contribution to the strategic setting of historic Cambridge but given the distance between Cambridge’s historic centre and the Site this is minimal and confined to how the historic centre of Cambridge is perceived in views from a very small area of higher ground around St Margaret’s Mount to the south when the Site will be potentially seen in views back towards the historic city.</p>	Limited

7.10 Para 137 of the NPPF notes that “...the essential characteristics of the Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”. Accordingly, the condition, quality and use of land is therefore not of relevance to the inclusion of land within the Green Belt. However, para 145 of the NPPF states that once Green Belts have been defined, local authorities should “...plan positively to enhance their beneficial use such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.” It is therefore useful to also briefly consider the existing role of the Site in contributing towards these objectives. A review of this is summarised in Table 7.3 below.

**Table 7.3: Contribution of Site to Green Belt Objectives**

Green Belt objective	Current role of the Site in fulfilling objective
1. Access	There are no public rights of way within the Site and there is currently no provision for public access to or through the Site.
2. Opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation	The Site makes no current contribution to outdoor sport or recreational opportunities.
3. Retention and enhancement of landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity	The arable attributes of the Site indicate that, beyond contributing to the local landscape character and local visual amenity, its contribution to biodiversity is limited and primarily associated with the hedgerow that defines its south eastern site boundary.
4. Improvement of damaged and derelict land	N/A

7.11 In summary, it is considered that the Site has a no more than Low - Moderate degree of openness and that, principally due to its noted sense of enclosure along its southern, western and northern boundaries, it is not located within a strategically important part of the Green Belt. It currently makes a Limited contribution to the functioning of the Green Belt in checking unrestricted sprawl and a Partial contribution to preventing towns (villages) from merging into each other and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It is also judged to make a Limited contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns (villages). In terms of functions and use of the Green Belt, the Site is considered to be of Moderate-low value.

**South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018**

7.12 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (SCLP) is currently the adopted plan relevant to the Site. At a local level, three purposes have been defined within Local Plan policy for the Cambridge Green Belt, namely:

- *"Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic City with a thriving historic centre*
- *Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting*
- *Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the City" (SCLP, paragraph 2.30).*

7.13 Particular reference is made in paragraph 2.31 to a number of factors associated with the Green Belt that help define the special character of Cambridge and its setting:

- *"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 a strong rural character."*

7.14 Of the seven factors identified above the sixth and seventh are considered to be most directly relevant to the Hauxton Site and, to a lesser degree, the first. Policies S/8 and S/9 specifically address Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres around Cambridge with accompanying paragraphs noting that *"...there is no strategic constraint on the amount of development or redevelopment of land for housing that can come forward..."* (paragraph 2.56) within the Rural Centres as these are the most sustainable villages within the District whilst schemes of up to approximately 30 dwellings are seen as appropriate for Minor Rural Centres. It is noted that Hauxton is not classed as either a Rural Centre or a Minor Rural Centre.

7.15 Hauxton is classed as a Group Village under Policy S/10 which identifies an indicative scheme size of 8 dwellings (or up to 15 dwellings for a brownfield site) as being appropriate for inclusion within the development frameworks.

7.16 Whilst the SCLP 2018 Local Plan remains the adopted plan, the first proposals for a Greater Cambridge Local Plan which brings together the plans for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire is currently out to consultation. The draft plan currently identifies 19 new sites for homes and business development.

### **Previous Green Belt Studies**

7.17 The Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (CIGBBS) (November 2015) provided an update of the previously published 2012 Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (December 2012). The CIGBBS identified 19 sectors of the Inner Green Belt which were then assessed to understand their importance to the performance of the Green Belt purposes with sectors divided into sub-areas where there were differences within the sector. However, it is noted that the Hauxton Site is located beyond the limits



of the Study area for the CIGBBS and that the CIGBBS has now been superseded by the recently published Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (August 2021).

**Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment**

- 7.18 This recently published document commissioned by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council provides an updated assessment which:
- *"identifies variations in openness and the extent to which land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt; and*
  - *uses this to determine variations in the potential harm to those Green Belt purposes of releasing land within Greater Cambridge from the designation."*(GCCBA, para 1.3)
- 7.19 The five purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF have been applied locally as the 'Cambridge Green Belt Purposes' which are set out in the current Local Plans and are identified as:
- Cambridge Purpose 1: *"preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre"*
  - Cambridge Purpose 2: *"maintain and enhance the quality of its setting"*
  - Cambridge Purpose 3: *"prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city."* (GCCBA, para 1.4)
- 7.20 The GCCBA assessment for the area around Hauxton is contained in Appendix B, Hauxton to Histon and Impington and shows the Site to occupy all of parcel HX7 and a very small portion of HX6 where it extends between the north west corner of parcel HX7 and High Street. The appendix provides an assessment of the detailed contribution that the Site (HX7) makes to the Cambridge Green Belt and provides an accompanying harm assessment.
- 7.21 An appraisal of the existing contribution of the Site to the Cambridge Green Belt Purposes is provided in Table 7.4 below.

**Table 7.4: Effect of Potential development upon the Cambridge Purposes**

	Cambridge Purposes	Effect of potential development of the Hauxton Site
1	Purpose 1 – to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre	The Site is located beyond the immediate vicinity of the city and has no direct visual connectivity with it. The Site is open and physically and visually connected to the wider Green Belt but is distinct and separate from the city’s urban edge. Potential development of the Site would have no bearing upon the

		character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre, thus a <i>Limited/Insignificant</i> effect.
2	Purpose 2 – to maintain and enhance the quality of its setting	<p>The Site is considerably indented into the existing eastern edge of Hauxton such that its southern and western boundaries and the majority of its northern boundary adjoin areas of existing residential development and the edge of Hauxton Primary School. Approximately a third of the Site’s boundaries would interface against the wider Green Belt. Whilst the Site has a rural character reflecting its agricultural use, it is also subject to the settlement influences of Hauxton around the majority of its perimeter and it thus has some relationship to the village.</p> <p>Its physical and visual connectivity with the surrounding wider Green Belt is also limited. The Site’s visual envelope is noticeably contained and the Site is only marginally visible from one small area of elevated landscape to the south (within the vicinity of St Margaret’s Mount) from whence it will be viewed and seen as largely set within and contiguous with the existing settlement. Whilst the Site forms part of the wider Green Belt, it is visible from only very few publicly accessible locations, principally High Street to the immediate north of the Site and from a few isolated locations to the south being otherwise visually contained by the existing built and well-vegetated edge of Hauxton to the south, west and north and the elevated M11 embankment to the east.</p> <p>The Site contains few elements beyond the existing maintained south eastern hedgerow and is otherwise devoid of other features or attributes that contribute to the quality of Cambridge’s setting. Neither does it form a component of a key approach into the city. Development of the Site would thus have a <i>Limited</i> effect.</p>
3	Purpose 3 – to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city	<p>The Site occupies a portion of the existing gap that exists between Hauxton and Little Shelford. However, the dominant feature within the gap is the M11 embankment which provides physical and visual separation as well as an element of spatial separation. Relatively narrow tracts of open countryside/Green Belt extend either side of the M11 corridor to both the west and east and collectively all contribute to separating Hauxton from Little Shelford.</p> <p>Whilst the Site contributes to this gap it is slightly more peripheral to the gap due to its indentation into the existing settlement and its development would still allow for the retention of rural countryside between it and the M11 embankment/corridor to the east. The Site, along with adjoining</p>

areas of Green Belt either side of the M11 contributes to retaining the separate identities of Hauxton and Little Shelford albeit the Site's contribution is considered to be more related to its physical contribution than its visual. Development of the Site would thus have a *Partial* effect.

7.22 In considering Cambridge Purpose 1, The GCGBA report notes that for land to contribute to this purpose it needs to be 'located in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge' and records the contribution of the Site as Limited/No Contribution stating that "[The] *Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Hauxton. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.*" On the basis of TLP's own Site appraisal and study it is considered that the summary finding is appropriate, albeit more inclined to 'No Contribution'.

7.23 As regards to Cambridge Purpose 2, the GCGBA report notes that two elements need to be considered in assessing the extent to which the Site maintains and enhances the quality of Cambridge's setting. These are:

- *"1) the extent to which land constitutes countryside (that is to say has a rural character) based on its usage and distinction from an inset settlement; and*
- *2) the extent to which land forms or contains other features or aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting."*

7.24 With regard to the first element, whilst the Site itself is essentially rural in appearance with few defining characteristics it is also subject to peripheral settlement influences associated with its indentation into the existing eastern edge of Hauxton. The 2021 Green Belt methodology states that

*"For the second element an analysis was undertaken of key views and visual inter-relationships; green corridors; approaches to the historic core and wider city; designated sites and landscape elements that contribute to character; the scale character, identity and rural setting of the Green Belt villages; and the topography providing a framework to the city. These elements were mapped, in order to identify variations in the relevance of each."*(para 3.29)

7.25 The GCGBA records the contribution of the Site to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting as 'Relatively Limited' and noting that "[The] *Land has a weak distinction from the edge of Hauxton, meaning it has a strong relationship with the inset area. However it comprises open farmland and therefore has some rural character. Land does not form or contain any specific features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.*"

- 7.26 In terms of the second element, there is a reasonable degree of agreement given the GCGBA description but, on the basis of our own landscape and visual appraisal and Green Belt assessment it is considered that the Site makes a 'Limited' contribution to the setting of Cambridge.
- 7.27 In considering Cambridge Purpose 3, the report notes that an analysis was undertaken of the distribution of villages in and around the Green Belt and the physical features that separate and/or connect them from each other or from Cambridge, in order to determine the fragility of each settlement gap.
- 7.28 The GCGBA records the contribution of the Site to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city as 'Moderate' noting that *"Land is peripheral to a very narrow gap between Hauxton and Little Shelford. There is weak distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3."*
- 7.29 It is noted that this summary does not record the separating effect of the elevated M11 corridor and its planted embankments which serve to prevent any physical and visual connectivity between Hauxton and Little Shelford, nor that the Site is considerably indented into the eastern edge of Hauxton. Overall, it is considered that the contribution of the Site to this purpose is 'Low – Moderate'.
- 7.30 The GCGBA summarises the impact of the Site's contribution on the adjacent Green Belt as Minor noting that *"The release and development of land within this parcel would increase the frontage of land to the east with the inset settlement, therefore increasing urbanising visual impact."* This is considered to be incorrect as the Site is surrounded along three of its boundaries by the existing settlement whereas, were it to be developed, only a single site boundary would interface against the adjoining rural landscape that would remain separating the Site from the M11 corridor.
- 7.31 Given all of the above, and taking account of TLP's own appraisal it is difficult to understand the conclusion that the overall harm of releasing the Site from the Green Belt would be High which, more appropriately, should be identified as Moderate.

### **Importance of the Site to Green Belt Purposes**

- 7.32 In summary, taking account of the NPPF purposes as well as the Cambridge purposes, it is considered that potential development of the Hauxton Site would bring about a no greater than Moderate harm rating upon the Cambridge Green Belt were it to be released. Whilst the Hauxton Site makes a Limited/No Contribution in contributing to the perceived setting of Cambridge it is considered that it does have a relatively limited role in contributing to the perceived physical and visual separation of Hauxton from Little Shelford and any potential development of the Site would need to be sensitive to

this and incorporate appropriate and integral landscape mitigation and enhancement measures if this aspect of the Site's contribution to Green Belt purposes is not to be unacceptably compromised.

## 8 ABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Landscape opportunities

8.1 From a landscape and visual perspective the key opportunities provided by the Site to accommodate residential development are:

- The Site is well-contained visually by a combination of existing vegetation and existing built development such that there are relatively few visual receptors likely to be affected by the introduction of development on the Site.
- The mature trees and existing vegetation that characterise the Site's southern, western and northern site boundaries considerably reduce the potential visibility of development on the Site. The established existing hedgerow that defines the Site's south eastern boundary also provides a natural edge that will assist in screening/filtering views of the development from the outset.
- The ease of access that can be achieved off High Street with minimal, if any, loss of existing vegetation.
- The 'rear of gardens' mature existing vegetation along the western site boundary in particular and the mature south east boundary hedgerow are positive landscape features which can contribute to the sense of place of the development and provide some sense of historic continuity.
- The established existing vegetation along the west bank of the M11 embankment is also effective in providing strong visual enclosure and in considerably limiting any potential visibility of traffic travelling along the motorway. The Site also remains separated from the motorway corridor by the retained agricultural field.
- Proximity to the existing village edge which provides the opportunity to integrate new development with the existing village fabric, with a connection to the existing road network via a new entrance close to the last property of Hauxton to the south of High Street.
- Opportunity to 'stitch' the new development into the existing local landscape through the incorporation of framework planting that would consolidate the existing hedgerow along the south east site boundary and which would relate well to the Hauxton Local Green Space and areas of local woodland within the immediate vicinity of the Site.
- A broader opportunity to build upon the wooded and well-treed character of the area and to strengthen local landscape character.

- Opportunity to incorporate residential development into the village fabric with only very limited potential visibility in views from the south, in particular the longer distance views available from the locally elevated locations on the public footpath that leads to the Obelisk on St Margaret's Mount.
- Strength of the existing 'rear garden' planting which contributes to limiting views into the Site and potential development for the nearest local residents.

8.2 The above opportunities will build upon the key enclosure elements identified in Figure 05, Site Appraisal, and respond to the visual attributes and characteristics of the Site and the surrounding area as identified in Figure 04, Visual Envelope and Context.

### **Landscape Constraints**

8.3 The key constraints associated with the Site from a landscape and visual perspective include:

- Residential properties around the southern, western and northern site boundaries currently enjoy views across an open, undeveloped field with existing framework planting beyond, albeit set against the backcloth of the M11 motorway. Development on the Site could potentially be seen as an intrusive feature into these views.
- Possible adverse effect on views from pedestrians and vehicles travelling along High Street west of the M11 bridge due to the introduction of a new access point (unless set behind a well-vegetated edge which would be consistent with local landscape character). This is also the main location from which any actual narrowing of the separation between Hauxton and Little Shelford may be perceived.
- The contained visibility of the Site to the south, principally from the railway line (Low sensitivity visual receptors) and from intermittent locations along a limited section of Shelford Road (Medium sensitivity visual receptors).
- The very limited potential visibility of the Site from a small area of the locally elevated landscape to the south of Shelford Road along the public footpath to the Obelisk on St. Margaret's Mount. This is a valued view given that it provides an opportunity to sight Cambridge and to locate it within its Green Belt setting.
- An offset will be required between the development edge and areas of retained mature vegetation within and around the site boundary due to the root protection areas.

## 9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### **Potential Effects on Visual Amenity and Landscape Character if the Site is developed**

9.1 It is considered that the introduction of development on the Site (subject to achieving an appropriate scale, layout and massing of development) is likely to result in limited and localised effects on landscape character and visual amenity. The key potential effects are likely to be:

- Adverse effects on some limited and local views from adjacent or nearby residential properties which back onto the Site from the south, west and north. Structural planting within the development site and around the perimeter of the Site would help to mitigate this to some extent.
- Moderate adverse visual effects in views from a short stretch of High Street immediately along the northern site boundary west of the M11 bridge, including views available to allotment owners to the north of the road.
- Low - Moderate adverse effects on views from the mainline railway line as it passes the Site to the south. Glimpsed views of development would result in a slightly reduced sense of openness and a minor reduction in the perceived sense of separation between Hauxton and Little Shelford, in part depending again on the apportionment of built form to landscape within the Site.
- Very localised and limited Low - moderate visual effects on the northward facing views that look towards Cambridge and are potentially available to users of the public footpath that gives access to the Obelisk on St Margaret's Mount.
- A small loss of the open countryside and extension of built development on land that is indented into the eastern edge of Hauxton.
- Whilst development of the Site would change the landscape character of the Site the existing areas of woodland to the west and along the motorway embankment are helpful in that they provide the basis for a more wooded and enclosed landscape treatment for the Site to be developed. This will assist with the integration of the new development into the locality and be in keeping with the woodland blocks that are a characteristic element of the local landscape.

### **Potential effects on Green Belt if the Site is developed**

9.2 A consideration of the likely effects on the Cambridge Green Belt should the Site be developed involves taking account of both the potential effects on the site itself and also those upon the residual functioning of the wider Green Belt.



- 9.3 For the Site itself, residential development would involve the introduction of a contained area of built development which would locally erode the sense of openness and bring about a limited encroachment into the countryside. However, the Site is indented into the settlement edge and effectively embraced by existing development around three of its boundaries which noticeably assists in limiting the sense of encroachment into the countryside.
- 9.4 Regarding the effects on the functioning of the residual Green Belt were the Site to be developed, it is considered that the Green Belt purposes assessed would not be significantly affected if the Hauxton Site were to be developed. Each of the four key NPPF purposes are summarised below.
- Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas – As noted above, the Site makes only a very *Limited* contribution to fulfilling this purpose and it does not in itself form part of a strategic barrier to urban sprawl. Locally, the large area of woodland associated with the disused pits to the west of Hauxton, the M11 motorway corridor to the east and the River Cam valley and floodplain to the north form the most important strategic barriers and these would all continue to function effectively in performing this role if the Site were to be developed.
  - Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another – The Site currently makes a *Partial* contribution to this purpose. The introduction of development on the Site would result in an evident physical and a visual reduction in the gap between Hauxton and Little Shelford. However, the M11 corridor and its associated wooded embankments arguably form a more important separation element between the two settlements and there will still be no intervisibility between the two settlements were the Site to be developed and an area of agricultural land will still separate the edge of Hauxton from the M11 corridor. The character of the gap will, of course, change with the limited loss of some sense of openness associated with the Site and the limited reduction in the extent of the physical space between Hauxton and Little Shelford. Development of the Site would have no bearing upon any perceived merging with other villages around Hauxton.
  - Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment – Although development on the Site would itself constitute encroachment of the countryside, it is considered that the Site makes only a *Partial* contribution to this purpose and that development upon it would not compromise the function of the wider Green Belt in fulfilling this purpose. The Site is well contained by the built edge of Hauxton into which it is indented. A wide swathe of Green Belt will still remain around the Site to the north, east and south which would all be safeguarded as undeveloped countryside with clearly defined edges to the proposed development area which would assist in protecting the adjacent areas of countryside from future encroachment.

- Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns – Although development of the Site is within relative close proximity to the historic heart of both Hauxton and Little Shelford there is no intervisibility between the Site and the two conservation areas or the listed buildings within the villages. It is considered therefore that the Site makes only a *Limited* contribution to this Green Belt purpose even though, on a strategic scale, it does make a minor contribution to the setting and special character of Cambridge, specifically from a small area of locally higher ground to the south of the Site within the vicinity of St Margaret’s Mount.

9.5 In terms of the future quality and use of the Green Belt, it is considered that development of the Site provides a number of opportunities for enhancing the Green Belt in the local area. Key opportunities include:

- Creation of pedestrian and cycle connections through the Site to form improved access and connectivity between the built areas and the Green Belt.
- Access and landscape improvements to the Site with the opportunity to link to the maturing planting on the M11 corridor embankments and to the woodland to the south of Hauxton.
- Deliver biodiversity enhancements through enriching the landscape and ecological attributes of the Site.