

Mingle Lane, Stapleford, Cambridgeshire

B25002: Landscape Rebuttal Statement

10th February 2025 | Abby Stallwood

Introduction

The Landscape Partnership has been appointed by Axis Land Partnerships, to provide an independent appraisal of the identified Important Views O, S, T and U, as set out in the Stapleford and Great Shelford emerging Neighbourhood Plan policy proposals, being views that relate to land in which Axis Land Partnerships has an interest.

Project: Mingle Lane, Stapleford

Local Authority: South Cambs District Council

Location: North east of Stapleford

Date: 10th February 2025

Table 1: Existing Baseline

Criteria	Description
Document for Review	Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan 2024 – 2041 Submission (Regulation 15 version). November 2024
Neighbourhood Plan Methodology	<p>The policy rationale for the selection of the identified views as 'Important Views', references the Stapleford and Great Shelford Landscape Character Assessment (SGS LCA), 2019, prepared by Sophie Smith Ltd on behalf of Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan (SGSNP) steering group.</p> <p>The SGS LCA initially identified 25 views that were mapped, although further views were also described in the detailed text of the report. As part of preparing the NP, all views were re-appraised and included for community engagement work in 2023, and additional views added. This resulted in the identification of 29 views across the parishes of Stapleford and Great Shelford.</p> <p>It is important to note that no clear methodology is provided as to how the Important Views were identified, nor what their function is, nor what qualities they must have, nor which criteria they should reach. The SGS LCA 2019 contains two maps in its Appendix with different selection of views noted alphabetically, however there is no accompanying list of these alphabetical views.</p> <p>There is a reference on one map in the SGS LCA Appendix, noting that many of the views are already contained within The Great Shelford Village Design Statement (2004). However again, there is no clear identification of such views, nor the criteria for determining their selection. Furthermore, this Design Statement only deals with the village of Great Shelford and makes no mention of Stapleford.</p>
NP Policy S&GS 13: Important views	The emerging Neighbourhood Plan, currently out for public consultation, identifies 'Important Views'. The policy requires development proposals to maintain or enhance the key features and settings of the view(s), and states ' <i>Community engagement identified and validated multiple views which are locally highly valued.</i> ' A description of each view, including an explanation of key features to be protected or enhanced, is provided in Appendix 7 of the

	<p>emerging NP. There are 29 views spread across two parishes, 12 in Stapleford and 17 in Great Shelford.</p> <p>Land in which Axis has an interest is crossed by views identified within the emerging NP as Important Views. These are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O - <i>New countryside park between Haverhill Road and Hinton Way</i> - S - <i>Gap between 27 and 31 Mingle Lane</i> - T - <i>Stapleford cemetery</i> - U - <i>Gap between 41 Gog Magog Way and homes at Chalk Hill</i>
Important View 'O' (extract from Appendix 7 of the emerging NP)	<p>The NP notes:</p> <p>Vantage point: high point (>40m OD) of new countryside park between Haverhill Rd and Hinton Way</p> <p>Description: panoramic long distance views over countryside towards Linton in the far SE; over the development framework of the Plan area towards high land south of the A505 in the SW; and over White Hill, Cambridge and beyond towards Bar Hill in the NW.</p> <p>Key contributing features to sense of place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevated 180° views across the development framework to high land well beyond the Plan area • A 'landmark viewpoint' (cf. Appeal decision, Reference: APP/W0530/W/21/3280395), giving a new publicly accessible perspective from high ground • Illustrates the connection between the villages and the surrounding S.Cambs. countryside • Strong sense of topographic variation from rolling chalk hills to clay lowlands, woodland, arable land and settlement
Important View 'S' (extract from Appendix 7 of the emerging NP)	<p>The NP notes:</p> <p>Vantage point: gap between 27 and 31 Mingle Lane, Stapleford</p> <p>Description: looking NNE across open arable fields towards wooded rear gardens of Hinton Way and chalkland hills.</p> <p>Key contributing features to sense of place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sheltered, flat, lowland area with long open views over arable fields towards gently rising chalkland hills • The otherwise poor relationship between village and countryside in this part of the Plan area makes this view very important
Important View 'T' (extract from Appendix 7 of the emerging NP)	<p>The NP notes:</p> <p>Vantage point: Stapleford cemetery, to the N of Mingle Lane</p> <p>Description: scanning NW to NE across open arable fields, taking in new countryside park between Haverhill Rd and Hinton Way, and Fox Hill in distant NE.</p> <p>Key contributing features to sense of place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense of countryside, with extensive views over open arable land contained by rolling chalk ridge line to N • A tranquil location (as appropriate for a burial ground) partly screened by hedgerows and mature trees • Settled hilltop estate at Fox Hill is a characteristic, wooded feature of local chalkland hills landscape • Visual link between village and new countryside park
Important View 'U'	The NP notes:

(extract from Appendix 7 of the emerging NP)	<p>Vantage point: gap between 41 Gog Magog Way and homes at Chalk Hill, Stapleford</p> <p>Description: scanning NW to NE over open arable lands, towards Hinton Way rear gardens, trees at Clark's Hill, new countryside park between Haverhill Rd and Hinton Way, and Fox Hill beyond.</p> <p>Key contributing features to sense of place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense of countryside and tranquillity, with long and broad views over open arable land contained by rolling chalk ridge line to N • Gap in development enables village to feel strongly connected to surrounding countryside • Within the view, the settled hilltop estate at Fox Hill is a characteristic, wooded feature of local chalkland hills landscape • Visual link between village and new countryside park
Landscape Character	<p>At the National level the Neighbourhood Plan area is set within NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk which is an extensive area stretching from Letchworth to Newmarket.</p> <p>At a District scale the Neighbourhood Plan area is located within South Cambridgeshire District. At the District scale the site is located within LCA 3B Gog Magog Hills and close to the LCA 4B Granta Valley, as defined in the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study 2015.</p> <p>At the local scale, the Stapleford and Great Shelford Landscape Character Assessment of 2019, identifies the majority of the land in which Axis has an interest, as being located within landscape character type 'B' Arable Lowland, further subdivided into areas, LCA 'B3' Mingle Lane and Hinton Way arable lowland. The north eastern edge of the land in which Axis has an interest being located in type 'A' Arable Hills, subdivided into areas 'A2' Stapleford Arable Hills.</p> <p>The overall character of LCA B3 Mingle Lane and Hinton Way arable lowland is described as follows;</p> <p><i>Open arable land at the foot of the chalkland hills. Contiguous with the Stapleford arable chalkland hills area but part of the flat lowland. A small separate area of the arable lowland encircled on three sides by housing and defined by weak hedgerows and the rising ground. This is a sheltered area.</i></p> <p>Sensitivities to Change are noted as;</p> <p><i>The Mass Rapid Transit route (Cambridge South East Transport - 'CSET') would cross the rising land of the chalkland hills just to the north and be visible in views from the Cemetery, Mingle Lane and Gog Magog Avenue with associated lighting and signalisation at road crossing points and potential drop off infrastructure resulting in adverse physical and visual impact and urbanisation of the area. The introduction of linear planting as mitigation along the course of the route could introduce uncharacteristic elements and affect long views.</i></p> <p>Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives</p> <p><i><u>Protect</u> - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.</i></p> <p><i><u>Enhance</u> - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.</i></p>

	<p>The overall character of LCA A2 Stapleford Arable Hills is described as follows;</p> <p><i>Open intensively farmed rolling landscape where the good quality soils are generally used for arable crops This area is, for the most part low in biodiversity and provides only limited access to the open countryside for recreation. Very large fields with a few rectilinear hedgerows remaining as shown on the 1812 Stapleford Inclosure map. The open landscape is characterised by the distinctive woodland of the settled hilltop estate at Fox Hill and the view to the distinctive Little Trees Hill on the skyline at Magog Down. The ridgelines separates the area from Area A1 which has views to Cambridge. This side of the ridgeline the land faces away from the City and affords extensive countryside views eastwards.</i></p> <p>Sensitivities to Change are noted as;</p> <p><i>Visually sensitive due to the open nature of the area and the high ground. The lack of a hedgerow along the east of Haverhill Road allows for panoramic countryside views and good views to Little Trees Hill at Magog Down which is a local landmark.</i></p> <p>Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives</p> <p><i><u>Protect</u> - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.</i></p> <p><i><u>Enhance</u> - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.</i></p>
Recent Addition to Existing Baseline	<p>The Appeal (reference: APP/W0530/W/21/3280395), was allowed and permission granted for a retirement village off Haverhill Road, north of Gog Magog Way and Chalk Hill. This development is currently under construction, and therefore now forms part of the existing baseline.</p>
Future Baseline	<p>The area will change dramatically following the development of the mass rapid transport route, the proposed Cambridge South East Transport (CSET) a 15m wide route, linking Cambridge with Granta Park, Linton and Haverhill. This new route would include a multiuser path for cyclists and pedestrians. The proposals include an area for enhancement providing the opportunity for ecological and landscape improvements along the CSET corridor. These could include an extensive country park with chalk grassland planting, public access, foot and cycle paths and large areas of new wildlife habitat.</p> <p>A draft allocation is noted in the emerging Local Plan, reference 'S/RSC/HW Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane, Great Shelford', for residential dwellings. The allocation notes;</p> <p><i>'Maximum capacity limited to 100 homes, relating to Cambridgeshire Fire Service requirements for no more than 100 homes to be served via a single vehicular access. There may be potential for a higher capacity if an additional access could be provided.'</i></p>

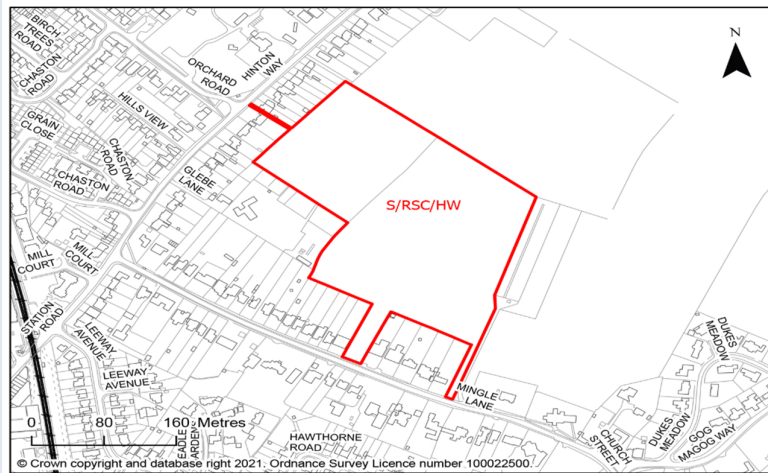


Figure 37: Map of proposed new allocation S/RSC/HW

Extract Map from Great Cambridge Local Plan - Policy S/RSC: Other site allocations in the Rural Southern Cluster

Site Features

The Site is enclosed by Stapleford on three sides, with the northern edge as it begins to rise being enclosed in the future by the Mass Rapid Transit route that would cross the rising land.

The Site consists of arable agricultural land, and is not publicly accessible. The land rises from approximately 20m AOD in the south east to 25m AOD across the majority of the Site, with the north eastern edge rising from 25m AOD to 30m AOD approximately.

There are clear views to the edge of settlement to the west, south and east from within the Site, including the care home and retirement village currently under construction, off Haverhill Road. To the north the rising land and woodland and copses of Fox Hill curtail the views.

Table 2: Visual Representation

Criteria	Description
Purpose/Use	Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan
Representative Viewpoints	Representative Viewpoints 1 to 4. These represent the identified Important Views.
Visualisation Type(s) (refer to TGN 06-19 Table 2: Types 1-4)	Type 1 (Non-verified) Annotated Viewpoint Photographs for Viewpoints to be finalised. The viewpoints are based on desktop study and site visit carried out in January 2025 to assess the identified Important Views O, S, T and U.
Viewpoint and Visualisation Type Reasoning	Viewpoints are those identified as Important Views O, S, T and U.
Photographic Equipment	Sony (ILCE-7M2) (full frame sensor) camera + 50mm lens
Locational Accuracy	Site survey, Google Earth and Polaris Navigation GPS Application

Table 3: Independent Appraisal

Criteria	Description
Independent Appraisal of 'Important View O'	<p>This is taken from an area with no current public access, and the area will change dramatically following the development of the mass rapid transport route, the proposed CSET a 15m wide route, linking Cambridge with Granta Park and Babraham Research Campus. This new route would include a multiuser path for cyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>The location of the Important View is within a proposed area for enhancement providing the opportunity for ecological and landscape improvements along the CSET corridor. These could include an extensive country park with chalk grassland planting, public access, foot and cycle paths and large areas of new wildlife habitat.</p> <p>The view will therefore change substantially, with the CSET route in the foreground changing the experience and overall character of the area, bringing forward strong urbanising influences on this viewpoint. This is recognised in the published NP LCA, specifically B3 Mingle Lane and Hinton Way arable lowland.</p> <p>In response to the Appeal reference (APP/W0530/W/21/3280395), utilised in the viewpoint description, the full context of the Inspectors comments continues as thus;</p> <p><i>'the highest point of the site, a point not currently accessible to the general public but which would undoubtedly become a landmark viewpoint were the country park proposal to come to fruition.</i></p> <p><i>The viewpoint which would be made accessible were the countryside park to be created is much closer to Stapleford and so currently presents a dramatic contrast between the agricultural land in the foreground and the village immediately behind. Were the development to be permitted and to proceed, the greater proximity of the developed part of the site would significantly reduce the sensation of the location being in the open countryside. Although the countryside park would still be open to undeveloped land to the south-east, it would tend to feel more enclosed between the existing arm of development extending along Hinton Way and the new residential care home development extending along Haverhill Road.'</i></p> <p>The Appeal was allowed and permission granted, with the retirement village currently under construction. It should also be noted that the draft allocation for residential housing off Mingle Lane, will also infill an area that is currently arable land, between the outlying cemetery and the existing settlement to the south west of this viewpoint. Therefore, whilst it is acknowledged that due to the elevation, longer distance views are afforded, the influence of the CSET corridor, approved development and draft allocation for residential dwellings, the immediate perception will be one of suburban settlement fringe, rather than open countryside.</p> <p>It is considered therefore that the emerging NP policy for Important Views and Important View 'O' does not align with either the District Local Plan route of CSET nor the approved planning applications, or indeed the published landscape character assessment LCA B3, which notes the <i>'physical and visual impact and urbanisation of the area'</i>, as a result of the CSET.</p>
Independent Appraisal of 'Important View S'	<p>This view is taken from Mingle Lane between two existing dwellings, No 27 and No31. This view is currently deteriorating as the land is under survey and as such this access point has been tracked over. This access point and the</p>

	<p>land beyond has a draft allocation in the emerging Local Plan, reference 'S/RSC/HW Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane, Great Shelford', for residential dwellings.</p> <p>This gap between the existing dwellings here will clearly be the main access into the draft allocation Site, and therefore it is accepted at District level that this view will change from the current arable fields to residential settlement.</p> <p>It is considered therefore that the emerging NP policy for Important Views and Important View 'S' does not align with the District Local Plan draft allocation for residential development.</p>
Independent Appraisal of 'Important View T'	<p>This view extends northwards out from the outlying cemetery across the immediately bounding fields, which are relatively flat, to the rising ground to the north and Fox Hill. To the west and east the existing settlement is visible, including the care home and retirement village currently under construction.</p> <p>As noted above, the route of the mass rapid transport route, the proposed CSET a 15m wide route, linking Cambridge to Granta Park and Babraham Research Campus, will cross the rising ground from east to west within this view, changing the perception of the view substantially from arable fields extending towards the undulating wooded horizon line, to foreshortening of the view with the route, including signage, lighting and two bus stops, as well as the movement of traffic along it, including vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the draft allocation for residential housing aligns with this northern edge of the cemetery to its west, bringing the settlement edge closer in physical and visual terms.</p> <p>The stated 'strong sense of countryside' will therefore no longer apply, and the 'tranquil' location will at best be diluted.</p> <p>It is considered therefore that the emerging NP policy for Important Views and Important View 'T' does not align with either the District Local Plan route of CSET nor the published landscape character assessment LCA B3, which notes the 'physical and visual impact and urbanisation of the area', as a result of the CSET. Neither does it align with the District Local Plan draft allocation for residential development off Mingle Lane.</p>
Independent Appraisal of 'Important View U'	<p>This view extends westwards from Gog Magog Way to the residential dwellings located on Hinton Way, approximately 500m to the rear façade of the dwellings. Many of the dwellings are in a light render colour and are very clearly visible, which with the modern extensions and paddocks to the rear of dwellings visible off Gog Magog Way, lends a rather suburban character in views to the west and south west. To the north the land rises to Fox Hill and the undulating wooded horizon which has the effect of enclosing and curtailing the view.</p> <p>As noted previously, the route of the mass rapid transport route, the proposed CSET a 15m wide route, linking Cambridge to Granta Park and Babraham Research Campus, will cross the rising ground to the north, changing the perception of the view substantially from arable fields extending towards the undulating wooded horizon line, to foreshortening of the view with the route, including signage, lighting and two bus stops, as well as the movement of traffic along it, including vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.</p> <p>The draft allocation for residential housing off Mingle Lane aligns with the northern edge and to the west of the cemetery, bringing the settlement edge closer in physical and visual terms.</p> <p>The stated 'strong sense of countryside' will therefore no longer apply, and the 'tranquil' location will at best be diluted.</p> <p>It is considered therefore that the emerging NP policy for Important Views and Important View 'U' does not align with either the District Local Plan route of CSET nor the published landscape character assessment LCA B3, which</p>

notes the 'physical and visual impact and urbanisation of the area', as a result of the CSET. Neither does it align with the District Local Plan draft allocation for residential development off Mingle Lane.

Summary

The summary assessment from the initial surveys, finds that the recent additions to the existing baseline, along with substantial changes anticipated for the future baseline, as set out within the District level policy including the Local Plan and draft new housing allocations, indicate the changing character of the northern side of the settlement of Stapleford, including new residential areas of settlement and the proposed Cambridge South East Transport (CSET), a 15m wide transport route.

Whilst the route of the CSET is noted and resultant changes are expressed within the Stapleford and Great Shelford Landscape Character Assessment of 2019, this does not appear to have been carried through to the identified Important Views, as noted within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

No clear methodology has been provided as to how the Important Views have been identified and what, if any, qualities they need to have to qualify.

Proposed development within and around these identified Important Views are tasked to '*maintain or enhance the key features and the setting of the views into and out of the settlement area*', which, given the recent changes to the existing baseline along with the future substantial changes to the baseline including the CSET and the draft residential allocation off Mingle Lane, demonstrates the incompatibility of the identified Important Views at the local level with the District level planned growth for the settlement.

This independent appraisal of the four views, O, S, T and U, finds that all four view descriptions do not align with the future growth plan for the area, and neither therefore the resultant changes to local character and visual amenity. There is no clear methodology nor criteria for such views to be identified as 'Important Views', and furthermore, failure to take into account District level growth, whilst stating in the emerging NP policy that new development must maintain the key features and setting of the views, are clearly so out of alignment as to render them void, as this policy test is knowingly unattainable.