

BIDWELLS

Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Landscape Strategy

[Redacted]

Land to the rear of 49-83 Impington Lane, Histon
October 2013



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October 2013

BIDWELLS

Quality Assurance

Site name: Land to the rear of 49 – 83 Impington Lane, Histon

Client name:

Type of report: Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Landscape Strategy

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Signed

Date

8 October 2013

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Signed

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bidwells has been instructed by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to undertake a Landscape Visual Appraisal and Landscape Strategy as part of the promotion of the land north of Impington Lane, Histon, Cambridgeshire for the purposes of residential development.
- 1.2 This Landscape Appraisal and Landscape Strategy is in response to South Cambridgeshire District Council's Proposed Submission Local Plan and Policies Map: July 2013, with particular regard to Inset No. 58 Histon and Impington and South Cambridgeshire District Council's current consultation regarding this.
- 1.3 The aforementioned site has been partially identified as an allocation for residential development (H/1 (d)), refer to figure 1, thereby releasing this land from the Green Belt. The purpose of this document is to demonstrate that extending the allocation boundary to include the extent of the site (refer to figure 2) will not have undue detrimental visual impact and still retain the objectives of the Green Belt as stated within section 9, paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Structure of the document

- 1.4 Methodology - this section states the recommended and industry accepted method to which the Landscape Appraisal has been carried out. Appendix A has more detail regarding the processes.
- 1.5 Baseline - this section identifies and assesses the character and quality of the local landscape including any landscape receptors and designations that may be sensitive to change and affected by the proposals. This section also establishes an area from which the proposals are visible. The assessment is undertaken from a combination of desk-top study and on-site visual assessment.
- 1.6 Opportunities and Constraints - this section analyses the results from the baseline study and identifies them in a series of opportunities and constraints presented by the site which are to be considered when designing the proposals.
- 1.7 Landscape Strategy - this section utilises the opportunities and constraints identified and translates them into a design rationale that ensures the development proposals will be sensitively designed to minimise any landscape and visual impact and make use of any existing site features.
- 1.8 Conclusion - this section will summarise the findings of Landscape Visual Appraisal and the proposals within the Landscape Strategy.

Methodology

- 1.9 The document has been produced in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), 3rd Edition, produced by the Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment¹, and Landscape Institute Advice Note: Use of Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment². These are widely considered to be the industry standards on the subject.

2 BASELINE

Site location and description

- 2.1 The site covers approximately 3.28 hectares. It is located to the north eastern sector of the village of Histon, three miles north of the centre of Cambridge and 13 miles south east of St Ives.
- 2.2 The site lies between 10-15m Above Ordnance Datum Level (AOD) as shown on figure 3.
- 2.3 The site adjoins residential properties fronting onto Impington Lane to the south, and Merrington Place to west and south west. The north of the site abuts a ditch running the extent of the northern boundary behind which are open fields in use for arable farming. To the east, the site adjoins the large rear gardens and common land of properties fronting on the Clay Close Lane.
- 2.4 The site comprises three parcels of land. The largest parcel adjoins properties fronting onto Impington Lane and Merrington Place. The smallest parcel of land is linear, running along the majority of the northern boundary. The final parcel is rectilinear and located to the east of the site. Within this parcel of land there is a large metal storage shed and a smaller pre-cast storage shed both heavily screened by surrounding planting. These are the only structures on site.
- 2.5 All parcels of land currently have no defined use although there is evidence from 'trodden' paths in the largest and linear parcels of land that they are being regularly used for recreational activities. Pedestrian access appears to be gained from the far western boundary adjacent to the development fronting onto Merrington Place.
- 2.6 Vegetation is generally limited within the two larger parcels of land to unmanaged grassland with occasional small self-seeded trees. The linear parcel of land is more enclosed with areas overtaken by rampant scrub such as Blackthorn. North, east and western boundaries to all parcels

¹ The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment 3rd Edition (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

² Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/2009: Use of Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment

of land are defined by thick mature hedgerows and specimen trees. The southern boundaries of the largest and the rectilinear parcels of land are defined by fencing, walls and a 3m wide, recently planted, landscape buffer strip which abuts the recent residential development fronting onto Merrington Place and Impington Lane. There are also sections of substantial vegetation located intermittently along the southern site boundary at the rear of housing fronting onto Impington Lane.

2.7 A driveway leading to a private residence and the aforementioned storage shed also provides access to the rectilinear parcel of land to the east. It is not possible to gain further access to the rest of the site due to the thick vegetated boundary. This is the only vehicular access point to the site. However, a gap between 51 and 67 Impington Lane could provide for another vehicular access point onto the large parcel of land.

Listed buildings

2.8 There are numerous Listed buildings within Histon, as shown on figure 4: Environmental Designations. The majority are Grade II, generally situated in a north to south eastward linear formation across Histon.

2.9 There are three Grade I Listed buildings:

- i The Parish Church of St Andrew, Church Street. Located approximately 750m north east of the site;
- ii St Andrew's Parish Church Burgoyne's Road. Located approximately 350m south west of the site; and
- iii The Village College, New Road. Located approximately 350m south west of the site.

2.10 The closest Listed building to the site is the Grade II 2 Mill Lane, which is approximately 150m south east of the site. The proposal site is not visible from this Listed building due to intervening residential buildings.

Conservation Area

2.11 There are two Conservation Areas within the vicinity of the site:

- i Histon Village centre and Station Road (originally two areas but amalgamated in 01/03/91 then extended in 12/11/98); and
- ii St Andrew's Impington designated in 14/4/88.

2.12 They are approximately 200m east and 110m west respectively.

2.13 Views of the site from the Conservation Areas are limited to the western boundary of St Andrew's Impington Conservation Area where part of the eastern boundary vegetation of the site is visible.

However, due to the mass and density of the boundary vegetation, views into the site are not possible.

Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)

- 2.14 There are no SAMs on or bordering the proposals site. The nearest SAM, a moated site 140m south west of Histon Manor, is located approximately 700m north west of the proposal site. The proposal site is not visible from the SAM due to the intervening buildings.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- 2.15 There are no designated SSSI's on or within the vicinity of the site.

Landscape Designations

- 2.16 There are no landscape designations on site. However, the site is currently within the Green Belt. This is explored in more detail further in the document.
- 2.17 (NOTE: THE SPECIAL POLICY AREA DESIGNATION IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED SUBMISSION LOCAL PLAN). The Proposed Submission Policies Map: July 2013 Inset No. 58 Histon and Impington also identifies various Protected Village Amenity Areas (Policy NH/11). The closest is located approximately 150m south east of the site directly northeast of Impington Village College. Views into the site are not possible from this location due to intervening buildings.

Public Right of Way (PRoW)

- 2.18 There is no PRoW in or bordering the proposal site. There is a limited network within the surrounding area. The majority of PRoW are located to the south of the site leading towards Cambridge and Girton as shown on Figure 4: Environmental Designations

Flood risk

- 2.19 The Environment Agency flood map shows the north eastern and northern part of the site to be within the flood zones 1, 2 and 3 as shown on figure 4. The accompanying Flood Risk and Drainage Statement assess the flood risk in more detail.

Green Belt

- 2.20 The site is currently designated as Green Belt. The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and Policies Map Proposed Submission July 2013 allocate part of the site for residential development as shown on Figure 1: South Cambridgeshire District Council Proposed Submission Policies Map July 2013 Designations.
- 2.21 Extending the proposed allocation boundary in accordance with the submitted site location plan is considered not to contradict the following five objectives of Green Belt as stated in the NPPF section 9 paragraph 80:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas - the proposal site would be better defined by the existing field boundary which work provide a natural extension to Histon;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another - the nearest settlement to the site is Cottenham, approximately three miles north;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment - although the proposal site would extend into the current Green Belt, the retention and enhancement of the significant boundary vegetation would ensure development would not unduly encroach visually and physically into the surrounding open countryside of the Fenland;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns - the contained and defined nature of the proposal site and the lack of sensitive historic receptors within the vicinity means that the site will be viewed within the context of existing development of Histon and would be seen as an extension to a defined historic boundary; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land – there are minimal brownfield sites within Histon. The site was previously used for commercial nurseries and therefore has no significant special character to retain.
- 2.22 Currently, the northern boundary line of the allocation site H/1(d) divides two open fields and abuts no defined historic or physical boundary. This is contrary to the advice provided by the NPPF which states in section 9 paragraph 85: 'When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.'
- 2.23 Extending the northern boundary line of the allocation site to include the extent of the proposal site would strengthen a clearly defined boundary to existing physical vegetated features.
- 2.24 The allocation of the whole site for residential development would provide opportunities to enhance and retain landscape features for visual amenity and biodiversity as well as providing potential access and opportunities for recreational activities within the associated public open space. This is in direct correlation with guidance found within the NPPF paragraph 81.

Summary of landscape baseline

- 2.25 The site has no landscape designations on or directly adjoining it. This site is however, currently within the Green Belt, although it is considered that releasing it will not cause any contradiction to the five principal objectives stated in the NPPF section 9, paragraph 80.

- 2.26 There are numerous heritage designations within the vicinity of the site such as: Listed buildings, SAM's and Conservation Areas, however, due to intervening vegetation and buildings, proposals for development on the site will be unlikely to adversely affect the setting of these designations.
- 2.27 In addition to national designations the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and Policies Map Proposed Submission July 2013 includes a number of Protected Village Amenity Areas within the vicinity of the site.
- 2.28 Part of the site has been identified as being within a flood risk zone. Drainage proposals will have to consider existing site levels and utilise site features such as the ditch to the northern boundary. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy considered this in further detail.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

National Character Area

- 2.29 The village of Histon lies within the character area 88 - Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands (refer to figure 5). The key characteristics are:
- Gently undulating topography and plateau areas, divided by broad shallow valleys.
 - Predominantly an open and intensive arable landscape. Fields bounded by either open ditches or sparse, closely trimmed hedges both containing a variable number and quality of hedgerow trees.
 - River corridors of Great Ouse and Ivel compose cohesive sub-areas characterised by flood plain grassland, riverine willows and larger hedges.
 - Woodland cover variable. Clusters of ancient deciduous woods on higher plateau area to northwest between Salcey and Grafham Water. Smaller plantations and secondary woodland within river valleys.
 - Settlement pattern clusters around major road and rail corridors (A1 and M1) many with raw built edges. Smaller, dispersed settlements elsewhere. Village edge grasslands an important feature.
 - Generally a diversity of building materials, including brick, thatch and stone. Limestone villages on the upper Great Ouse.
 - Man-made reservoir at Grafham Water. Restored gravel working lakes adjacent to River Ouse, and water-bodies in Marston Vale resulting from clay extraction.

- Brickfields of Marston Vale and Peterborough form a major industrial landscape. Mixed extraction, dereliction and landfill.
- Medieval earthworks, including deserted villages, the major feature of visible archaeology.

Regional Landscape Character

2.30 The East of England Framework identifies the site as lying within 'Lowland Village Farmlands' (refer to figure 6). The key characteristics are:

- A generally low lying, gently rolling topography, although some areas adjacent to lower lying levels can appear elevated.
- Landscape generally drained by small streams which are visually indistinct. Occasionally there are gravel extraction lakes (e.g. Hemingfords and Buckden) along the River Great Ouse and within the Ivel valley in Bedfordshire.
- Arable land use predominates with some areas of pasture and orchards. Occasional mineral extraction, lake creation and brickworks.
- Medium/large scale, regular field pattern, defined by well-trimmed hedgerows. Field systems include a mix of rectilinear and sinuous patterns, reflecting the process of planned surveyor enclosure from common fields.
- Groups of trees, often around farmsteads and occasional small plantations.
- Medieval moated sites and fine stone churches are a characteristic feature.
- A dense, largely nucleated, rural settlement pattern composed of small towns (e.g. Biggleswade), villages and outlying farmsteads. Larger towns (e.g. Bedford) often exert an urbanising influence on this landscape.
- Away from major transport routes this landscape has a greater sense of tranquillity although intensive farming activity and a high density settlement pattern mean that many areas retain a busy feel.
- Sparse woodland cover giving rise to open character and extensive views.

Local Landscape Character

2.31 A site visit was undertaken on 7th and 16th August 2013 in fair conditions to establish the local landscape character. The distinctive local level features are:

- Histon has a centralised but linear historic core running along Station Road and High Street and Windmill Lane. The focal of the core is centred around the village green and pond where numerous shops, restaurants and pubs service the village.

- Impington Lane is a minor service road into Histon. It has an urban character with a mixture of large detached and semi-detached properties varying in architectural styles fronting onto the road. Generally housing is set back from the road. There are limited views out to the Fenland countryside from the north.
- The site comprises of three field parcels defined by dense, mature, boundary vegetation. The two larger parcels of land have an open, yet contained, feel due to the substantial boundary vegetation screening extended views out of the site. The smaller parcel is linear in form and more enclosed due to the surrounding vegetation and unmanaged scrub. Glimpsed views are possible of flat Fenland fields to the north through gaps in the north boundary vegetation.
- Apart from the existing boundary hedges and specimen trees the site offers little distinguishing character features; this is partially due to its previous use as a nursery.

Summary of landscape character

- 2.32 The wider site and surrounding landscape displays many of the typical character traits identified within the national and regional character surveys. Flat arable landscapes provide expansive views towards green tree'd horizons. The village of Histon is also representative of the character of small conurbations; focusing round a historic core with relatively dense housing and services. Throughout the village, styles of buildings vary reflecting the village's historic growth.
- 2.33 The site itself, although typically flat, offers limited character value to the surrounding area with minimal distinctive landscape features and dense vegetation limiting extended views out to the Fenland countryside. The site is considered to have minimal landscape sensitivity and therefore has capacity for change.

Visual baseline

- 2.34 Photographs were taken from viewpoints within the site and strategically sensitive locations within the surrounding area, looking towards the site to assess the potential visual impact of any proposed development on the site.
- 2.35 The following is a description of the viewpoints taken on the site visit. Refer to Figure 7 location plan and panoramas.

Viewpoint 1:

- 2.36 This viewpoint was taken approximately 2.4km from the site on the Roman Road looking south westwards towards the site. A large, flat, arable field extends from the foreground towards a heavily tree'd horizon, the Roman Road is visible to the left of the view. Due to the distance and intervening vegetation the site is not discernible.

Viewpoint 2:

- 2.37 This viewpoint was taken approximately 1.6km from the site on the Roman Road, south west of Mereway Farm. The viewpoint is looking south westwards towards the site, taken from a gap in the vegetated boundary located either side of the Roman Road. The view consists of a large, flat, arable field continuing towards a heavily tree'd horizon. Due to the distance and intervening vegetation the site is not discernible.

Viewpoint 3:

- 2.38 This viewpoint was taken approximately 450m from the site on Milton Road. The viewpoint is looking westwards towards the site. The view is dominated by a flat, arable field which continues towards a tree'd horizon. To the far left of the view Milton Road is visible. Left off centre a detached property fronting onto Milton Road is partially visible behind thick field boundary vegetation. Due to intervening vegetation the site is not visible.

Viewpoint 4:

- 2.39 This viewpoint was taken approximately 120m from the site on Clay Close Lane at the north western edge of St Andrew's Impington Conservation Area. The viewpoint is looking westwards towards the site. To the centre of the view, extending to the far right, is a flat piece of grassed/scrub land with no defined use continuing to a tree'd horizon. To the right of the view properties fronting Clay Close Lane are clearly visible. To the centre, the far eastern site boundary and the on-site storage sheds are visible making up part of a larger vegetated horizon. As part of the proposals these sheds are to be removed. The existing boundary vegetation will potentially screen any development on site.

Viewpoint 5:

- 2.40 This viewpoint was taken approximately 100m from the site on Impington Lane. The viewpoint is looking north westwards towards the site. Detached houses fronting onto Impington Lane dominate the foreground and screen extended views into the site. To the far right of the view a private drive leading towards the eastern side of the site is clearly visible although it is heavily tree'd either side.

Viewpoint 6:

- 2.41 This viewpoint was taken from inside the site, near the far north eastern corner looking south westerly. From this viewpoint the extent of the eastern parcel of land is visible. Flat scrubland/unmanaged grassland continues from the foreground towards thick boundary vegetation on all sides which screens further views out of the site. Views of an adjacent property located on the southern boundary are possible due to the southern boundary vegetation being less substantial than the rest.

Viewpoint 7:

- 2.42 This viewpoint was taken inside the largest parcel of land within the site. It was taken along the eastern vegetated boundary looking westerly. From this viewpoint the extent of the largest parcel of land is visible. Flat scrubland/unmanaged grassland continues from the foreground to thick vegetated boundaries either side of the view and recent residential development fronting onto Impington Lane and Merrington Place to the centre of the view. A gap in the southern boundary vegetation provides views of a detached dwelling fronting onto Impington Lane. Views out of the site are limited to recent development located centrally within the view and a single dwelling to the left of the view.

Viewpoint 8:

- 2.43 This viewpoint was taken inside the largest parcel of land within the site. It was taken along the northern vegetated boundary looking southerly. From this viewpoint the majority of the largest parcel of land is visible. Flat scrubland/unmanaged grassland continues from the foreground towards thick vegetated boundaries either side of the view. In the centre of the view recent residential development fronting onto Impington Lane and Merrington Place is clearly visible. To the left of the view a detached dwelling fronting onto Impington Lane (as mentioned in viewpoint 7) is partially visible in a gap in the southern boundary vegetation.

Viewpoint 9:

- 2.44 This viewpoint was taken in the north eastern corner of the largest parcel of land which makes up the site. It was looking south easterly. From this viewpoint the majority of the largest parcel of land is visible comprising grassland/unmanaged scrubland. To the far right and left of the view thick vegetated boundaries prevent further views of the remaining site and surrounding landscape. In the centre of the view recent residential development fronting onto Merrington Place is clearly visible. To the right of the recent development it is possible to see the existing pedestrian access point onto the site.

Viewpoint 10:

- 2.45 This viewpoint was taken approximately 15m from the site on Merrington Place. The viewpoint is looking northwards towards the site. Views of the site are almost completely obscured by recently built residential dwellings fronting onto Merrington Place, however, between a gap in the housing the north eastern corner of the largest parcel of land, within the site, is visible. Extended views to the north are restricted by thick boundary vegetation.

Viewpoint 11:

- 2.46 This viewpoint was taken approximately 5m from the site on Impington Lane. The viewpoint is looking northwards towards a gap between recent residential development to the left of the view and historic residences to the right. Views northwards into the site are limited by properties fronting onto Impington Lane and an existing mixed native hedge which runs along the associated path.

Viewpoint 12:

- 2.47 This viewpoint was taken approximately 200m from the site on the northern most entrance of Homefield Park also part of Histon Village Centre Conservation Area. The viewpoint is looking northwards towards the site. Existing residential houses and associated garden vegetation completely obscures views into the site.

Viewpoint 13:

- 2.48 This viewpoint was taken approximately 250m from the site on a Public Right of Way within Histon Village Centre Conservation Area looking easterly towards the site. The site is completely obscured by buildings fronting onto Glebe Way (B1049) including the Grade II Listed Rose and Crown Pub.

Viewpoint 14:

- 2.49 This viewpoint was taken approximately 100m from the site on Ambrose Way looking south easterly towards the site. Views of the site are completely screened by the thick vegetated boundary treatment spreading the extent of the view.

Viewpoint 15:

- 2.50 This viewpoint was taken approximately 200m from the site on a private track looking southwards towards the site. The view is dominated by a flat, arable field which continues towards a tree'd horizon, partially comprising the northern boundary of the site. To the right of the view glimpses of the recent development fronting onto Merrington Place can be seen on the horizon through gaps in the intervening vegetation. The vegetated northern boundary of the site is visible. Development on the site is potentially visible to a similar extent as the aforementioned recent development.

Viewpoint 16:

- 2.51 This viewpoint was taken from Drake Way, approximately 350m from the site, looking south east towards the site. The view is dominated by residential dwellings which completely obscure the site.

Viewpoint 17:

- 2.52 This viewpoint was taken on the edge of the cemetery within the grounds of the Grade I Listed Parish of St Andrew Church. The viewpoint is looking south eastwards towards the site,

approximately 750m away. The site is completely obscured by the boundary wall of the church grounds, intervening vegetation and buildings.

Viewpoint 18:

- 2.53 This viewpoint was taken approximately 1.7m from the site on the Cottenham Road (B1049) looking south eastwards towards the site. A large, flat, arable field extends from the foreground towards a vegetated green horizon. To the left, off centre of the view, glimpses of the north eastern edge of Histon can be seen through the vegetated horizon. Due to the distance and the intervening vegetation the site is not discernible.

Viewpoint 19:

- 2.54 This viewpoint was taken approximately 2.8km from the site on a Public Right of Way called Gun's Lane looking south eastwards towards the site. To the left of the view a large, flat, arable field extends from the foreground towards a heavily tree'd horizon. Right off centre Gun's Lane meanders to the vanishing point. Trees and scrubby vegetation to the right of the lane restrict extended views to glimpses of flat arable fields. Due to the distance and the intervening vegetation, the site is not discernible.

Summary of visual baseline

- 2.55 In summary, the site, which comprises of three distinct parcels of land, is contained and heavily screened by significant vegetation and mature trees. All boundaries, apart from the southern boundary, offer significant if not complete screening. The southern boundary offers the least visual protection, where gaps in the boundary vegetation provide adjacent properties fronting onto Impington Lane and Merrington Place with views into the site. Residents of recently built properties fronting onto Merrington Place currently have unrestricted views into the site due to the lack of rear garden vegetation and the infancy of the landscape buffer strip.
- 2.56 Views into the site from longer distances are restricted, either by existing vegetation on the northern and eastern boundaries, screening views south eastward from the adjacent Conservation Area and northward from the open Fenland landscape, or by the existing built form of Histon, specifically properties fronting onto Impington Lane and Merrington Place.
- 2.57 The site is well screened and contained, limiting the potential visual impact of proposed development to some adjoining residential dwellings, most significantly properties fronting onto Merrington Place. However, with adequate landscape planting and the provision of the existing landscape buffer to mature, visual screening will be provided where currently there is none. Sensitively located development will also ensure the potential effects of the visual impact can be significantly reduced.

2.58 The Landscape visual appraisal has helped identify three parcels of land within the complete site, refer to figure 10; Landscape Assessment Land Parcels and table 1 – Summary of Parcels. Each parcel of land has been assessed in the criteria outlined in the methodology; refer to appendix A.

Parcel 1 – Northern Linear Parcel

2.59 This parcel contains a limited range of landscape elements. The majority of plants within the parcel are self-seeded scrub plants such as blackthorn. The edges of the parcel are lined with substantial mixed species hedgerow and specimen trees. This parcel is of Medium high landscape sensitivity.

2.60 This parcel is located on the northern edge of the site. As previously mentioned the parcel is boarded by a substantial hedge and trees. Views out of the parcel are limited to the north, south and west through incidental gaps in the existing vegetation. This parcel is of Medium low visual sensitivity.

2.61 The combination of the landscape and visual sensitivity result in a Landscape Character Sensitivity of Medium.

2.62 This parcel does not contain landscape designations with the exception of Green Belt. This parcel is of Medium Landscape Value.

Parcel 2 – Eastern Rectilinear Parcel

2.63 This parcel contains mature dense boundary hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The remaining land is covered by unmanaged grassland with incidental young self-seeded trees. This parcel is of Medium low landscape sensitivity.

2.64 The substantial hedge and hedgerow trees bordering the parcel limit the visual envelope to a glimpsed view northwards between a gap in the vegetation and a view of an adjacent property bordering the southern boundary. This parcel is of Medium low visual sensitivity.

2.65 The combination of the landscape and visual sensitivity result in a Landscape Character Sensitivity of Medium Low.

2.66 This parcel does not contain landscape designations with the exception of Green Belt. This parcel is of Medium Landscape Value.

Parcel 3 – Southern Parcel

2.67 This parcel contains a similar range of plants to parcel 2; a mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees boarding the northern, eastern boundaries. The remaining land is covered by unmanaged grassland with incidental young self-seeded trees. This parcel is of Medium low landscape sensitivity.

- 2.68 Views into site are limited by the substantial boundary planting however views are possible from properties adjacent to the southern boundary fronting onto Merrington Way and Impington Road. This parcel is of Medium high visual sensitivity.
- 2.69 The combination of the landscape and visual sensitivity result in a Landscape Character Sensitivity of Medium.
- 2.70 This parcel does not contain landscape designations with the exception of Green Belt. This parcel is of Medium Landscape Value.

Table 1- Summary of Parcels

Parcel	Landscape Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Character Sensitivity	Landscape Value
1	Medium High	Medium Low	Medium	Medium
2	Medium Low	Medium Low	Low	Medium
3	Medium Low	Medium High	Medium	Medium

The Site

- 2.71 The combination of the above three parcels of land provides the complete site with a Landscape Character Sensitivity of Medium and a Landscape Value of Medium.

3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

- 3.1 The following Opportunities and Constraints presented by the site have been identified from the baseline study (refer to Figure 8)
- The site is currently designated as Green Belt, however, by extending the boundary shown in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and Policies Map Proposed Submission July 2013 towards the northern drainage ditch it will greatly support the five objectives of Green Belt and ensure it is more clearly defined;
 - Existing vegetation to the boundaries provides significant screening from any sensitive views into the site;
 - Strategic glimpsed views from the northern linear green space out of the site to the north across open fenland to be retained within the proposals;
 - Internal tree and shrub boundaries to be retained where possible and used to define the spatial layout of the proposal;

- Inclusion of additional pedestrian routes to enable connectivity of the site to the surrounding village;
- Linear parcel of land to be retained and sensitively managed as part of the site's public open space and the drainage strategy;
- Potential main vehicular access point between 51 and 67 Impington Lane;
- Existing access point off Impington Lane;
- Housing fronting onto Impington Lane significantly restricts views into the site;
- Southern boundaries to be strengthened to provide some screening for neighbouring residents;
- Existing landscape buffer to the rear of houses fronting onto Merrington Place to be retained to provide site screening of proposed development; and
- Existing boundary and hedgerow trees to be retained where possible and considered in accordance with the highway infrastructure and drainage treatments.

4 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

4.1 The following points are a series of design principles which will enable the proposed development on the site to be sensitively designed, thereby minimising potential visual and landscape impacts of the surrounding area whilst utilising existing site features to ensure the creation of a pleasant and sustainable place to live which integrates successfully into the village of Histon. Figure 9 translates the following principles into an illustrative Concept Development Framework.

- Utilise the gap between 51 and 67 Impington Lane for the main vehicular access point to the site;
- Provide planting to some of the southern boundary to provide a buffer against the proposed development for residents along Impington Lane;
- Retain existing landscape buffer to the rear of properties fronting onto Merrington Place to provide screening for residence;
- Utilise linear parcel of land for public open space and as part of the drainage strategy;
- Manage northern linear parcel of land to promote biodiversity and provide natural habitats for local wildlife;
- Create additional pedestrian links within the site to connect to the surrounding village;

- Retain and enhance significant vegetation along northern boundary to ensure a strong visual screen towards the Fenlands;
- Replicate the existing boundary formations of the site with a grid system of roads and development blocks; and
- Strategic natural gaps within the northern boundary vegetation to be retained to provide glimpsed views out onto the Fenland from the rectilinear open space.

5 **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 There is opportunity to create a defined development area within the site which is not considered to affect the character and setting of Histon and does not encroach onto the surrounding Fenland landscape to the north. The retention of existing site boundary vegetation and the enhancement of planting on some sections of the southern boundary will help to screen views from adjoining residents on Impington Lane. To the rear of Merrington Place there exists a useful landscape strip, planted with trees and shrubs. This will provide a buffer to the new development.
- 5.2 The proposed extension of the allocation site (H/1 (d)) to include all the site shown on the submitted Site Location Plan will accord with Green Belt policy stated in the NPPF section 9, paragraph 85. This uses the existing vegetated northern boundary, to be managed and enhanced, as a "physical feature that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent" as stated within the NPPF. Currently the proposed allocation site boundary has no relation to any natural physical site feature and creates an unnatural split across these parcels of land.
- 5.3 The proposed site will utilise a scrubby area of land to form an area of natural open space and to provide public connectivity.
- 5.4 The design concept would deliver up to 74 dwellings at 35 dwellings per hectare, although exact housing densities, types and mixes will need to be determined with further discussions with SCDC and stakeholders. This provides a scheme that responds to the local housing needs whilst sitting sensitively with the surrounding built and natural environment to ensure a successful and sustainable development.

Land to the rear of 49 – 83 Impington Lane, Histon
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BIDWELLS

Appendix A

Methodology

Methodology

The process for undertaking this study involves the following stages:-

- Assessment of the landscape setting of the site to act as a baseline against which to assess the site in detail;
- Assessment of the landscape baseline of the site to identify landscape and townscape features which may contribute to local landscape and townscape character and to help form character areas for capacity assessment;
- Assessment of the visual envelope of the site;
- Sub-division of the site into local level landscape character areas;
- Assessment of landscape assessment of the parcels of land.

Definition of local level landscape character areas

The landscape assessment of the site was used to identify local character areas for capacity assessment. Elements and features assessed include a number of different aspects such as the geological pattern, landform, land use, vegetation, ecology, scale and enclosure. The scale of the site is such that smaller areas were defined, at a field by field level. In total, 3 areas were defined in, based on field boundaries.

Landscape Assessment

1. Landscape Sensitivity

This is based on judgements about sensitivity of physical and aesthetic elements in the landscape that are most likely to be affected. The level of sensitivity is based on a professional judgement about the degree to which the receiving landscape is able to accommodate change without adverse impacts upon its character. Aspects likely to be affected and their sensitivity may include the following:

Natural Factors

Vegetation – the nature and extent of woodland and hedgerows will have different sensitivities (e.g. an area with a strong and extensive hedgerow structure will be more sensitive to change than a landscape with few hedges; natural woodland may be more sensitive than a plantation).

Extent and pattern of semi-natural habitat – presence, size and dispersal of semi-natural habitats. There are areas which have greater sensitivity due to the nature of habitats (e.g. species rich grassland will be more sensitive than areas in continued arable crop production).

Landform and drainage – presence of water courses, distinctive features (valleys, scarps etc.), slopes and elevation all contribute to the sensitivity of the landscape (e.g. features such as prominent slopes, ridges and river valleys would be more sensitive to development than flat landscapes).

Cultural factors

Land use/function of the area – the nature of land use, the level of scarcity and resilience to change will all have a level of sensitivity attached (e.g. an area of woodland would be more sensitive to change than area of urban fringe activities such as paddocks).

Settlement Patterns – nature and extent of settlement patterns, would they be sensitive to change (e.g. sprawling urban fringe may be less sensitive to change than a clear town/country divide).

Historical features – the presence of historical features adds to the sensitivity because of the need to preserve their integrity. Features such as historical parks, Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM), Listed buildings, Roman roads and scarce/uncommon historical landscape types. The level of sensitivity will depend on their presence, nature and extent.

Landscape Quality and Condition

Representation of typical character – this will indicate how similar the area is to the landscape character area within which it exists, how many of the typical features it exhibits.

Intactness – this indicates how well the landscape has survived over a period of time and whether significant features have been lost (e.g. hedges, woods).

State of repair – this assesses how well the landscape is looked after and whether elements such as hedges have been managed consistently.

Aesthetic Factors

The aesthetic value of the character areas includes an assessment of sensitivity of the following elements – scale, enclosure, diversity, texture, form, pattern and prominence of skyline. (e.g. areas which are small scale; open character; display a greater level of unity rather than fragmentation; possess a number of local visual horizons could all have a greater level of sensitivity).

2. Visual Sensitivity

The study will also take account of the visual sensitivity of the landscape and consideration as to the way people see the landscape. This may depend on the following factors:

General Visibility

This considers the level of visibility (or intervisibility) in the area, based on the nature of the landform and vegetation cover. Landscapes with higher levels of intervisibility are more sensitive to change.

This will also consider any key views and the contribution the area makes to the visual setting of an area (including visual links to the wider landscape). Areas containing wider panoramas across areas of countryside will be more sensitive.

Population

This element will consider the number (magnitude) of people likely to perceive change in the landscape. The higher the number of people, the greater the level of magnitude.

The purpose of viewers being within an area (sensitivity) is considered, as the nature of activity will have a bearing on how visually sensitive the landscape is (e.g. residential and recreational pursuits (e.g. walking) are considered to be more sensitive than transient views of people travelling through or where there are views from workplaces).

Mitigation Potential

This aspect considers the likelihood of change being mitigated, without the mitigation measures themselves having an adverse effect (for example, planting trees to screen a development in a large-scale open landscape could have as great an impact as the development itself). The level of sensitivity relates to how appropriate mitigation may be in an area, for example, in an area where mitigation is more appropriate the sensitivity would be lower.

3. Landscape Value

The value of the landscape is an important element in assessing the overall landscape capacity of an area. These are more subjective, experiential or perceptual aspects that can also reflect the local value of a landscape to a community and includes both designated and non-designated elements. These may include:

Designations

The value of a landscape can be recorded by some form of formal designation – from national down to local level. The nature, number and extent of the designation may also indicate the level of sensitivity of the landscape to change – whether physical, visual or historical and is recorded within the assessment as such.

Perceptual Aspects

The perceptual value of character areas need to be considered within the assessment. The tranquillity of an area can be defined by the extent of noise sources within an area; the absence of views of development and the absence of human activity. The scenic beauty of an area is the subjective value given to an area relating to pleasing patterns and combinations of landscape features that appeal primarily to visual senses. The value will relate to the presence and extent of these aspects.

Settlement Edge

This aspect refers to the functional (as opposed to visual) role that an area has in relation to the settlement edge. This could relate to whether or not an area defines some form of physical separation between two areas. The level of sensitivity will relate to the presence and extent of these aspects.

Local Associations

There are sometimes parts of landscape areas that have special associations or meanings to a local community and therefore make a contribution to the value of the local landscape. Often, these are not designated but still need to be recorded in some manner in relation to the landscape capacity of the area. Assessing this aspect is an intensive area of work, often requiring extensive local knowledge beyond the resource capability of this study. Therefore, in order to reflect this in the assessment, each area is assumed to have a medium level of sensitivity in relation to cultural associations, except where there is some known aspect that contributes to the value of the area. It is possible that this element could be reviewed as time progresses

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Each of the three aspects described above, Landscape Sensitivity, Visual Sensitivity and Landscape Value, have been assessed on a 5 point scale – low, medium-low, medium, medium-high and high. This assessment is based on how prominent each of the categories is within the character area and also the relative sensitivity of each element to change.

In order to establish the overall Landscape Character Sensitivity for each of the character areas the individual assessments for Landscape Sensitivity and the Visual Sensitivity are combined on a matrix as below:

Table 1 - Landscape Character Sensitivity

Landscape Sensitivity	High	Medium	Medium High	Medium High	High	High
	Medium High	Medium Low	Medium	Medium High	Medium High	High
	Medium	Medium Low	Medium Low	Medium	Medium High	Medium High
	Medium Low	Low	Medium Low	Medium Low	Medium	Medium High
	Low	Low	Low	Medium Low	Medium Low	Medium
	Low	Medium Low	Medium	Medium High	High	
	Visual Sensitivity					