

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

For the Greater Cambridge Local Plan - The First Conversation
(Issues and Options 2020)

Land South of St Neots Road, Hardwick

For Pigeon Land 2 Ltd
(on behalf of The Landowners)

February 2020

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 Liz Lake Associates have been commissioned by Pigeon Land 2 Ltd to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal for 'Land south of St Neots Road, Hardwick', hereafter referred to as 'the Site'. The Appraisal has been prepared in support of submissions to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Issues and Options consultation.
- 1.1.2 The Site lies to the western edge of Hardwick, a settlement lying between the larger urban areas of Cambridge and Cambourne in South Cambridgeshire and west of the M11. The village is positioned on an elevated part of the undulating claylands, albeit the Site is located on relatively flat land, where the landform falls away from the southern edge of the village, with its well vegetated edge, towards a wide shallow valley system, within which the Bourn Brook is located along with villages such as Toft.
- 1.1.3 The area around Hardwick has undergone and is undergoing significant change, with new housing and development. Significant infrastructure exists close to the north of the Site, where the A428 road corridor passes, with overbridges, roundabouts and slips roads connecting Cambridge to Cambourne. Further change is planned to construct a dedicated bus route between Cambridge and Cambourne along with an associated park and ride facility (preferred option at Scotland Farm, north of Hardwick).
- 1.1.4 Several other developments have taken place in the surrounding area. Immediately to the east of the Site there is an extant planning permission for up to 155 dwellings (Ref: S/3064/16/OL), although construction work has not yet begun. That development therefore forms part of the baseline context when considering this Site from a landscape and visual perspective.
- 1.1.5 The Site lies beyond the Green Belt boundary and is not subject to any landscape designations and, as such, is not constrained in landscape planning terms.

- 1.1.6 The total Site area is approximately 6.51 hectares. The Site is agricultural land comprising paddocks and an access track leading to St Neots Rd. The Site is well contained with mature boundaries comprising hedgerow and belts of deciduous trees to the south, east and west.
- 1.1.7 The Site lies beyond a tract of existing housing along St Neots Road at the western end of the village, with rear gardens and associated hedgerow and tree planting along the Site's northern boundary. The north-eastern boundary of the Site is defined by a relatively new housing development along Meridian Close, which only has sparse hedgerow and a line of trees along its western boundary to separate it from the Site.
- 1.1.8 An existing track running along the eastern boundary of the Site (and adjacent to houses on Meridian Close) has been incorporated into the approved neighbouring scheme as providing pedestrian and cycle links, with connectivity to St Neots Road. This track also connects eastwards via the adjacent consented Site with Hall Drive allowing a circular loop into the village.
- 1.1.9 The site is positioned within Landscape Character Area (LCA) C: The Western Claylands, as set out in both the Cambridgeshire County Landscape Guidelines Document (1991) and the South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide SPD (SCDC) (2010).
- 1.1.10 The SCDC Design Guide, states that,
"The mostly small, scattered villages of this area often have well defined edges provided by mature trees, thick hedgerows, copses or parkland. Small fields and paddocks also contribute to their landscape setting, providing a transition to the surrounding countryside."
- 1.1.11 Visually, the Site is well-contained by the urban settlement of Hardwick and the existing pattern of vegetation of small woodlands, hedgerow and hedgerow trees. Due to this, much of the Site is shielded from views from the wider landscape. The field boundary along its southern edge only separates the Site from further arable

farmland which is level with the Site and unlikely to offer much in terms of views of the proposed scheme.

1.1.12 The site provides good opportunities to strengthen, reinforce and enhance the key features and characteristics of the LCAs. The Land South of St Neots Road, Hardwick Vision Document (2019) has been informed by a landscape and visual baseline assessment of the Site and the guidelines for the local character areas, as well as the South Cambridgeshire Design SPD (2018). The opportunities identified in the vision document include:

- *“Provision for a range of high quality housing with associated green infrastructure;*
- *Create a sensitively designed new development in a location that is closely related to the existing settlement;*
- *Provision of new vehicular access point from St Neots Road, together with a potential pedestrian/cycles link along the eastern boundary of the site;*
- *Potential to connect to existing pedestrian route to the east to enhance pedestrian access to village centre;*
- *Creation of a locally distinctive development which draws on the local vernacular;*
- *To retain and strengthen the boundary vegetation along the western and southern boundaries of the site, to create a soft development edge and to filter views of development from the adjoining countryside;*
- *Include suitable planting and open space to provide an attractive landscape setting that helps achieve biodiversity net gain;*
- *New dwellings to respect the privacy and amenity of both existing and future homes.”*

1.1.13 The Site is not subject to any landscape designations, it lies in an area of relatively low value quality, comprising paddocks at the edge of the settlement, which is otherwise surrounded by vegetative features from the wider landscape, and according has a low sensitivity to change in landscape terms. As a consequence, the Site has a high capacity to accommodate residential development.

Site Location: **Land South of St Neots Road, Hardwick**

Local Planning Authority: **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Approximate Site area: **6.50ha**

Client: **Pigeon Land 2 Ltd**

“Liz Lake Associates” has been commissioned by ‘Pigeon Land 2 Ltd’ (“The Promoter”) on behalf of “The Landowners”, to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal for ‘Land south of St Neots Road, Hardwick’, to be referred to hereafter as ‘the Site’. The Appraisal has been prepared in support of submissions to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Issues and Options consultation.

This report has been prepared for the joint benefit of Pigeon Land 2 Ltd and The Landowners, and the contents should not be relied upon by others without the express written authority of Liz Lake Associates. If any unauthorised third party makes use of this report they do so at their own risk and Liz Lake Associates owe them no duty of care or skill.

Landscape Character Assessments	
National ¹	National Character Area (NCA) Area 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
Regional ²	Landscape Typology: Wooded Village Farmlands
County ³	Landscape Character Area 3: Western Claylands
District ⁴	Landscape Character Area C: Western Claylands

Designations	
Landscape and Green Belt	Hardwick Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located towards the edge of the study area, approximately 1.5km to the south west of the Site. Several Public Rights of Way lie within 2km of the Site, affording connections to a wider network of footpaths and bridleways across the rural Cambridgeshire

¹ Natural England; Landscape Character Assessments; Area 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands

² East of England Landscape Character Assessment 2010; Landscape Typology: Wooded Village Farmlands

³ Cambridgeshire County Landscape Document 1991; Landscape Character Area 3: Western Claylands

⁴ South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide 2010; Landscape Character Area C: Western Claylands

	landscape. These public rights of way connect the village of Hardwick to Dry Drayton to the north, Comberton to the south east and Caldecote to the south west. The closest public footpath to the Site is Caldecote 38/9, which begins approximately 0.4km south west of the Site and runs in a south-westerly direction through arable farmland east of Caldecote. Approximately 1.2km south west of the Site, the footpath meets bridleway Hardwick 114/5, which runs south of the Site from west to east (as the Long Distance Wimpole Way) across the valley slopes to the south of Hardwick. The Cambridgeshire Green Belt covers large areas of land to the north, east and south of Hardwick Village. The Site is located beyond the Green Belt. At its closest, this designation lies approximately 0.2km north east of the Site, north of the A428 and its road junction interchange with St Neots Road / Scotland Road. Refer to Figure 2 Statutory Designations and Figure 3 Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way.
Environmental	The Site is not covered by and does not adjoin any environmental designations. Within the 2km study area lies numerous areas of deciduous woodland and some smaller scattered areas of traditional orchards. Hardwick Wood, an area of ancient and semi-natural woodland, lies approximately 1.85km south west of the Site. An area of lowland meadows lies to the south of Caldecote, 1.85km south west of the Site. Larger areas of wood pasture and parkland BAP lie to the north west and north east of the Site, on the edge of the study area. Refer to Figure 4 Environmental Designations.
Heritage	There are no Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments listed on the Historic England register within the Site, however there are some within the wider study area, including the Grade II* listed Church of St Mary (List Entry Number: 1163557) to the south east within the village. A number of Grade II Listed Buildings lie within 1km to the south east of the Site, to the south of Hardwick village, including The Blue Lion (List Entry Number: 1127182), Chequers (List Entry Number: 1163577), Victoria Farm Cottage (List Entry Number: 1127184) and Old Victoria Farmhouse (List Entry Number: 1127183). Refer to Figure 3 Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way

Element	Appraisal/ Review
National Character Area (NCA) profile	
Key Characteristics: Bedfordshire and	<i>"The Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands National Character Area (NCA) is a broad, gently undulating, lowland plateau dissected by shallow river valleys</i>

Cambridgeshire Claylands (NCA 88)	<i>that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east. Within it, but distinct from it, is the Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge, a contrasting narrow and elevated outcrop of Greensand, with its associated habitats on acidic soils such as grassland, heathland and woodland. Views of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA and its large-scale arable farmland can be seen in most directions, from the elevated ground of the Yardley Whittlewood Ridge, Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge, East Anglian Chalk and Chilterns NCAs.</i> • <i>“Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.</i> • <i>Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the northwest representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.</i> • <i>Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.</i> • <i>Wide variety of semi-natural habitats supporting a range of species – some notably rare and scarce – including sites designated for species associated with ancient woodland, wetland sites important for birds, great crested newt and species of stonewort, and traditional orchards and unimproved grassland supporting a rich diversity of wild flowers.</i> • <i>Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads.”</i>
Regional Landscape Character Assessment	
Relevant Key Characteristics: Wooded Village Farmlands	The Regional Landscape Character Assessment positions the Site within the Wooded Village Farmlands where, <i>“A gently rolling, elevated arable landscape with ancient woodland blocks and small, nuclear villages. Often an open landscape with long distance views, although woodland contains views particularly around settlements;</i> • <i>Elevated, gently rolling landscape typically associated with broad glacial plateaux;</i> • <i>A wooded landscape with many ancient woodlands and frequent hedgerow trees (oak and ash);</i> • <i>A mixture of small scale, sub-regular and sinuous fields (often with tall hedgerows) alongside areas of planned geometric fields, reflecting the late enclosure of former commons and waste.”</i> Refer to Figure 5 Landscape Character Assessment

Visual Experience: Wooded Village Farmlands	<i>“Elevation and openness means this landscape offers some long ranging views across lower lying areas. Woodland screens views in places creating a more intimate feel particularly around settlements.”</i>
Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (1991)	
Key Characteristics: Western Claylands	<i>The Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines</i> <i>“This gentle undulating landscape It consists of large-scale arable farmland with open fields, sparse trimmed hedgerows and watercourses often cleared of bankside vegetation. ...Elsewhere individual woods are of importance in visual and nature conservation terms, but they tend to be isolated incidents in an area dominated by arable farmland”.</i> <i>“Increased mechanisation has led to the removal of hedgerows and amalgamation of fields. Many of the remaining hedges are ‘gappy’ and trimmed almost out of existence by regular cutting.....”.</i> <i>“Existing and former wartime airfields at.....Bourn... have a significant impact on the area”.</i> <i>“Small villages and hamlets are scattered throughout the area, usually in sheltered places with existing trees. Small grass paddocks typically occur on the edges of the villages.”</i>
Principles for Landscape Improvement and Management: Western Claylands	The principles include and point towards a “new landscape pattern” that responds to the need for landscape enhancement with the “creation of the new landscape structure”. • <i>“Management of existing woodlands;</i> • <i>Planting of woodland belts;</i> • <i>Hedgerows: Selected hedgerows should be reinforced or managed for particularly significant impact, based upon their visual and wildlife potential. Historically significant hedgerows should be carefully conserved, and new hedges planted to emphasise the existing landscape;</i> • <i>Footpath corridor improvements: a small number of long distance routes and also circular/ linking routes related to villages and towns should be located, and landscape improvements implemented along their alignments;</i> • <i>Urban fringe: where the claylands border the Ouse Valley towns a substantial increase in the amount of tree and hedge cover is needed with trees along road margins, and woodland belts alongside roads and edges of developments.</i>

South Cambridgeshire District Council – District Design Guide SPD (2010)	
Relevant Key Characteristics: Western Claylands (C)	<i>“This character area comprises gently undulating arable farmland with, mostly, large fields and low trimmed hedgerows. Occasional medium to large sized ancient woodlands provides a distinctive feature and church towers and spires are key landmarks. Despite the presence of some major roads, much of the area has a relatively tranquil, rural character.”</i> • <i>“The gently undulating topography is divided by broad, shallow valleys”</i> • <i>It is a predominantly open and intensive arable landscape. Fields are either bounded by open ditches, or closely trimmed hedgerows, both with a variable number of hedgerow trees;</i> • <i>Small pasture fields with origins in ‘ancient countryside’ provide a buffer between settlements and medium size fields enclosed in the nineteenth century.”</i> Refer to Figure 3 County Landscape Character Assessment
Settlement Character: Western Claylands (C)	<i>“The mostly small, scattered villages of this area often have well defined edges provided by mature trees, thick hedgerows, copses or parkland. Small fields and paddocks also contribute to their landscape setting, providing a transition to the surrounding countryside. Many of the villages have a strong, linear form with rows of cottages and a few, larger farmsteads facing roads and paths.”</i> • <i>“Villages are either located on the sides of small valleys (such as Bourn and Little Gransden), along spring lines (such as Haslingfield) or on slightly elevated ground within broad valleys (such as Comberton and Grantchester)”.</i> • <i>“Woodlands, copses, paddocks and, occasionally, parklands contribute to the distinctive landscape setting of villages, creating a wooded character and providing a link to the surrounding countryside;</i> • <i>The historic villages are mostly linear in form, despite modern infilling in some villages;</i> • <i>Buildings are typically arranged in loose knit patterns, sited close to roads or paths. Frontages include open spaces which allow visual unity with surrounding fields and woodlands;</i> • <i>Mature trees, hedges, picket fences and walls contribute to the informal rural character;</i> • <i>Small irregularly shaped village greens are sometimes a feature.....”</i>
Design Principles: Western Claylands (C)	• <i>“Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern of mostly small, scattered villages and isolated farmsteads;</i> • <i>Ensure any extensions to valleyside villages are located parallel to contours or at right angles to them along lanes reflecting the historic settlement form;</i>

	• <i>Ensure the linear or rectilinear form of settlements is maintained, avoiding backland and cul-de-sac development where possible;</i> • <i>Ensure buildings are arranged in a loose knit form, generally facing and close to, or set a little back from, the streets;</i> • <i>Ensure developments are well integrated with the local patterns of tree planting and hedgerows;</i> • <i>Ensure new developments respond to the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings in the area, for example, reflecting the traditional building styles, materials, colours and textures of the locality;</i> • <i>Mark street boundaries by the use of simple picket or trellis fencing, hedges, or low brick walls as appropriate;</i> • <i>Retain hedges and introduce them as boundaries alongside roads outside village cores;</i> • <i>Conserve small pre-nineteenth century paddocks.</i>
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South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan, 2018	
The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) covers the period 2011-2031 and was produced jointly by Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.	
Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character	• <i>“Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which it is located”.</i>
Policy NH/3: Protecting Agricultural Land	• <i>Planning permission will not be granted for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless: a. Land is allocated for development in the Local Plan; b. Sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land.</i> • <i>2. Uses not involving substantial built development but which take agricultural land will be regarded as permanent unless restricted specifically by condition.</i> • <i>3. When considering proposals for the change of use or diversification of farmland, particular consideration shall be given to the potential for impact upon Priority Species and Habitats.</i>
Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure	• <i>1. The Council will aim to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district. Proposals that cause loss or harm to this network will not be permitted unless the need for and benefits of the development demonstrably and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the district’s green infrastructure network.</i> • <i>2. The Council will encourage proposals which: a. Reinforce, link, buffer and create new green infrastructure; and b. Promote, manage and interpret green infrastructure and enhance public enjoyment of it.</i>

	• 3. The Council will support proposals which deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and which deliver local green infrastructure. • 4. All new developments will be required to contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network within the district. These contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs.
Policy NH/7: Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees	• Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland (as shown on the Policies Map) or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. 2. Development proposals affecting ancient woodland or veteran trees will be expected to mitigate any adverse impacts, and to contribute to the woodland's or veteran tree's management and further enhancement via planning conditions or planning obligations.
Policy NH/8: Mitigating the Impact of Development In and Adjoining the Green Belt	• Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality.
Policy SS/7 Relates to Bourn Airfield	The Policy for Bourn Airfield has some relevance since it makes reference to the "creation of a comprehensive movement network" including, • "Significant Improvements in Public Transport, including: iii. Provision of a segregated bus link from Cambourne to Bourn Airfield new village across the Broadway, and on through the development to the junction of the St Neots Road with Highfields Road;" • "Measures to Promote Cycling and Walking, including: i. Provision of a network of attractive, direct, safe and convenient walking and cycling routes from the start of the development linking homes to public transport and the main areas of activity such as the village centre, schools and employment areas; ii. Provision of a direct, segregated high quality pedestrian and cycle links to west Cambridge, Cambourne, Caldecote/Highfields, Hardwick and Bourn;"

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

As part of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF), the South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) updates policies from the 2007 Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD).

Policy DP/2 Design of New Development	"1. All new development must be of high-quality design and, as appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, should: a. Preserve or enhance the character of the local area; b. Conserve or enhance important environmental assets of the site;
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	c. <i>Include variety and interest within a coherent design, which is legible and provides a sense of place whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;</i> d. <i>Achieve a legible development, which includes streets, squares and other public spaces with a defined sense of enclosure and interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and landmarks, with good interrelationship between buildings, routes and spaces both within the development and with the surrounding area;</i> e. <i>Achieve a permeable development for all sectors of the community and all modes of transport, including links to existing footways, cycleways, bridleways, rights of way, green spaces and roads;</i> f. <i>Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;</i> g. <i>In the case of residential development, provide higher residential densities, and a mix of housing types including smaller homes;</i> h. <i>Provide high quality public spaces;</i> i. <i>Provide an inclusive environment that is created for people, that is and feels safe, and that has a strong community focus;</i> j. <i>Include high quality landscaping compatible with the scale and character of the development and its surroundings.</i> 2. <i>Design and Access Statements submitted to accompany planning applications and applications for listed building consent should be compatible with the scale and complexity of the proposal and, as appropriate should include:</i> k. <i>A full site analysis of existing features and designations</i> l. <i>An accurate site survey including landscape features and site levels;</i> m. <i>The relationship of the site to its surroundings;</i> n. <i>Existing accesses for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vehicles;</i> o. <i>Any known historic importance;</i> p. <i>Opportunities for maximising energy efficiency and addressing water and drainage issues.</i> 3. <i>The Access element of the Statement should demonstrate that the development will achieve an inclusive environment that can be used by everyone, regardless of age, gender or disability. It should also address how the development has taken account of the transport policies of the development plan."</i>
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Element	Site Assessment (Character, Condition and Value)
Site Appraisal	The Site lies to the west of Hardwick on relatively flat land which gradually slopes to the north. The total area is approximately 6.51ha. The central area of the Site feels open and large as it is predominantly paddock land that lacks in vegetation except for that along the edges of the Site. Along the western and southern edges of the Site are field boundaries of broadleaf deciduous trees, which provide a rural backdrop that contain potential long-distance views across the adjacent arable farmland. West of the Site is an undeveloped field of shrub and grassland which further obscures views towards the Site from Caldecote to the west. Scattered along the southern boundary of the Site are a series of mature trees that appear uncharacteristically large and pointy in form, compared to the smaller, broad, rounded canopies of nearby trees. The east of the Site is currently contained by a parcel of wooded land that has approved planning permission (reference S/3064/16/OL) for up to 155 dwellings. As this is immediately east of the Site, the development will vastly change the character and value of the Site, giving it a much more urban, developed feel. The Site wraps around existing housing off St Neots Road to the north of the Site, with rear gardens and associated hedgerow and tree planting along the northern Site boundary. This gives a strong urban influence and will allow the proposal to 'merge' with existing development. The north-eastern boundary of the Site is defined by a relatively new housing development along Meridian Close, which only has sparse hedgerow and a line of trees along its western boundary to separate it from the Site. This housing is larger and more modern in appearance than the more traditional, local bungalows, so that this western area in the village of Hardwick already feels developed and changing. The proposal will be able to merge with the recent development along Meridian Close, as well as the development proposed for immediately east of the Site.

Landscape Qualities	
Representativeness/ consistency with wider character judgement	- Highly Consistent - Mostly consistent - Some key characteristics present - Not representative of wider character
Landscape character attractiveness judgement	- Highly attractive - Attractive - Pleasant - Unremarkable

Remoteness and tranquillity judgement	- Remote - Peaceful - Some interruption - Not tranquil The existing settlement and varied surrounding land uses, including the modern developed Meridian Close and key road infrastructure and pylons in the area. Proposed development for land immediately east of the Site will further reduce the remoteness and tranquillity of the Site.
Landscape qualities general description	The Site is only partially typical of the wider landscape character areas – whilst it is bounded by wooded features, occupying a planned field bound by hedgerow and hedgerow trees. More typical of local landscape character area, the Site contains grass paddocks commonly found on the edges of villages but these reduce the landscape quality and condition compared to the wider agricultural landscape beyond the villages, and maintains a “relatively tranquil, rural character” despite the close proximity of the A428, St Neots Road and associated junctions.

Visual Qualities	
Visual Prominence judgement	- High - Moderate high - Moderate low - Low Views from north and east masked by existing built form. Views from west and south restricted by existing mature vegetation- glimpse views would see proposed development merged with existing and proposed built form immediately north and east of Site.
Nature of the urban edge judgement	- No visible urban edge - Soft well vegetated urban edge limited views of principally rooflines - Partially visible urban edge - Hard urban edge with no screening Where the settlement is visible from the Site there is currently a stark edge, with limited planting. The adjacent new development with permission granted will have the benefit of some hedgerow screening and the principle for screening and softening is established.
Settlement setting and views of settlement judgement	- Highly attractive features or views - Some attractive features or views - Few attractive features or views - No attractive features or views

	The setting is defined by mature vegetation on the village fringes which helps ensure the landscape setting of the settlement in the wider countryside (to the south), is maintained with attractive views to the south of the site.
Public accessibility within and immediately surrounding the potential development site judgement	- Many public views - Some public views - Limited public views - No public views There is currently no public access to the Site, whilst views from public locations at Meridian Close (gaps between built frontage) north east of the Site provide views into the Site. Remaining public views are restricted to glimpse views from St Neots Road and PRoW to south of Site across existing housing. An informal track along the eastern boundary of the Site will eventually allow public access in future adjacent to the Site boundary.
Visual qualities general descriptions	The majority of the Site is well contained by the existing urban form and existing pattern of vegetation of small woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees. From the north of the Site, glimpse views of the Site may be possible, but these are limited due to the existing built form and vegetation in the vicinity of St Neots Road. Glimpsed views of the Site from St Neots Road may be afforded through gaps in the residential properties, as well as those along Meridian Close. The majority of properties along the boundary with the Meridian Close development have rear gardens that back onto the Site, with planting along high fence boundaries. Views over the Site will be possible from upper windows to the rear of these properties, transitioning from rural and open to urban and enclosed. Views from the east of the Site, along Hall Drive, will change once a proposed development for 155 dwellings on the parcel of land immediately east of the Site is built (Ref: S/3064/16/OL). As a result, foreground views of the site are blocked and screened by new housing in the baseline and existing retained boundary vegetation. From the south of the Site the hedgerow boundary, with scattered mature trees, sufficiently masks views towards the Site from the south as the level of the land drops away as part of the gently undulating landscape character. This southern Site boundary may be reinforced and strengthened to mask the proposed development. To the west of the Site, a parcel of land with dense layers of woodland, shrub and grassland sufficiently blocks any potential views of the Site from footpaths, roads and the settlement of Caldecote to the west of the Site.

Scope for mitigation	
Scope for mitigation?	The Site is already well contained and screened within the landscape but there is scope for further mitigation. The Site falls gradually towards the north, east and west. The northern part of the Site is well screened from existing vegetation and residential properties along St Neots Road, as well as the A428 road which runs along an embankment from west to east. Glimpse views between buildings are possible from St Neots Road, but these can be screened with vegetation along the northern boundary of the Site. The eastern part of the Site is sufficiently screened from the rest of Hardwick village by a densely wooded parcel of land. This has outline planning permission for a residential development of up to 155 dwellings, which would also sufficiently screen the Site from the east, with associated landscaping that would further reduce visibility of the Site over time as the vegetation matures. To the south of the Site, the gradually sloping landform means that the Site is slightly more exposed to the regular scattering of public footpaths and bridleways along arable field boundaries south west of the Site. Given the proximity of existing and planned development, the Site would merge with views of the existing urban development to the west of Hardwick. The reinforcement of the hedgerow field boundary with broadleaf trees along the southern boundary of the Site would help to mitigate these views. To the west of the Site is a land parcel of shrubby grassland edged with a mature hedgerow and tree field boundary. The various layers of vegetation sufficiently mask any views from the west of the Site but may be enhanced with more attractive species as part of a "landscape buffer" which would run along the western and southern boundaries of the Site. Existing landscape features within the Site, including hedgerow and tree boundaries, can be retained to provide a mature landscape structure around the edges of the development which will screen the development stage and be enhanced with additional planting which will provide additional screening of the Site in the future. An area of open space in the northern segment of the Site would prevent the proposed scheme from encroaching too much on existing residential properties along St Neots Road, providing them with an attractive backdrop and additional privacy that will be securely overlooked by residents. A sensitive design approach would enable an appropriate edge to be created for the southern part of the Site to provide a distinct separation between the urban extension of Hardwick and the rural, arable landscape. The addition of a stronger hedgerow boundary and higher frequency of mature, broadleaf trees would strengthen the existing Site boundary and sufficiently screen views into the Site from the south. An informal track which runs east to west through the wooded parcel of land immediately east of the Site, then northwards along the western boundary of the Site towards St Neots Road, provides an opportunity to link the

	Site with the proposed development of 155 dwellings immediately east (Ref: S/3064/16/OL) and existing development along St Neots Road to the north. This could become an attractive green corridor which extends into the Site to provide naturalistic pedestrian and cycle links to the village of Hardwick. Multi-use, attractive open space should be located in an accessible part of the Site. Development should be sufficiently offset from adjacent properties along Meridian Close and those proposed for the land parcel immediately east of the Site. Properties along the edges of the Site should face outwards for purposes of natural surveillance, with rear gardens that securely back onto each other. This is particularly important along the western edge of the Site along which properties should front outwards to provide natural surveillance over the informal track along the western boundary of the Site.
Land Management Guidelines:	South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide SPD 2010 • <i>“Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern of mostly small, scattered villages and isolated farmsteads;</i> • <i>Ensure the linear or rectilinear form of settlements is maintained, avoiding backland and cul-de-sac development where possible;</i> • <i>Ensure buildings are arranged in a loose knit form, generally facing and close to, or set a little back from, the streets;</i> • <i>Ensure developments are well integrated with the local patterns of tree planting and hedgerows;</i> • <i>Ensure new developments respond to the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings in the area, for example, reflecting the traditional building styles, materials, colours and textures of the locality;</i> • <i>Mark street boundaries by the use of simple picket or trellis fencing, hedges, or low brick walls as appropriate;</i> • <i>Retain hedges and introduce them as boundaries alongside roads outside village cores;</i> • <i>Avoid unnecessary straightening and widening of narrow country lanes and the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials, street furniture, lighting and signage as part of traffic calming measures wherever appropriate”.</i> South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan 2018: • <i>“Policy NH/4: Biodiversity includes: New development must aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity. Opportunities should be taken to achieve positive gain through the form and design of development. Measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitats and networks, and natural landscape. The built environment should be viewed as an opportunity to fully integrate biodiversity within new development through innovation. Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist</i>

	<i>in the achievement of targets in the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and aid delivery of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.</i> • <i>Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure includes: The Council will encourage proposals which: a. Reinforce, link, buffer and create new green infrastructure; and b. Promote, manage and interpret green infrastructure and enhance public enjoyment of it. The Council will support proposals which deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and which deliver local green infrastructure. All new developments will be required to contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network within the district. These contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs.</i>
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Landscape Capacity	
Is there Capacity within the landscape to absorb change?	Yes - Given the nature, overall character, condition, value and quality of the Site, it is considered that the Site has a high capacity to accommodate change; this is for residential development of up to 2.5 storeys, subject to a sympathetic design approach which respects the existing features of the Site, including hedgerow and mature tree field boundaries. The Site is well contained from the surrounding landscape and the gentle transition to the rural landscape to the south would be maintained as a buffer, so that the settlement edge is well integrated in line with settlement characteristics. There are limited views of the Site from public and private locations, save for the adjacent residential properties. The land immediately east of the Site has an existing planning permission for a residential development of up to 155 dwellings (Ref: S/3064/16/OL), which further sets the context for a changing landscape in the area.

Recommendations if the Site is to be developed (refer to Illustrative Concept Plan)
• Retention of the existing landscape features along the edges of the Site, including tree belts, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to provide a mature landscape structure to the development Site and a strong well vegetated separation between the Site and the rural arable farmland to the south. • Residential areas to be concentrated within the central area, with an area of open space towards the north of the Site, to separate the proposal from existing residential properties along St Neots Road. • Properties should be offset from existing residences and use open space and vegetation to create suitable distances and offset for privacy and amenity. • The existing informal track which approaches the Site from Hall Drive could provide an attractive pedestrian and cycle link that connects the Site with the centre of Hardwick village. Development frontages should be offset from this but could overlook the new link for safety.

- The internal street pattern should allow for the integration of planting, including street trees to help integrate the development and soften its appearance and provide visual amenity for residents.
 - Dwellings should front outwards across proposed roadways for security from natural surveillance.
 - Dwellings should have rear gardens that back onto each other for added security and privacy. Rear garden fences should be carefully positioned so as not to detract from the character – they can be planted. Consider brick walls in some key locations.
 - Include SUDs features where possible to provide connected water holding solutions on the clay soils.
 - Buildings, structures and hard-standing should avoid tree protection areas for existing trees and hedgerows to be retained along the edges of the Site.
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2. Conclusion

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- 2.1.1 The Site lies to the west of Hardwick on relatively flat land which gradually slopes to the south. The total area is approximately 6.51ha and comprises paddocks abutting the edge of the settlement. Along the western and southern edges of the Site are field boundaries of deciduous trees. The east of the Site is contained by a wooded parcel of land which has approved planning permission for a development of up to 155 dwellings. The Site wraps around existing housing off St Neots Road to the north of the Site, with rear gardens and associated hedgerow and tree planting along the Site boundary. The north-eastern boundary of the Site is defined by a relatively new housing development along Meridian Close, which only has sparse hedgerow and a line of trees along its western boundary to separate it from the Site.
- 2.1.2 In summary, the Site is not subject to any landscape designations, it lies in an area of relatively low value quality, comprising paddocks at the edge of the settlement, which is otherwise surrounded by vegetative features from the wider landscape, and according has a low sensitivity to change in landscape terms. As a consequence, the Site has a high capacity to accommodate residential development. The Site is subject to relatively few views as identified in the appraisal and there would be no effect on the wider landscape given the design approach will allow for a strong and well considered transition to the wider countryside that follows the existing settlement pattern.
- 2.1.3 The proposed design approach allows for significant new green infrastructure as part of the strategic allocation, that could connect the Site to the rest of Hardwick via an existing informal track that runs along the eastern boundary and through the wooded parcel of land immediately east that has approved planning permission for residential development.
- 2.1.4 Overall, this appraisal has informed the approach to site layout and the extent of development and green infrastructure opportunities that is appropriate within the Site, to the south of St Neots Road, Hardwick.
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- Landscape Design
- Urban Design
- Residential
- Public Realm
- Masterplanning
- Landscape Planning
- Heritage Landscapes
- Gardens and Estates
- Restoration and Conversion
- Places of Worship
- Expert Witness
- Hospitality
- Education
- Retail / Office
- Community
- Ecology
- Arboriculture
- 3D / Graphic Design