WHLandscape
RESIDENTIAL • AGRICULTURAL • EQUESTRIAN • COMMERCIAL

LAND AT THE FORMER SIPSON GARDEN CENTRE, SIPSON, WEST DRAYTON, HILLINGDON, LONDON

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

FOR

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR AIRSIDE SUPPORT VEHICLES

Prepared by:

WHLandscape

On behalf of:

Lewdown Holding Ltd

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APPOINTMENT

WH Landscape Consultancy Ltd (WHLandscape) has been appointed by Lewdown Holdings Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the proposed development of a Centre of Excellence for Airside Support Vehicles on land at the former Sipson Garden Centre, Sipson, West Drayton, Hillingdon, London.

WHLandscape has an established track record of assessing development proposals. The practice has considerable experience in the field of landscape and visual assessment and uses tried and tested techniques developed and recognised by the Landscape Institute, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, and Natural England.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This LVIA provides an assessment of the landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed development of a Centre of Excellence for Airside Support Vehicles on land at the former Sipson Garden Centre (totaling approximately 2.8 hectares), to the north of the village of Sipson. The site is in the administrative area of the London Borough of Hillingdon and is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The findings of the appraisal will be used to determine the suitability of the proposals, as well as to suggest appropriate mitigation measures if required.

1.2 The current scheme has been developed in response the findings and recommendations of a preliminary LVIA (23.1621 (REV: A) – June 2023) undertaken by WHLandscape, as well as subsequent pre-application advice provided by Hillingdon Borough Council in 2023.

1.3 The approach that has been taken follows the best practice, as set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3rd ed, for the mitigation of landscape and visual effects (paragraphs 4.21 to 4.34) and enhancement (paragraphs 4.35 to 4.37).

1.4 The application is presented with 'primary mitigation', as defined in paragraph 4.21:

> ***Primary measures, developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design.***

and clarified in paragraph 4.22:

> ***It can be expected that … these types of mitigation measure will definitely be implemented as they are an integral part of the scheme.***

1.5 Furthermore, as per paragraph 4.36, the enhancement proposals are "*an integral part of the design of the development proposals*" and have "*brought sensibility into the project planning and design stage… form*[ing] *part of the overall proposals*". As such they "*may legitimately be assessed as part of the proposal.*"

1.6 The application will see the redevelopment of the site, including:

- The removal of a dilapidated greenhouse and polytunnel, which are central to the site, as well as the demolition of a redundant outbuilding to the south (previously approved under APP/2019/1245).
- The removal of large areas of scrub and unmanaged undergrowth around the site.

- The construction of a 'T' shaped, single multi-purpose building, with a total footprint of 1219.57m² and a total volume of 7833.82m^3. The building comprises two distinct elements:
    - A two-storey office building (5.70m to eaves and 6.70m to ridge) with a footprint of 219.47m^2.
    - A service building (5.95m to eaves and 7.50m to ridge) with a footprint of 1000.10m^2.
- The remodelling and expansion of the existing hardstanding (tarmac and concrete) around the site to provide staff and visitor parking as well as external storage areas, in addition to access roads and paths. Total footprint 5065.74m^2. (Note: the site will not be used for long term vehicle storage, with storage being limited to the short-term holding of vehicles that are at the site for maintenance).
- The retention and enhancement of the existing access off Sipson Road (A408), with appropriate visibility splays being created (previously approved under APP/2019/1245).
- The creation of a swale to the west of the visitor parking for the office building and a Sustainable drainage system (SUDs) to the south of the storage area associated with the service building.
- Extensive tree and hedgerow planting across the land around the site, including a tree belt along part of the M4, the effectiveness of which will be considered as part of the assessments.

1.7 The office building will be constructed using a steel framework, with steel cladding to the walls. There will be glazing across both storeys of the northern, southern and western elevations, with a single glazed access point to the south. The roof will be constructed with a southerly pitch and will include the installation of 35 solar panels to generate renewable energy for the office; space will also be provided for roof mounted service equipment and a rooflight. A sedum rich green roof will be installed across the remaining roof area.

1.8 The service building will be constructed as a simple steel framed shed, using metal cladding on top of precast concrete panels for the elevations. Vehicle access will be provided along the eastern elevation, with the service building having eight roller shutters (6.25 wide and 5.50m high), and service doors to the rear as well as the northern and southern elevations (four total). The roof will be constructed with an easterly pitch, and will include the installation of 282 solar panels to generate renewable energy for the service building; space will also be provided for 16 rooflights. A sedum rich green roof will be installed across the remaining roof area.

1.9 This report is for a "non-EIA project". The Landscape Institute has advised in relation to Landscape and Visual Appraisals / Statements outside a formal EIA process in its 'Statement of Clarification 1/13' that:

> ***In carrying out appraisals, the same principles and process as LVIA may be applied but, in so doing, it is not required to establish whether the effects arising are or are not significant. […] The emphasis on likely 'significant effects' in formal LVIA stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects. The same principle – focussing on a proportional approach – also applies to appraisals of landscape and visual impacts outside the formal requirements of EIA.***

1.10 This report therefore provides an assessment of the levels of the effect without commenting on their "significance". Furthermore, this appraisal only considers the proposed development as described, and its findings should not be considered prejudicial against any other future land use proposals for the site, which should each be assessed on their own merits.

1.11 For this report, the policy context is taken from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023), The London Plan 2021 (2021) the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 1 – Strategic Policies (2012), and the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2 – Development Management Policies (2020). The baseline landscape character has been taken from Natural England National Character Area Profile (NCA): 115. Thames Valley (2012), London's Natural Signatures (2011), and Hillingdon's Landscape Character Assessment (2012). Also of relevance to this project is the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2023), and the Hillingdon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Planning Obligations (2014).

2. SCOPE AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

2.1 The LVIA process is based on the following guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3rd ed. (GLVIA 3).
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.

2.2 The LVIA is a tool used to identify and assess the likely effects of change resulting from development, both on the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity. Landscape Effects relate to changes to components of the landscape resource as a result of development. Visual Effects relate to the appearance of development, its effect on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by users of the landscape. The study area to be considered includes the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape with the potential to be influenced by the development.

2.3 BASELINE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STUDY

2.3.1 The baseline study reviews the existing landscape and visual resources to determine and describe the conditions against which changes resulting from the development can be measured or predicted and assessed. The process comprises three stages, namely a desk study, field survey and baseline analysis. The baseline study helps identify the landscape and visual receptors which are considered susceptible to change as a result of the development and includes description, classification and evaluation. It forms the basis against which to assess the Magnitude of Effect and, if necessary, the Significance of Effect of development on landscape and visual resources.

DESK STUDY RESOURCES

2.3.2 The following resources have been used to inform the field survey and the analysis:

Mapping

- Ordnance Survey maps and vertical aerial photography
- Definitive Rights of Way: Hillingdon Public Rights of Way Definitive Map and Statement
- Geology: Geology of Britain Viewer (British Geological Survey)
- Pedology: Soilscapes Map (Soilscapes)
- Designations: Magic Interactive Mapping – Hillingdon Council's Policies Map
- Heritage assets: The National Heritage List for England (Historic England)

Planning Policy

- NPPF
- The London Plan 2021
- Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 1 – Strategic Policies
- Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2 – Development Management Policies

Character Assessment

- NCA: 115. Thames Valley
- London's Natural Signatures
- Hillingdon's Landscape Character Assessment

Additional Documents

- PPG
- Hillingdon SPD – Planning Obligations
- North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment

FIELD SURVEY

2.3.3 The desk study informs the field survey. Of particular relevance are the Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photography and the Landscape Character Assessments. The field survey is then used to gain a full appreciation of the relationship between the site and study area. The field work is supported by mapped viewpoints and photographic records, representative of, and relevant to, the development.

BASELINE ANALYSIS

2.3.4 The findings of the desk study and field survey inform the baseline analysis, which helps in determining the landscape value of the study area though description, classification and evaluation of the landscape and visual resources relevant to the application site and surrounding study area. Determining the value of the landscape as a resource helps in identifying specific landscape and visual receptors that have the potential to be affected by the development.

Landscape value

2.3.5 Landscape value is the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society; a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a variety of reasons, however having specific components of value does not mean an area is a valued landscape. Furthermore, while designations can be an indicator of value, the presence of detracting components may mean the value of a

designated area locally varies across its geographic extent. Moreover, as identified in GLVIA 3, "*the fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value*".

2.3.6 Typically, value is determined against a series of predefined factors, to establish an overall landscape value of either Low, Medium, or High, with the importance of any designations also being taken into account. Additionally, the specific value of the site, as a component of the landscape resource, is also considered.

2.3.7 When determining the value of the landscape resource, the following factors, adapted from Box 5.1 of GLVIA 3, are considered relevant to the assessment process:

- **Landscape Quality (condition):** A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements or features.
- **Scenic Quality:** The term used to describe landscapes which appeal principally to the senses (primarily, but not exclusively, visual).
- **Representativeness:** Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or elements or features, which are considered particularly important examples thereof.
- **Rarity:** The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Area (LCA) and/or Landscape Character Type (LCT).
- **Conservation Interests:** The presence of features of wildlife, earth science, archaeological or historical, and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape, as well as having value in their own right.
- **Recreational Value:** Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity, where experience of the landscape is important.
- **Perceptual Aspects:** A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities and/or tranquillity.
- **Associations:** Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or an event in history that contribute to perceptions of natural beauty of the area.

Landscape Receptors

2.3.8 Landscape receptors will be selected to help ascertain the specific aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. Potential receptors include individual elements or features of the study area, both on and off site, as well as the distinct landscape character of the study area as a whole.

Visual Receptors

2.3.9 Visual receptors will initially be identified from where the desk study suggests that the proposed development may be visible, before being verified as part of the field survey. Views will primarily be recorded from Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and other areas with public access, as well as public roads with full public and permissive access. Residential views will be considered, where appropriate, through the use of representative viewpoints. It should be noted views may be recorded from areas which the desk study suggests have no intervisibility with the site, moreover not all potential visual receptors will be recorded during the field survey (e.g. if there is an obvious lack of intervisibility).

2.4 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

2.4.1 The landscape assessment addresses changes in the fabric, character and/or key elements or features of the landscape resource. The visual assessment addresses changes in visual amenity, and the implication of those changes on specific visual receptors.

2.4.2 The assessment of effects aims to:

- Estimate the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as a function of their value and their susceptibility to change.
- Identify the Magnitude of Effect of the development.
- Provide an assessment of the effects and, subsequently the Nature of Effect, in a logical and well-reasoned fashion.
- Indicate suitable mitigation measures.

2.4.3 The LVIA will consider the likely effects of the proposed development in the context of Receptor Sensitivity in order to determine the Level of Effect on landscape and visual receptors, with mitigation measures recommended if required. The overall landscape and visual effects of the development will then be reassessed to determine the effectiveness of the recommended mitigation at both implementation and once established.

2.4.4 To be consistent, the determination of sensitivity and the prediction of magnitude have been guided by pre-defined criteria. However, by its very nature, the LVIA process requires a significant amount of interpretation and professional judgement.

2.4.5 Designations which may affect the sensitivity of receptors, or how an effect may be perceived, will be taken into consideration where appropriate. In terms of listed buildings and other designated

heritage assets as receptors, this report will only consider the potential effects on the historic landscape settings of these structures/areas. It should be noted that, although a development may be visible from a listed building or other designated historic asset, this does not automatically mean that there is an effect on its historic landscape setting.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

2.4.6 Landscape Sensitivity is a function of the value of a landscape receptor, both as part of the landscape resource and as an individual component, and its ability to accommodate the development (susceptibility to change) without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline condition and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.

Table 1a: Landscape Receptor Sensitivity

Level of Sensitivity	Definition of Sensitivity
High	Important landscapes and/or landscape components of high value with a high susceptibility to change.
Medium	Important/moderately valued landscapes and/or landscape components with a medium susceptibility to change.
Low	Moderately valued/relatively unimportant landscapes and/or landscape components with a low susceptibility to change.
Negligible	Degraded landscape tolerant of major change.

2.4.7 The Magnitude of Landscape Effect is based on changes to the baseline condition of the landscape resource and/or specific landscape receptors. Factors such as, the nature of change, extent and scale of change, and the relationship to baseline characteristics are all considered.

Table 1b: Magnitude of Landscape Effect

Level of Magnitude	Definition of Magnitude
Substantial	Total loss or alteration of key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition (predevelopment).
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration of one or more key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the predevelopment condition will be partially changed.
Slight	Minor loss or alteration of one or more characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the baseline condition will be similar to the predevelopment circumstance.

Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the changes are barely distinguishable.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

2.4.8 Visual Sensitivity takes account of the value of routes/areas used by visual receptors including the extent to which attention is focused on the landscape, and the ability of specific views to accommodate the development. Certain views that are experienced may have a value attached through planning designations or in relation to heritage assets or may be indicated on maps or in guidebooks.

Table 2a: Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Level of Sensitivity	Definition of Sensitivity
High	Users of strategic rights of way, cycle paths, etc; important cultural, physical or historic features; views from beauty spots, picnic areas and principal views from residential properties. Places where the attention of the receptor is likely to be focused on the landscape.
Medium	Other public rights of way. Views from principal settlements and secondary views from residential properties. Places where the attention of the receptor may be focused on the landscape.
Low	Receptors engaged in activities other than for the appreciation of the landscape.
Negligible	Views from industrialised areas.

2.4.9 The Magnitude of Visual Effect is based on the overall extent of the visibility. Factors such as distance from the development, duration of effect, screening, angle of view, backdrop to the development and extent of other development are all considered.

Table 2b: Magnitude of Visual Effect

Level of Magnitude	Definition of Magnitude
Substantial	Fundamental or very obvious change in the character, make-up and balance of the view. The proposals would be prominent or even dominant when considered in terms of the baseline condition. The established visual character would change.

Moderate	Moderate changes in the character, make-up and balance of the view, with the proposals noticeably distinct. This may lead to a change in the established visual character, depending upon the type of development proposed.
Slight	The proposals would be visible as a new feature. Change would be limited and would be unlikely to affect the established visual character as a whole.
Negligible	Virtually imperceptible change in the view. Whilst theoretically visible, the proposals would be faint, not legible or difficult for receptors to discern.

LEVEL OF EFFECT

2.4.10 The Level of Effect can be expressed as a correlation between the Magnitude of Effect and Landscape or Visual Sensitivity in a single matrix to determine the level, as shown in Table 3. However, it must be noted that the matrix is not in itself a substitute for professional judgement, for which allowances must be made. Although mitigation measures are often proposed where the Level of Effect is Minor or None, it is the Major and Major/Moderate categories which provide the highest Level of Effect in terms of effect on the landscape and visual resources.

Table 3: Level of Effect as a Correlation of Sensitivity and Magnitude Applicable to both the Landscape Resource and Visual Amenity

Landscape or Visual Sensitivity	**Magnitude of Effect**			
	Substantial	*Moderate*	*Slight*	*Negligible*
High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor
Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor
Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/None
Negligible	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/None	None

NATURE OF EFFECT

2.4.11 Change as a result of development may be Positive or Adverse, to varying degrees, or Neutral. Neutral effects are those where change is considered to have neither a Positive nor Adverse effect on the landscape or visual resource being considered. The calculation of a high Level of Effect does not mean that change is automatically Adverse; Nature of Effect is considered independently to the calculation of Level of Effect. Mitigation can change the Nature of Effect post development, with the aim being to lower the Magnitude of Effect and reduce Adverse effects as far as possible, ideally through mitigation measures that have a Positive effect on landscape and/or visual resources.

2.5 ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY

2.5.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) modelling is a process used to gain a landform-based perception of the potential visibility of a structure or development area. Digital Surface Model data is used to account for built form and vegetation. However, the process must be used cautiously as the data does underrepresent tree canopies and the analysis does not include distance modelling.

2.5.2 The procedure used in this modelling exercise is as follows:

1. A CAD ground modelling exercise was required to interpret and represent the landform height data using GIS computer software (QGIS) and Environment Agency LiDAR DSM (Digital Surface Model) (first return 1m resolution, captured 2022). Visibility processing was carried out using the digital surface model for the site to indicate, in plan form, the surrounding areas from which the development could potentially be seen. This primary information is intended to assist the secondary, detailed visibility study.
2. The ZTV analysis considered the visibility of multiple points across the site from surrounding landscape, from a receptor with an eye-level of 1.60m. The datum for the survey was 7.50m, the uppermost ridge height that is being considered.
3. The surface model was used to process the multiple points for visibility by the observer on the basis of a 2m grid up to a distance of 4km. The xyz co-ordinate at the centre of each grid square was used to determine the observer's height on the ground model. The number of points visible to the observer from each grid square was plotted over the base map. The higher the number plotted in each square, the more points from the site are theoretically visible from that location.
4. The output drawings indicate the extent to which the proposed development is potentially visible from the surrounding area, taking into account the base surface.

LIMITATIONS

2.5.3 ZTV modelling is a relatively broad-brush process, and as such has limitations in terms of the output drawings that are produced. As regards this project, the following limitation apply:

- The modelling process does not take account of the phased nature of development, as such the output data only considers the visibility of the entire site at completion.
- A field survey is required to verify and refine the accuracy of the ZTV.
- It is generally accepted that Visual Effects decrease the further a receptor is from a site, meaning that, although it may be theoretically visible, a development does not necessarily have a significant detrimental impact.

3. LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 The following policy has been taken from the planning documents which are pertinent to the development of the site. The following policy extracts and, where applicable, excerpts of explanatory text, are relevant to the application. The policies listed will be used to guide the assessment and the mitigation strategy for the proposed development.

3.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.2.1 Originally published in March 2012, with the most recent revision being in December 2023, the NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. Of particular relevance to this assessment is Section 15. Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, specifically paragraph 180, which states that "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by":

> ***a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);***

and:

> ***b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;***

3.2.2 Also of relevance to this project is Section 12. Achieving Well-designed Places, specifically paragraph 135, which states:

> ***Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:***
>
> ***a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;***
>
> ***b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;***
>
> ***c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);***
>
> ***d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;***

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

3.2.4 As regards the Green Belt Section 13. Protecting Green Belt Land, paragraph 143, lists the five purposes of Green Belt:

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.2.5 Furthermore, while the NPPF notes that "*A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt*" paragraph 154 lists the exceptions to this. Of particular relevance to this application is Bullet Point g:

limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development;

3.3 THE LONDON PLAN 2021

3.3.1 Adopted in March 2021, the London Plan 2021 is part of the statutory development plan for London, meaning that the policies in the Plan should inform decisions on planning applications across the capital. Borough's Local Plans must be in 'general conformity' with the London Plan, ensuring that the planning system for London operates in a joined-up way and reflects the overall strategy for how London can develop sustainably.

POLICY HC3: STRATEGIC AND LOCAL VIEWS

A Strategic Views include significant buildings, urban landscapes or riverscapes that help to define London at a strategic level. They are seen from places that are publicly-accessible and well-used. The Mayor has designated a list of Strategic Views that he

will keep under review. Development proposals must be assessed for their impact on a designated view if they fall within the foreground, middle ground or background of that view.

B Within the designated views, the Mayor will identify landmarks that make aesthetic, historic, cultural or other contributions to the view and which assist the viewer's understanding and enjoyment of the view.

C The Mayor will also identify Strategically-Important Landmarks in the views that make a very significant contribution to the image of London at the strategic level or provide a significant cultural orientation point. He will seek to protect vistas towards Strategically-Important Landmarks by designating landmark viewing corridors and wider setting consultation areas. These elements together form a Protected Vista. Each element of the vista will require a level of management appropriate to its potential impact on the viewer's ability to recognise and appreciate the Strategically-Important Landmark. These and other views are also subject to wider assessment beyond the Protected Vista.

D The Mayor will also identify and protect aspects of views that contribute to a viewer's ability to recognise and appreciate a World Heritage Site's authenticity, integrity, and attributes of Outstanding Universal Value. This includes the identification of Protected Silhouettes of key features in a World Heritage Site.

E The Mayor has prepared Supplementary Planning Guidance on the management of the designated views – the London View Management Framework Supplementary Planning Guidance (LVMF SPG). The Mayor will, when necessary, review this guidance.

F Boroughs should include all designated views, including the protected vistas, in their Local Plans and work with relevant land owners to ensure there is inclusive public access to the viewing location, and that the view foreground, middle ground and background are effectively managed in accordance with the LVMF SPG.

G Boroughs should clearly identify local views in their Local Plans and strategies. Boroughs are advised to use the principles of Policy HC4 London View Management Framework for the designation and management of local views. Where a local view crosses borough boundaries, the relevant boroughs should work collaboratively to designate and manage the view.

POLICY G2: LONDON'S GREEN BELT

A The Green Belt should be protected from inappropriate development:

1) development proposals that would harm the Green Belt should be refused except where very special circumstances exist,

2) ***subject to national planning policy tests, the enhancement of the Green Belt to provide appropriate multi-functional beneficial uses for Londoners should be supported.***

B ***Exceptional circumstances are required to justify either the extension or de-designation of the Green Belt through the preparation or review of a Local Plan.***

POLICY G5: URBAN GREENING

A ***Major development proposals should contribute to the greening of London by including urban greening as a fundamental element of site and building design, and by incorporating measures such as high-quality landscaping (including trees), green roofs, green walls and nature-based sustainable drainage.***

B ***Boroughs should develop an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) to identify the appropriate amount of urban greening required in new developments. The UGF should be based on the factors set out in Table 8.2, but tailored to local circumstances. In the interim, the Mayor recommends a target score of 0.4 for developments that are predominately residential, and a target score of 0.3 for predominately commercial development (excluding B2 and B8 uses).***

C ***Existing green cover retained on site should count towards developments meeting the interim target scores set out in (B) based on the factors set out in Table 8.2***

POLICY G7: TREES AND WOODLANDS

A ***London's urban forest and woodlands should be protected and maintained, and new trees and woodlands should be planted in appropriate locations in order to increase the extent of London's urban forest – the area of London under the canopy of trees.***

B ***In their Development Plans, boroughs should:***

1) ***protect 'veteran' trees and ancient woodland where these are not already part of a protected site[139]***
2) ***identify opportunities for tree planting in strategic locations.***

C ***Development proposals should ensure that, wherever possible, existing trees of value are retained.[140] If planning permission is granted that necessitates the removal of trees there should be adequate replacement based on the existing value of the benefits of the trees removed, determined by, for example, i-tree or CAVAT or another appropriate valuation system. The planting of additional trees should generally be included in new developments – particularly large-canopied species which provide a wider range of benefits because of the larger surface area of their canopy.***

139 - Forestry Commission/Natural England (2018): Ancient woodland and veteran trees; protecting them from development, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-applicationsaffecting-trees-and-woodland

140 - Category A, B and lesser category trees where these are considered by the local planning authority to be of importance to amenity and biodiversity, as defined by BS 5837:2012

3.4 LOCAL POLICY

3.4.1 Hillingdon Council's Local Plan comprises two core documents: the Local Plan Part 1, adopted in November 2012, which sets out the overall level and broad locations of growth up to 2026; and the Local Plan Part 2, adopted in January 2020, which comprises Development Management Policies, Site Allocations and Designations and the Policies Map. The Local Plan forms the council's future development strategy for the borough. It sets out a framework and detailed policies to guide planning decisions and it is the starting point for considering whether planning applications should be approved.

LOCAL PLAN: PART 1 – STRATEGIC POLICIES

POLICY BE1: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Council will require all new development to improve and maintain the quality of the built environment in order to create successful and sustainable neighbourhoods, where people enjoy living and working and that serve the long-term needs of all residents. All new developments should:

1. ***Achieve a high quality of design in all new buildings, alterations, extensions and the public realm which enhances the local distinctiveness of the area, contributes to community cohesion and a sense of place;***
2. ***Be designed to be appropriate to the identity and context of Hillingdon's buildings, townscapes, landscapes and views, and make a positive contribution to the local area in terms of layout, form, scale and materials and seek to protect the amenity of surrounding land and buildings, particularly residential properties;***

…

POLICY EM2: GREEN BELT, METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND AND GREEN CHAINS

The Council will seek to maintain the current extent, hierarchy and strategic functions of the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Chains. Notwithstanding this, Green Chains will be reviewed for designation as Metropolitan Open Land in the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2- Site Specific Allocations LDD and in accordance with the London Plan policies.

Minor adjustments to Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be undertaken in the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2- Site Specific Allocations LDD.

Any proposals for development in Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be assessed against national and London Plan policies, including the very special circumstances test.

Any proposals for development in Green Chains will be firmly resisted unless they maintain the positive contribution of the Green Chain in providing a visual and physical break in the built-up area; conserve and enhance the visual amenity and nature conservation value of the landscape; encourage appropriate public access and recreational facilities where they are compatible with the conservation value of the area, and retain the openness of the Green Chain.

LOCAL PLAN: PART 2 – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

POLICY DMHB 11: DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

A) All development, including extensions, alterations and new buildings will be required to be designed to the highest standards and, incorporate principles of good design including:

- ***i) harmonising with the local context by taking into account the surrounding:***
  - ***scale of development, considering the height, mass and bulk of adjacent structures;***
  - ***building plot sizes and widths, plot coverage and established street patterns;***
  - ***building lines and setbacks, rooflines, streetscape rhythm, for example, gaps between structures and other streetscape elements, such as degree of enclosure;***
  - ***architectural composition and quality of detailing;***
  - ***local topography, views both from and to the site; and***
  - ***impact on neighbouring open spaces and their environment.***
- ***ii) ensuring the use of high quality building materials and finishes;***
- ***iii) ensuring that the internal design and layout of development maximises sustainability and is adaptable to different activities;***
- ***iv) protecting features of positive value within and adjacent to the site, including the safeguarding of heritage assets, designated and un-designated, and their settings; and***
- ***v) landscaping and tree planting to protect and enhance amenity, biodiversity and green infrastructure.***

B) Development proposals should not adversely impact on the amenity, daylight and sunlight of adjacent properties and open space.

C) Development will be required to ensure that the design safeguards the satisfactory re-development of any adjoining sites which have development potential. In the case of

proposals for major development sites, the Council will expect developers to prepare master plans and design codes and to agree these with the Council before developing detailed designs.

D) Development proposals should make sufficient provision for well designed internal and external storage space for general, recycling and organic waste, with suitable access for collection. External bins should be located and screened to avoid nuisance and adverse visual impacts to occupiers and neighbours.

POLICY DMHB 14: TREES AND LANDSCAPING

A) All developments will be expected to retain or enhance existing landscaping, trees, biodiversity or other natural features of merit.

B) Development proposals will be required to provide a landscape scheme that includes hard and soft landscaping appropriate to the character of the area, which supports and enhances biodiversity and amenity particularly in areas deficient in green infrastructure.

C) Where space for ground level planting is limited, such as high rise buildings, the inclusion of living walls and roofs will be expected where feasible.

D) Planning applications for proposals that would affect existing trees will be required to provide an accurate tree survey showing the location, height, spread and species of trees. Where the tree survey identifies trees of merit, tree root protection areas and an arboricultural method statement will be required to show how the trees will be protected. Where trees are to be removed, proposals for replanting of new trees on-site must be provided or include contributions to offsite provision.

POLICY DMEI 4: DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT OR ON METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

A) Inappropriate development in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will not be permitted unless there are very special circumstances.

B) Extensions and redevelopment on sites in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be permitted only where the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, and the purposes of including land within it, than the existing development, having regard to:

- ***i) The height and bulk of the existing building on the site;***
- ***ii) the proportion of the site that is already developed;***
- ***iii) the footprint, distribution and character of the existing buildings on the site;***
- ***iv) the relationship of the proposal with any development on the site that is to be retained; and***
- ***v) the visual amenity and character of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.***

4. BASELINE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STUDY

4.1 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

4.1.1 The site is located at the former Sipson Garden Centre, on the northern edge of the village of Sipson, between the town of West Drayton to the north and Heathrow Airport to the south. In its wider context the site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt on the western edge of Greater London, approximately 10 kilometres (km) east of Windsor Castle, and falls within the Heathrow Opportunity Area. A Holiday Inn (London – Heathrow) and The Plough public house define the site's northern boundary, while to the east and west the site lies between the M4 Heathrow Spur and Sipson Road, respectively; an element of residential development is present along Sipson Road to the south-west. The southern boundary of the site is largely open to the remainder of field, which totals approximately 4.2ha and is under the applicant's control.

4.1.2 At the beginning of the 20th century the site originally formed part of a break in the built form between the residential edge of Sipson and what is now The Plough public house, however this gap was eventually closed following the northern expansion of Sipson and the development of the original garden centre. The garden centre has been closed for several years and has fallen into disrepair, with the on-site structures becoming dilapidated and the area as a whole being unmanaged, although security fencing has recently been erected around the site and the land under the applicant's control.

4.1.3 While the site is currently being used for vehicular storage, in 2019 an application to reinstate the garden centre was approved (APP/2019/1245). This application, now lapsed, established that there is 9132m^2 of external development at the site, comprising a mix of foundations, sales space, car parking, and 'other' hardstanding, with the proposal being to replace it with 9011m^2 of similar space.

Elements	Existing	APP/2019/1245
Car park area	2183m^2	2281m^2
Main building floor space/footprint	1966m^2 (823m^2 + 1138m^2 poly tunnels)	2186m^2
Outbuilding floorspace/footprint	197m^2	197m^2 – Community building
External hardstanding/ Sales space	4786m^2	4347m^2
Eaves Height	2.50m – Main building 2.00m – Outbuilding	2.50m – Main building 3.00m – Community building
Ridge height	4.60m – Main building 4.00m – Outbuilding	6.47m – Main building 6.20m – Commercial building

4.1.4 Due to the developed nature of a large part of the site, much of the land has already been levelled to accommodate built form, moreover due to the relatively flat topography of the area the change in levels across the site is minimal, being no greater than 1.00m. Vegetation cover within and around the site mainly comprises unmanaged scrub and general undergrowth, as well as several trees around the site boundary. Due to the lack of management, weeds and other pioneer species have started to establish on the existing areas of hardstanding and around the site.

4.1.5 The site's location within the Green Belt means that development will be tightly controlled, although there are exceptions to this, as identified in paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF. Green Belts serve as a mechanism to aid urban planning and development, to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Although it is noted that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence, its designation is not based solely on the quality of the landscape or its character and appearance.

4.2 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

4.2.1 The following Landscape Character Assessments have been used to establish the baseline character of study area:

- NCA: 115. Thames Valley
- London's Natural Signatures
- Hillingdon's Landscape Character Assessment

4.2.2 Only the information pertaining to the LCAs and LCTs in which the site is located has been listed in order to help establish its unique landscape character as well as to determine the site's contribution to the landscape character, elements, and features which define the wider landscape. It is important to note that, due to the extent of individual Character Areas and Types, some of the listed information may not be wholly relevant to the site and surrounding landscape.

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA PROFILES

4.2.3 In 2012, Natural England, as part of its responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, revised the National Character Area Profiles to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience. The site and entire study area fall within the NCA: 115. Thames Valley.

NCA: 115. THAMES VALLEY

Key Characteristics:

- ***Flat and low-lying land, rising to low, river-terraced hills, which include the prominent local outcrop of chalk on which Windsor Castle sits.***
- ***The underlying geology is dominated by the London Clay which, over much of the area, is overlain by river-lain sands and gravels.***
- ***The numerous hydrological features provide unity to an area which otherwise lacks homogeny; these features include the River Thames and its tributaries, streams, lakes, canals and open waterbodies (the result of restored gravel workings).***
- ***Woodlands characterise the north-western area, with the wooded character extending up to the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills.***
- ***Farming is limited. Where it survives, grazed pasture is the major land use within a generally open, flat and featureless landscape. The field pattern is medium-scale and irregular, with smaller fields to the west. Localised areas of species-rich hay meadows provide a splash of colour in summer.***
- ***Although densely populated and developed, pockets of woodland, open grassland, parkland, wetlands and intimate meadows provide escape and tranquillity, and include a variety of habitats supporting important populations of many species, notably stag beetle, shoveler, gadwall and other invertebrates and wildfowl.***
- ***Towards London in the east, the natural character of the area is overtaken by urban influences: a dense network of roads (including the M25 corridor), Heathrow Airport, railway lines, golf courses, pylon lines, reservoirs, extensive mineral extraction and numerous flooded gravel pits.***
- ***There are small but biologically important areas of lowland heathland – especially on higher sandy ground in the north – and a small area to the south falls within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) buffer zone.***
- ***To the south, the open Thames flood plain dominates, with its associated flat grazing land, becoming characterised by a number of formal historic landscapes on higher ground. Between Hampton and Kew, the River Thames forms the focus of a series of designed landscapes.***
- ***The area has an urban character, and there are very few villages of more traditional character, although almost half of the area is greenbelt land and development has been restricted in areas like Crown Estate land and Eton College grounds.***
- ***The river is closely associated with numerous historic places and cultural events, such as the signing of Magna Carta at Runnymede. Tourists from all over the world are drawn to the rich heritage of the area, flocking to attractions like Hampton Court Palace and Windsor Castle.***

- ***The area is important for recreation, both for residents and visitors. Historic parkland and commons provide access to green space, the Thames Path National Trail runs the length of the NCA, and a variety of activities are enjoyed on the river and other waterbodies.***

LONDON'S NATURAL SIGNATURES

4.2.4 In 2011, Natural England published London's Natural Signatures, a framework to re-establish the relationship between the built and the natural aspects of London. The assessment creates new local identities based on the geology, ecology and landforms of London, with the aim being to help planners and developers reflect the natural landscapes more clearly when regenerating and renewing the capital. The Site and majority of the study area is located with LCA: 10. Hayes Gravels.

LCT: 10. HAYES GRAVELS

Description:

The Hayes Gravels are split in two sections, divided by the Brent Valley (NLA 11). They are gravel terraces to the north of the Thames which run east–west from Hillingdon to Southall and north Hounslow, and then from Ealing and Brentford to Finsbury, sandwiched between the Barnet Plateau (NLA 3) and Hampstead Ridge (NLA 5) to the north and the Upper Thames Valley (NLA 13) to the south. The alignment of the area follows the broad flightpath of planes coming in to land at Heathrow Airport. The topography is a gradual but fairly constant slope from north to south – there are shallow summits at Hillingdon, to the north of the Serpentine (25m AOD) and in the west at Ealing Common (30m AOD).

London Clay is the dominant bedrock, with deposits of the Boyn Hill Gravel Member near Hillingdon, Langley Silt Member cropping out extensively westwards from Kensington, Lynch Hill Gravel Member through Ealing, Kensington and Westminster, Taplow Gravel Member to the south east (Kensington) and an arm of alluvium extending north through Mayfair. Many areas of the Langley Silts have been worked out around Hammersmith and Hayes for bricks; the quarries were generally not backfilled and houses were built on many of them. Sand and gravel in the west have been extensively worked. These quarries were largely backfilled and were generally not built over.

The soils are principally deep loam, with occasional areas of deep silt and seasonally wet loams and silts which are focused along shallow valleys. This is most evident at the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park.

The historic centres of settlement (at Ealing, Gunnersbury Park and Shepherd's Bush) developed along the ancient roads from the west leading to the Anglo Saxon trading settlement of Lundenwic. These areas are predominantly Victorian terraces, interspersed by much smaller interwar suburbs. Extensive public open spaces in the east (Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens) are surrounded by Georgian residential buildings in Kensington, Mayfair and Chelsea. In the far west the dominant built form is of recent residential and commercial development, particularly around Hillingdon, Hayes Town and along the A4020.

Few areas of natural landscape remain within this built up area. Overland rail and road infrastructure do not serve as corridors of natural vegetation. However, there are strips of native woodland along the railway embankments in Ealing and in Holland Park, cemeteries and in small patches of Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens. Further west, small areas of semi-natural habitats build up a fragmented ecological network.

Natural Signature:

Hayes Gravels – Small-scale, enclosed landscape of meadows bordered by tall hedgerows, with woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees.

Underlining the Natural Signature of the Hayes Gravels:

Key Influences

- ***Oak-ash-hornbeam woodland and copses.***
- ***Hazel coppice.***
- ***Small pastures enclosed by native hedgerows, with hedgerow trees.***
- ***Meadows with tall grasses and herbs.***
- ***Small wet meadows and damp woodlands alongside winding streams with narrow floodplains.***

Design Clues

- ***Small native woodlands and copses, in combination with wildflower meadows.***
- ***Curving wildflower meadows contrasting with areas of mown grass alongside paths and as a focus within open spaces.***
- ***Hedgerows and hedgerow trees to divide and define public spaces and routes.***
- ***Lines of willow trees along swales and wet ditches.***
- ***Community gardens as part of a small-scale landscape pattern.***

HILLINGDON'S LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

4.2.5 In 2012, Land Use Consultants, under the appointment of the Hillingdon Council, produced Hillingdon's Landscape Character Assessment. The purpose of the document is to provide an evidence base for the character, function and quality of the landscape within the Borough, as well as being used to guide and influence its future conservation and management. The site and majority of the study area fall within LCT: K. Open Gravel Terrace, specifically LCA: K2. Harlington Open Gravel Terrace.

LCT: K. OPEN GRAVEL TERRACE

Key Characteristics:

- ***A flat, open landscape, typically underlain with Langley Silt Formation and Taplow Gravel Formation. The gravel deposits have frequently been worked and infilled.***
- ***Predominately large scale fields of arable farmland, with smaller interspersed fields of paddock along settlement edges. Some large area of gravel and sand extraction, recreation sports grounds and playing fields, plus the historic parkland of Cranford Countryside Park.***
- ***Some scattered hydrological features, with a number of ponds occupying former gravel pits. The River Crane flows along the east***
- ***Limited tree cover, with the exception of some relatively large area of scrub and trees, such as at Cranford Countryside Park. Hedgerows and scrubby grassed boundaries provide an important linear corridor connecting fragmented habitats throughout the character area.***
- ***Modern edge settlement filters into the landscape, along the boundaries, however settlement is limited elsewhere. Heathrow Airport and associated infrastructure feature prominently along the southern boundary.***
- ***The M4 runs through the north, and a number of other roads connect settlement, however elsewhere roads are limited.***
- ***Few public rights of way, with a number of footpaths associated with Cranford Countryside Park.***
- ***Open, long views south across farmland and with buildings and infrastructure of Heathrow Airport noticeable in many vistas.***
- ***A simple and uniform character, as a result of limited land cover, land use, and the flat topography.***
- ***Retains a largely farmland character, despite being surrounded by settlement and urban development.***
- ***Presence of a waste landfill site, area of gravel extraction and several clusters of industrial and commercial buildings, occasionally interrupt the landscape.***

LCA: K2. HARLINGTON OPEN GRAVEL TERRACE

Key Characteristics:

- ***A flat, open landscape, underlain with London Clay Formation, and pockets of superficial Taplow Gravel Formation and Lynch Hill Gravel Formation. The gravel deposits have frequently been worked and ground infilled.***
- ***A mixed landscape, predominantly arable farmland occupying large scale fields, with a large area of gravel and sand extraction, recreation sports grounds and playing fields, plus Heathpark golf course and a large burial ground.***
- ***Limited tree cover, with the exception of relatively large area of scrub and trees in the west. Hedgerows and scrubby grassed boundaries provide an important linear corridor connecting fragmented habitats throughout the character area.***
- ***Modern edge settlement surrounds the character area, although there is limited settlement within the character area itself. Heathrow Airport and associated infrastructure feature prominently along the southern boundary.***
- ***A number of main roads pass through the character area, with the M4 in the north and west, and several other A and B roads.***
- ***Few public footpaths with limited access.***
- ***Open, long views south across farmland and with Heathrow notable in many vistas.***
- ***A strong horizontal and geometric form, with straight field boundaries and roads, and the flat landform.***

Description:

Location and Boundaries

The character area lies in the south of Hillingdon Borough within the Hayes Gravel Natural Landscape Area (London's Natural Signatures). The boundaries of the character area are largely defined by settlement and roads, with Hayes Town bordering the northern boundary, Harlington located to the east, and the A408 and edge of Sipson defining the west. Commercial infrastructure associated with Heathrow airport delineates the southern extent of the character area.

Landscape Character

A flat and open landscape, with a mix of land uses. Large fields of arable cultivation predominate, interspersed with amenity grass playing fields, Heathpark golf course, a large cemetery and industrial sand and gravel works. Limited tree cover emphasises the openness of the character area, with long views across the landscape, particularly south, towards Heathrow Airport, which features prominently in many views. A network of hedgerows provides some visual unity and wildlife corridors with this landscape, and generate a strong geometric form.

Evaluation:

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

- ***Openness and long views, particularly to the south, could be interrupted by further development.***
- ***Network of hedgerows which provide wildlife corridors and visual continuity.***
- ***Areas of stillness and limited overt human impact, away from the busy M4 and other development, such as Heathrow Airport.***
- ***Areas of scrub, woodland and Sites of Borough Grade I and II provide pockets of biodiversity.***
- ***Open agricultural landscape which has been retained within largely settled and urban surroundings.***

4.3 THE STUDY AREA

4.3.1 The bedrock geology of the study area is closely tied to its topography, with London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand) underlying the study area and much of the land beyond, resulting in a flat landscape with no distinct natural landform features. While this would typically allow for long ranging views, these are generally restricted due to extensive development, along with vegetation cover within the Green Belt. As such the study area, and consequently the site, have a relatively high level of enclosure.

4.3.2 The study area is broadly defined by three distinct areas; Heathrow Airport, the Metropolitan Green Belt, and the residential edge of West Drayton. Three villages, Harmondsworth, Sipson and Harlington break-up the Green Belt, and are remnants of the more rural landscape which dominated the area prior to the establishment of the airport and the post-war expansion of London. The study area is well connected by several major transport corridors including the M4 and a series of A roads, as well as several more historic minor roads and lanes.

4.3.3 Heathrow defines the southern boundary of the study area, with the edge of the airport roughly delineated by the A4 (Bath Road). Being a major international airport, it has had a distinct influence on the landscape of the study area, with there having been a notable increase in housing and general infrastructure in the local area since it was opened as a civil airport in 1946, this includes the Holiday Inn north of the site, which at 35.00m in height is one of the most visually prominent structures within the study area. Furthermore, the proposed expansion of the airport would see a large area of the Green Belt to the west of Sipson developed to facilitate a third runway; not only would this change the character of the area but would also result in the loss of much of the Village of Harmondsworth.

4.3.4 The northern boundary of the study area is defined by the residential edge of West Drayton, roughly delineated by the M4. Much of the expansion of the town was as a result of the opening of Heathrow Airport, with the later development of the M4 helping develop the area as a transport hub and commuter town. Within the study area the edge of the settlement is characterised by a series of housing estates, interspersed with areas of Green Belt land, used as parkland and recreational ground, as well as a golf course and a large cemetery.

4.3.5 The Metropolitan Green Belt separates Heathrow Airport and West Drayton, creating a break between these two large areas of urban built form. While the Green Belt itself is broken up by three villages, it still presents as a comparatively open landscape; albeit it is somewhat degraded due to large areas being quarried for gravel and sand extraction, as well as the land between Harmondsworth and Sipson being used as a landfill site. The remaining fields are used for arable crop production and grassland (both amenity and grazing pasture), which in conjunction with the surrounding development give the area a quasi-rural character. Hedgerow cover defines the majority of field boundaries, although there are notable areas of fragmentation present. Tree cover is less regular, typically being found in clumps and belts around the edge of settlements and along transport corridors.

4.3.6 As previously mentioned, the three villages within the Green Belt were present prior to the more recent development which now dominates the landscape. While historically settlements within the study area were dispersed, more modern development has seen them expand and begin to encroach on one another. Both Sipson and Harlington were historically linear settlements, a characteristic they largely retain, although they now essentially link Heathrow and West Drayton with built form. Harmondsworth has always been a more nucleated settlement but like the other two villages has seen considerable expansion since the mid-20th century. However, much of this settlement will be lost if the development of the third runway and related infrastructure goes ahead.

4.3.7 While Harmondsworth and Harlington both have associated Conservation Areas, Sipson does not, furthermore, the old village centre of West Drayton, West Drayton Green, is also designated as a Conservation Area. Listed structures are largely located within the Conservation Areas, and generally lie beyond 1000m of the site, with there only being two Grade II listed structures within 500m of the former garden centre. Moreover, in terms of higher value heritage assets, in the form of Grade I and II* listed structures, these are typically found beyond 1500m of the site, with the only exception being the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul, which lies approximately 1370m east of the site within the Harlington Conservation Area.

4.3.8 Pedestrian access through the study area is extremely limited outside of the footways which run though the settlements. While there are open areas of parkland as well as playing fields and recreational grounds, designated PRoWs and other routes with public access are not a common feature. Moreover, there is no clear connection between the PRoWs that are present and as such it cannot be said that there are any strategic rights of way running through the study area.

4.4 BASELINE ANALYSIS

4.4.1 The findings of the desk study and field survey have been used to determine the landscape value of the study area, and subsequently identify specific landscape and visual receptors that have the potential to be affected by the development. The effect of the development on these receptors will be calculated, leading to an overall determination of Level of Effect on both the landscape resource and the visual amenity of the study area.

4.4.2 It should be noted that, while specific receptors have been identified for consideration, this does not necessarily mean that they will be adversely affected by the proposals. Moreover, if there are high level Adverse effects on specific receptors, this does not automatically mean that there will be high level Adverse effects on the study area as a whole.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

4.4.3 The key factors in determining the landscape value of the study area are listed below:

- **Landscape Quality (condition):** The landscape of the study area is continually developing and the built environment expanding, changing the perception of the area. Most notably, if approved, the Heathrow third runway will represent a distinct change in the make-up of the landscape, not only due to its size but also as it will see the loss of a large area of Green Belt. Overall, the Quality of the landscape is somewhat fragmented, broken up by major transport corridors, as well as quarries and landfill sites. While the site itself is well contained by dense vegetation, the general lack of management means that its landscape structure is fairly poor. **Value rating:** *Low*.
- **Scenic Quality:** The prevailing urban appearance of the landscape, coupled with the large areas of transport infrastructure mean that scenic quality is limited. The Green Belt presents as a less developed area, however it is enclosed by the poor urban/rural interface of the surrounding built form, as well as being broken up by detracting landuses (quarrying and landfill). In the case of the site itself, it is seen as a derelict and unmanaged area of land within the Green Belt and has no scenic value. **Value rating:** *Low*.

- **Representativeness:** The study area is generally representative of the landscape described in Hillingdon's Landscape Character Assessment. However, areas such as the site, and the adjacent Holiday Inn, are somewhat discordant features within the Open Gravel Terrace LCT, being more akin to transitional areas between the townscape and the surrounding fields, rather than falling into one distinct character area. Furthermore, if the third runway at Heathrow is developed, many of the characteristics which define the land between Heathrow and West Drayton will be lost, with the alteration of the airport resulting in changes to character beyond the runway. This will also have a notable effect in respect of the essential characteristics of the Green Belt, with the section of Green Belt which bisects the study area, losing a large part of its openness and permanence. **Value rating:** *Medium – Low*.
- **Rarity:** While the identified characteristics relevant to the study area represent important elements and features of the landscape resource, they are neither particularly rare nor common in respect of the wider scope of the relevant character assessments. However, in the case of the Green Belt, while it is not an uncommon designation, the associated characteristics (mainly openness from major development) are somewhat rare in respect of the largely urban landscape. Moreover, if the third runway at Heathrow is built these characteristics will become more uncommon. **Value rating:** *Medium*.
- **Conservation Interests:** There are numerous listed buildings within the study area, including several Grade II* and Grade I listed heritage assets, as well as Conservation Areas at Harmondsworth and Harington. Additionally, there are several locally designated nature conservation sites present, particularly to the west. In most cases these conservation interests lie beyond 1000m of the site. **Value rating:** *Medium*.
- **Recreational Value:** The landscape of the study area has limited recreational value. While the Green Belt represents an area of relatively open land in an otherwise urban environment, public access is extremely limited meaning that any value attached to the area is based more on the perceptual aspects of the Green Belt rather than its use for recreational activity. **Value rating:** *Low*.
- **Perceptual Aspects:** The perception of the study area is predominantly that of an urban environment, however this means that the value attached to the Green Belt that bisects it is greater. While the Green Belt has limited value in respect of its landscape and scenic qualities and is not particularly tranquil due to the presence of the M4 and the Airport, it still represents a distinct break between West Drayton and Heathrow, as well as being comparatively open in terms of built form that is present. The perceived value of Green Belt is also likely to increase if the third runway at Heathrow is developed as this will see an overall reduction in the amount

of Green Belt in the local area. However, it is important to note that the site itself is an area of previously developed land within the Green Belt. **Value rating:** *High – Medium*.

- **Associations:** While Heathrow airport and its proposed expansion into the Green Belt is a place/event known nationally, this does not contribute to perceptions of natural beauty of the area. The site and the surrounding study area contain no known associations to any particular people or events that may have provided the landscape within the study area with cultural prominence. **Value rating:** *Low*.

4.4.4 Overall the value of the landscape is *Medium – Low*, which means that it is not a 'valued landscape' under Section 15, Paragraph 180, Bullet Point a), of the NPPF.

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

4.4.5 The following landscape receptors have been identified as being aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the proposals:

- The Established landscape components which define the landscape in which the site is located, including:
    - The essential characteristics of Green Belt (openness and permanence), as well as the importance of the site as a component of the Green Belt.
    - Local character, including the established pattern of built form at the site, as well as on the edge of Sipson.
- The historic environment of the study area, and the site's relationship with listed and notable non-listed heritage assets.
- Existing on-site and boundary vegetation and its importance in respect of the site itself, as well as part of the wider study area.

VISUAL RECEPTORS

4.4.6 The ZTV indicates that the development area may be visible, with the field survey refining the potential visual receptor locations. The following visual receptors locations have been identified as having potential intervisibility with the proposed development/being worthy of consideration:

- Sipson Road
- The M4 Heathrow Spur
- The Plough public house
- Holiday Inn (London – Heathrow)
- The northern residential edge of Sipson

- Sipson Lane
- Holloway Lane
- The graveyard of the Church of St Peter and St Paul
- Footpath Y19

5. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

5.1 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 The Landscape Value of the study area as a whole is *Medium – Low*. While the Green Belt has value in and of itself, there are a series of elements and/or features which significantly detract from the overall landscape and scenic quality of the area, most notably Heathrow airport and the major transport network which dominates the study area. The overall Susceptibility to Change of the application site as a component of the landscape is *Medium – Low*, in respect of the development proposed. The former garden centre falls under the NPPF's definition of "*previously developed land*", with there also being a recently lapsed permission for the redevelopment of the site (APP/2019/1245). However, the type of development proposed is different from the established landuse, with there also being an increase in the volume of the on-site building. Nevertheless, the development is not demonstrably different from other commercial operations within the local landscape. As such, the Overall Landscape Sensitivity of the development area within the surrounding landscape is *Medium – Low*.

5.1.2 The site itself does not represent a specific element or feature defined as a key characteristic of the study area as identified in the relevant landscape character assessments. It is recorded as being within LCA: K2. Harlington Open Gravel Terrace, however, it in fact forms more of a transition area between this LCA and the adjacent townscape of Sipson, sharing characteristics of both. The proposed development will not be an isolated area of development to the north of Sipson as the presence of a Holiday Inn (London – Heathrow) and The Plough public house to the north of the site already represent the extent of development beyond the village, with the holiday Inn being a notably dominant feature. Furthermore, no characteristic elements or features of the landscape will require removal to facilitate its redevelopment.

5.1.3 While not contributing to the overall character of the landscape, including the Green Belt, the garden centre is still an established feature within the local area and as such the proposed redevelopment and change of use will be readily apparent. However, while this application represents a change from the established operation of the site, it will not result in any significant effects over and above the baseline condition, and even though different, would not result in a form of development incompatible with the established character of the area. While the volume of the proposed building is greater than that of the existing garden centre arrangement, the total area of the site to be developed is actually less than that of both the existing developments and recently lapsed permission.

5.1.4 The layout of the proposed development has been carefully considered as part of the most recent amendments to the scheme, with the service building having been reoriented to allow the built form to be stepped further back from the existing housing along Sipson Lane, while also taking advantage of the containment provided by the established site boundary tree cover to the north. Moreover, while the proposed hardstanding has extended slightly further east, this, coupled with the reorientation of the service building, has seen notable reductions in the amount of hardstanding to the south and west, allowing for improved landscaping and containment. Overall, the proposed building will not have any significant effects on the landscape resource over and above that of the existing dilapidated Garden Centre or the lapsed consent.

5.1.5 The proposed material palette is different from that of the existing garden centre and the previous permission, however, so is the type of development proposed, and as such the materials choice needs to be appropriate for the intended operations at the site. To lessen any effects on the landscape resource, the design of the service building is reflective of an agricultural development in order to retain the 'quasi-rural character' that the garden centre had within the local landscape. As regards the office building, while initially the 'agricultural style' was not entirely commensurate with the buildings design, recent changes to the fenestration have served to the lessen these effects. Additionally, further mitigation to both buildings has been provided by way of green roofs, which help soften the overall appearance of the built form and better integrate it into the landscape.

5.1.6 The installation of solar panels on the building will see the introduction of somewhat 'modern' infrastructure to the site, however solar arrays on buildings are not something uncommon within the local landscape, being found on both residential and commercial developments. Furthermore, due to the proposed function and appearance of the building, the proposed solar panels would be out of place as a component of the built form.

5.1.7 There will potentially be secondary effects as a result of vehicles being parked on-site as they await maintenance, as well as those of visitors to the office building. However, it is important to note that there is no long-term vehicle storage proposed at the site, with storage being limited to the short-term holding of vehicles that are at the site for maintenance. The most recent amendments to the scheme have seen visitor parking to the front of the site reduced and stepped back from the road, reducing the effect that it had in respect of both the existing garden centre and the previous permission.

5.1.8 The proposals will see the removal of large areas of scrub and unmanaged undergrowth, but this vegetation has limited landscape value outside of the site, not representing a notable feature either within the local area or the wider landscape. However, the revised layout has allowed for the retention of more notable trees along the site frontage, thus improving containment in this area. All of the retained vegetation will be repaired and managed, as it is acknowledged that the site's existing landscape structure will play a key role in creating a setting for the development. As a result of the redevelopment, space has been allocated to establish a robust landscape structure within and around the site, allowing for better boundary definition and improved connectivity with existing vegetation. Mixed native hedging and strategic tree planting will be established to better define the boundary of the site as well as to create an appropriate setting for the development; additionally, large parts of the main development area have been set aside for general ecological and landscape improvement, including riparian habitat around the swale and SUDs.

5.1.9 The site itself is an area of land with no specific historic or architectural interest. Any value the land previously had, in respect of the historic landscape, was derived from it historically forming part of a break in the built form between the residential edge of Sipson and what is now The Plough public house. However, the subsequent expansion of Sipson and development of Heathrow Garden Centre itself, as well as the construction of the Holiday Inn, has definitively changed the area's historic landscape context with any associations with the historic landscape having been lost. The proposed development is not considered to affect the historic landscape settings of any heritage assets within the study area due to distance and a general lack of intervisibility.

5.1.10 In terms of the Overall Magnitude of Landscape Effect resulting from the proposals, any change has to be considered in terms of the landscape components that will definitely be affected and those that will potentially be affected. The importance of these components as part of the wider landscape is also a consideration. The proposals will see the redevelopment of a vacant site that, while having permission for redevelopment, currently has components that detract from the area's scenic quality and overall character. While the change in on-site built form will be apparent, this will not result in the significant loss or alteration of any key elements, features or characteristics of the local landscape.

5.1.11 It is for the reasons stated above that, in landscape terms, the redevelopment of the site will also not affect the key characteristics of Green Belt land, with the perceived openness and permanence of the Green Belt remaining unchanged. The application meets the criteria of paragraph 154, bullet point g, of the NPPF, as it will see the development of "*previously developed land*" and will

"*not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development*". This is discussed further in Section 5.3.

5.1.12 The development proposals will not conflict with the relevant key issues, strategies, objectives and policies identified across the relevant Character Assessments, additionally, the proposals are not considered inappropriate in respect of the five purposes of Green Belt. As such, while there will be a change to the site's baseline condition, in terms of the landscape resource as a whole, the Overall Magnitude of Landscape Effect is *Moderate – Slight*. The development proposals have an Overall Level of Landscape Effect of *Moderate/Minor*.

5.1.13 While the uppermost ridge height is greater, this will not result in the development becoming unduly prominent or detracting from the surrounding landscape, with the total area of the site to be developed actually less than that of both the existing and previously approved garden centre developments. The redevelopment will result in the improvement of a largely vacant area of built form within the study area, with the plot being of sufficient area to accommodate the development proposed, as well as to provide extensive landscape and ecological benefits to off-set/mitigate any adverse effects, as well as enhance the receiving landscape. As such, while at Year 0 the Overall Nature of Landscape Effect of the proposed development, will be *Neutral*, as the proposed planting matures the development will result in a *Positive* Nature of Landscape Effect, with further details of how this may be achieved being included in Section 6 of this document.

5.2 VISUAL ASSESSMENT

5.2.1 The recorded viewpoints can be used to predict possible effects from PRoWs, roads, publicly accessible areas and residential properties within the study area. Viewpoints have been determined from where the desk study suggested that the development areas may be visible, as well as observations during the field survey. The recorded Viewpoints are considered appropriate for the scale of the development and the prevailing topography and land cover. All the photographs were taken using a digital equivalent of a 50mm focal length traditional 35mm SLR lens to represent most accurately the views as seen by the human eye.

5.2.2 Where appropriate, viewpoints are presented with Type 2 3D Wireline visualisations to assist in describing a proposed development and its context (See Appendix 3: Viewpoint Photographs for enlarged copies of the selected viewpoints). Photomontages of select viewpoint locations are

provided in Appendix 4 to demonstrate the mitigating effect of the landscape proposals once established.

5.2.3 For the purpose of this assessment, close views are between 0m – 500m from the main development area, medium views are between 500m – 1000m, and long views from further than 1000m. Views are representative and not totally exclusive.

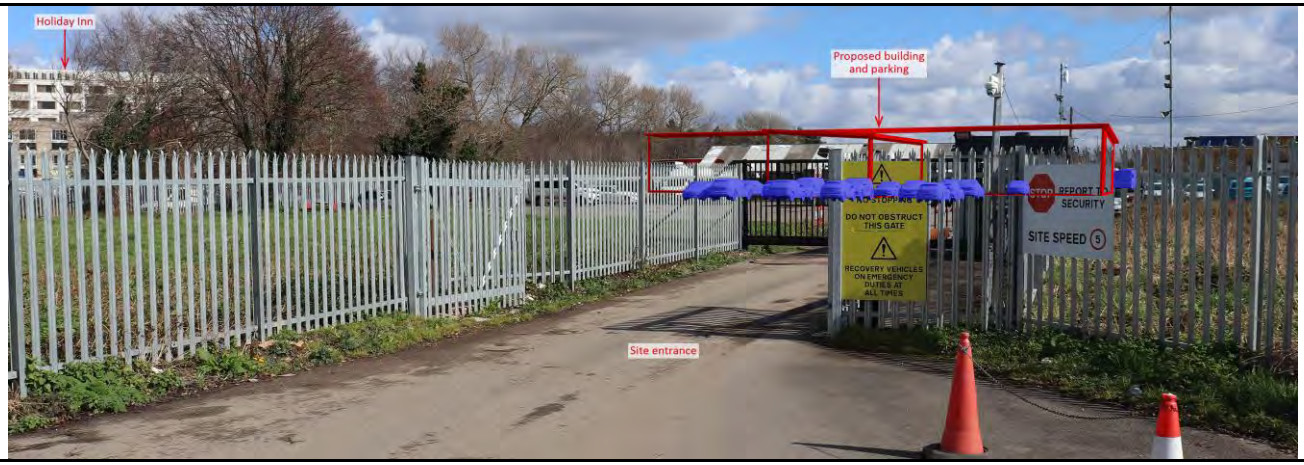
5.2.4 The Viewpoints were visited in early March 2023 when leaf cover was still at a minimum. The seasonal differences (seasonality), in respect of potential effects arising from the varying degree of screening/filtering of views by vegetation that will apply in summer and winter, have been considered in the assessment of all recorded Viewpoints; as per the recommendation of GLVIA3. It is important to note that the recording of Viewpoints during different seasons is not a prerequisite of the consideration of seasonality, as GLVIA3 states:

> ***The timing of the assessment work and the project programme will also influence the practicality of covering more than one season.***

Viewpoint 1

Approximate distance from site: Adjacent

OS map elevation: Between 29-30m AOD



DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view north-west, taken from Sipson Road through the site access. Representative of views had for approximately 90m along the site frontage, where palisade fencing and a lack of intervening vegetation allows for views back into the development area. Views are seen in the context of the large Holiday Inn to the north, which dominates the local landscape.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be vehicles using Sipson Road and people walking the along the adjacent footway, as well as local residents of Sipson. While local residents may be more focused on the surrounding landscape, the majority of receptors will be people engaged in activities other than the appreciation of the landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Medium – Low*
ASSESSMENT:	The proposed building will be visible as a new feature, being taller than the existing built form, however it will follow the established north/south orientation of the on-site development, while also being stepped further back into the landscape. Moreover, part of the service building will be well contained by the existing tree cover to the north of the site. The remodelling of the parking area will be apparent but will not represent a detrimental change, with parking being stepped back from receptors and greater space being provided for landscaping to the front of the site. The parking associated with the service building will not be visible, having been positioned behind the structure itself.

	The proposals will be notably distinct, although this would be unlikely to have a discernible effect on the established visual character, due to the on-site operations remaining commercial in nature, coupled with the views already had of large-scale structures within the local area. Furthermore, the proposed materials palette, and fenestration of the office building, will mean that building has an agricultural appearance, retaining the quasi-rural visual character associated with the garden centre. There will also be glimpsed views of the proposed solar panels, although they will have very little effect on the overall perception of the site. The proposed tree and hedge planting around the site frontage will notably restrict intervisibility with the development as it matures, softening what is currently a visually harsh frontage through the removal and repositioning of the existing palisade fencing behind the proposed hedging. While seasonality currently has a limited effect due to a lack of intervening vegetation, when the proposed planting is established, it will mean that views of the proposed development will be notably restricted throughout the year. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Moderate* **Level of Effect:** *Moderate - Moderate/Minor* **Nature of Effect:** *Adverse (Slight)* becoming *Neutral* (potentially *Positive*) as the enhancements to the site boundary vegetation mature.

VIEWPOINT 2

Approximate distance from site: Within

OS map elevation: Between 29-30m AOD

DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view north-east, taken from within the site to the rear of the properties along Sipson Road; representative of potential residential views. While there is potential intervisibility from the garden areas of these properties, views are partially obscured by existing boundary fencing, with the greatest intervisibility coming from upper storey (non-primary) windows.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be residents of the properties along Sipson Road. While the attention of receptors may be focused on the landscape, views are largely secondary with the visual envelope of these properties generally being well contained. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Medium*
ASSESSMENT:	The proposed building will be visible as a new feature, being taller than the existing built form, however it will follow the established north/south orientation of the on-site development, while also being stepped further back into the landscape. Moreover, the development will be well contained by a backdrop of trees and seen in the context of Holiday Inn, which will continue to dominate the view post development. Intervisibility will be greater from upper storey windows, with views of the building being restricted from the garden areas due to boundary fencing. Similarly, the remodelling of the parking area will only be apparent from the upper storey windows, however this will

	not represent a detrimental change, with parking being stepped back from receptors and greater space being provided for landscaping between the residential properties and the site. The proposals will be notably distinct, although this would be unlikely to have a discernible effect on the established visual character, due to the on-site operations remaining commercial in nature, coupled with the views already had of large-scale structures within the local area. The proposed materials palette, and fenestration of the office building, will mean that building has an agricultural appearance, retaining the quasi-rural visual character associated with the garden centre, with the green roof helping to soften its appearance. The proposed solar panels will be largely subsumed into the mass of the building, however when sunlight is glinting off them they will become more apparent, although not to such a degree as to make the building visually prominent. The proposed tree planting around the site boundary will restrict intervisibility with the development as it matures, as well as softening views of the Holiday Inn beyond. While seasonality currently has a limited effect due to a lack of intervening vegetation, when the proposed planting is established views of the proposed development will be notably restricted throughout the year. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Moderate – Slight* **Level of Effect:** *Moderate – Moderate/Minor)* **Nature of Effect:** *Adverse (Slight)* becoming *Neutral* as the proposed tree cover matures.

VIEWPOINT 3

Approximate distance from site: 10m

OS map elevation: Between 29-30m AOD

DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view south-east, taken from Sipson Road adjacent to the access to The Plough public house. This viewpoint covers the effects of the development had on patrons of the public house, with Viewpoint 1 covering the effects on the site frontage. The car park of The Plough was not accessible at the time this viewpoint was recorded.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be visitors to The Plough public house, whose attention is unlikely to be focused on the surrounding landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Low*
ASSESSMENT:	Views from the parking area of the public house are similar to those recorded, albeit at an oblique angle and filtered by existing boundary tree and shrub cover; views beyond the car park are restricted by intervening vegetation. The proposed building will be taller than the existing garden centre, although it will be stepped further back into the site. Similarly, while the remodelling of the parking area will be apparent, it will not represent a detrimental change, with the proposed parking area being stepped back from receptors and greater space being provided for landscaping to the front of the site. The service building will appear largely subservient to the office building that will be seen in the foreground, with the revised fenestration meaning that the development retains the quasi-rural visual character associated with the garden centre. There will also be glimpsed views of the proposed solar panels, although they will have very little effect on the overall perception of the site.

	While the make-up and balance of the view will change, this would be unlikely to have a discernible effect on the established visual character, due to the on-site operations remaining commercial in nature, and the containment of the proposals to the edge of the site. New hedge planting along the site's shared boundary with The Plough will notably reduce intervisibility with the site once it is established, something that can be further enhanced through additional tree planting within the landscape buffer zones. While seasonality currently has a limited effect due to a lack of intervening vegetation, when the proposed planting is established and in full leaf it will notably reduce intervisibility with the site throughout the year. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Moderate – Slight* **Level of Effect:** *Moderate/Minor – Minor* **Nature of Effect:** *Adverse (Slight)* becoming *Neutral* as the proposed boundary vegetation matures.

VIEWPOINT 4

Approximate distance from site: 50m

OS map elevation: Between 29-30m AOD

DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view south-east, taken from the edge of the visitor car park of the Holiday Inn to the north of the site. Intervening tree cover and existing boundary vegetation break up views back toward the site however there are still glimpses of the existing on-site built form. Views closer to the development were not possible due to a lack of public access.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be visitors to the Holiday Inn, whose attention is unlikely to be focused on the surrounding landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Low*
ASSESSMENT:	Existing tree cover will break up views of the proposed building, although it will still be visible as a new feature, being taller than the existing built form. However, it will follow the established north/south orientation of the on-site development, while also being stepped further back into the landscape. Moreover, part of the service building will be well contained by the existing tree cover to the north of the site. The proposed materials palette, and fenestration of the office building, will mean that building has an agricultural appearance, retaining the quasi-rural visual character associated with the garden centre, with its colouration also helping it blend into the surrounding tree cover. There will also be glimpsed views of the proposed solar panels, although they will have very little effect on the overall perception of the site.

	The visitor/staff parking area is obscured by existing intervening vegetation, both around the site and along the boundary of the Holiday Inn land, while the proposed storage area is concealed by the building itself. Due to the proximity of the development to the site boundary, opportunities for additional landscaping are limited, however the gapping up of the hedgerow along the site's northern boundary will further reduce intervisibility with the development. Seasonality will see a further reduction in intervisibility with the site when vegetation, both existing and proposed, is in full leaf. Overall, while the make-up and balance of the view will change this would be unlikely to have a discernible effect on the established visual character, due to the on-site operations remaining commercial in nature. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Moderate – Slight* **Level of Effect:** *Moderate/Minor – Minor* **Nature of Effect:** *Adverse (Slight)*

VIEWPOINT 5

Approximate distance from site: Within

OS map elevation: Between 29-30m AOD

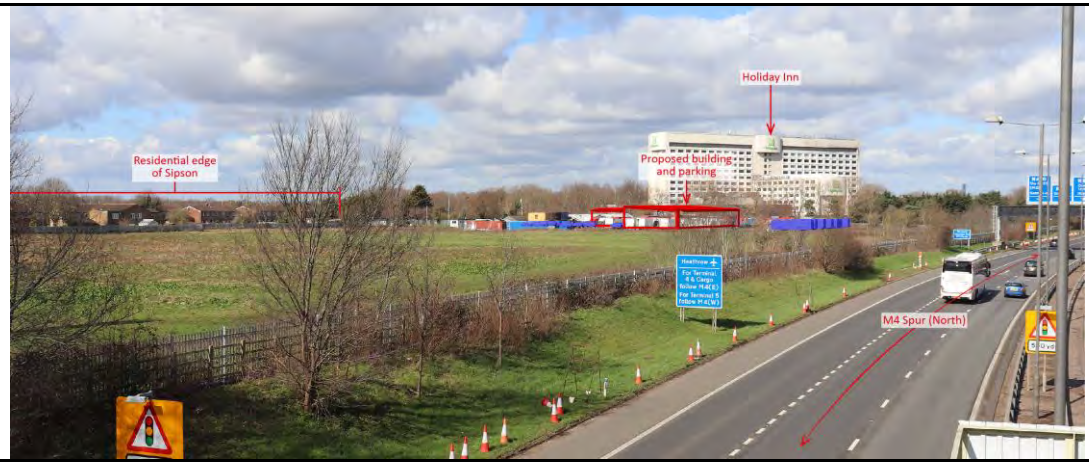
DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view north-west, taken from the edge of the M4 on the edge of the site. For approximately 350m, where the M4 runs adjacent to the site and the land under the applicant's control, large breaks in roadside vegetation mean that the development will be visible. However, these views are glimpsed and, due to the speed of traffic, for a short duration.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be vehicles using M4, where focus is highly unlikely to be on the surrounding landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Low*
ASSESSMENT:	The proposed building will be visible as a new feature, being both taller than the existing on-site built form and closer to receptors. Furthermore, hardstanding will also be extended further to the east, with larger vehicles being parked in this area as they await maintenance. However, views of on-site vehicles will notably differ from those seen in the recorded viewpoints, in that vehicles will not be seen across the entire area of hardstanding, and their storage will not be permanent. Furthermore, recent revisions to the proposals have seen the parking of larger vehicles consolidated to just the eastern boundary of the hardstanding. The increase in height of the on-site buildings and the expansion of the parking area will see the make-up the view change, however it will follow the established north/south orientation of the on-site development. Overall, this would be unlikely to have a discernible effect on the established visual character, due to the on-site operations remaining commercial in nature and being seen in the context of the

	Holiday Inn, which dominates views. Furthermore, the proposed materials palette will give the service building an agricultural appearance, retaining the quasi-rural visual character associated with the garden centre, while the green roof will serve to soften its overall appearance. The proposed solar panels will be largely subsumed into the mass of the building, however when sunlight is glinting off them they will become more apparent, although not to such a degree as to make the building visually prominent. The proposed tree belt along the site's eastern boundary will notably reduce intervisibility from the closest receptors, with views eventually being restricted to winter only glimpses through the tree cover. Tree and hedge planting further to the south, along with tree cover around the parking area, will also help reduce intervisibility with the development from the majority of vehicles. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Moderate – Slight* **Level of Effect:** *Moderate/Minor – Minor* **Nature of Effect:** *Adverse (Slight)* becoming *Neutral* as the proposed vegetation along the M4 matures.

VIEWPOINT 6

Approximate distance from site: 260m

OS map elevation: 29m AOD (taken from bridge over M4)



DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view north-west, taken from the footway along Sipson Lane where it crosses the M4 Spur. The elevated nature of the viewpoint, coupled with the limited amount of intervening vegetation cover, allow for largely open views back towards the site.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be vehicles using Sipson Lane and people walking the along the adjacent footway. Due to the predominantly urban environment, and lack of wider pedestrian connections that could be considered a recreational walking route, the focus of receptors is highly unlikely to be on the surrounding landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Low*
ASSESSMENT:	The proposed building will be visible as a new feature, being taller than the existing built form, as well as extending further to the west. However, the proposed development will be seen against a backdrop of tree cover, as well as in the context of the Holiday Inn, which will continue to dominate the view post development. The proposed materials palette, and revised fenestration of the office building, will mean that building has an agricultural appearance, retaining the quasi-rural visual character associated with the garden centre, with the green roof helping to soften its overall appearance. The proposed solar panels will be largely subsumed into the mass of the building, however when sunlight is glinting off them they will become more apparent, although not to such a degree as to make the building visually prominent.

	The expansion of the hardstanding to the east, will mean vehicle movements are potentially seen across a wider area, however, views of on-site vehicles will notably differ from those seen in the recorded viewpoints, in that vehicles will not be seen across the entire area of hardstanding, and their storage will not be permanent. Furthermore, recent revisions to the proposals have seen the parking of larger vehicles consolidated to the east of the proposed service building, and the overall parking area associated with the on-site operations reduced. The increase in height of the on-site buildings and the expansion of the parking area will see the make-up of the view change, however it will follow the established north/south orientation of the on-site development. Overall, this would be unlikely to affect the established visual character, due to the on-site operations remaining commercial in nature. Seasonality will see a further reduction in intervisibility with the site when the roadside vegetation is in full leaf. Furthermore, as it matures the proposed tree planting around the parking area, coupled with strategic hedge and tree planting along the M4, will help filter views of the building. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Moderate – Slight* **Level of Effect:** *Moderate/Minor – Minor* **Nature of Effect:** *Adverse (Slight)* becoming *Neutral* as the proposed vegetation along the M4 matures.

VIEWPOINT 7

Approximate distance from site: 1250m

OS map elevation: Between 25-30m AOD

DESCRIPTION:	Long distance view west, taken from the edge of the graveyard of the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Harlington. From the majority of the graveyard views are restricted by existing boundary vegetation, however the viewpoint recorded represents a notable break in the landscape structure.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	While the attention of receptors is likely to be focused within the graveyard itself, as opposed to the wider landscape, which it should be noted is not visible by design, the Church of St Peter and St Paul is Grade I listed and is an important cultural and historic feature, with the graveyard forming its immediate setting. As such, receptors in this area are afforded a higher level of sensitivity. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *High - Medium*
ASSESSMENT:	Rising landform between receptors and the site will mean views of the development are obscured throughout the year. The extent to which the site is screened is demonstrated by the fact only the top floor of the Holiday Inn is visible. **Magnitude of Effect:** *None* **Level of Effect:** *None* **Nature of Effect:** *Neutral*

VIEWPOINT 8

Approximate distance from site: 1410m

OS map elevation: Between 25-30m AOD

DESCRIPTION:	Long distance view north-east, taken from Footpath Y19 where it crosses the Green Belt land to east of Harmondsworth (the location of the proposed Heathrow third runway). A lack of intervening vegetation allows for long ranging views back towards the edge of Sipson.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be people walking the Footpath, which while not a strategic right of way, is one of only a limited number of pedestrian links through the Green Belt around Harmondsworth. The focus of receptors would generally be on the path ahead and views of the surrounding landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *High – Medium*
ASSESSMENT:	While the service building has a ridge height of 7.50m, its positioning within the site means that it will be obscured by existing development within Sipson itself, as well as dense tree cover around the edge of the village, throughout the year. **Magnitude of Effect:** *None* **Level of Effect:** *None* **Nature of Effect:** *Neutral*

VIEWPOINT 9 **Approximate distance from site:** 570m **OS map elevation:** 28m AOD	
	
DESCRIPTION:	Medium distance view north-east taken from the footway along Harmondsworth Lane through a gap in the boundary hedgerow. While the ZTV indicates there is some potential, albeit low level, intervisibility with the development from further west along the lane, the field survey has established that this is not the case due to bunding and vegetation cover around the waste transfer station. The recorded viewpoint was instead considered as it represents a notable break in the roadside hedgerow, beyond the transfer station.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be vehicles using Harmondsworth Lane and people walking along the adjacent footway, including pedestrians walking between Harmondsworth and Sipson. While local residents may use the route for more recreational purposes, the majority of receptors will be people engaged in activities other than for the appreciation of the landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Medium – Low*
ASSESSMENT:	Views are screened by the tree cover at Heathrow Primary School. This vegetation will screen the proposed development even during times of minimum leaf cover (as has been recorded); when vegetation is in full leaf views will be further restricted. **Magnitude of Effect:** *None* **Level of Effect:** *None* **Nature of Effect:** *Neutral*

VIEWPOINT 10

Approximate distance from site: 265m

OS map elevation: 30m AOD

DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view south-east, taken from the footway along Harmondsworth Road just before it crosses the M4. While the ZTV indicates there is some potential intervisibility with the development, the field survey has established that it is extremely restricted and seasonal, with intervening vegetation, restricting views to only the top of the service building.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be vehicles using Harmondsworth Road and people walking the along the adjacent footway. Due to the predominantly urban environment, and lack of wider pedestrian connections that could be considered a recreational walking route, the focus of receptors is highly unlikely to be on the surrounding landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Low*
ASSESSMENT:	While there is potential intervisibility with the taller elements of the building, these views will be seasonal and heavily restricted by intervening tree cover, being extremely difficult for potential receptors to discern, with the Holiday Inn continuing to dominate the view. When vegetation is in full leaf views will be restricted to the point of being obscured, however heavily restricted winter views are likely to remain even when the proposed planting is established. Overall, there will be a virtually imperceptible change in the view, with no effects on the established visual character. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Moderate*

	Magnitude of Effect: *Negligible* (*None* when vegetation is in full leaf) **Level of Effect:** *Minor/None* (*None* when vegetation is in full leaf)

VIEWPOINT 11

Approximate distance from site: 265m

OS map elevation: Between 29-30m AOD

DESCRIPTION:	Close distance view South-east, taken from the footway along Holloway Lane. While the ZTV indicates there is some potential intervisibility with the development, the field survey has established that it is extremely restricted and seasonal, with Tree planting along Holloway Lane, coupled with intervening vegetation, notably restricting views.
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY:	Primary receptors would be vehicles using Holloway Lane and people walking the along the adjacent footway. Due to the predominantly urban environment, and lack of wider pedestrian connections that could be considered a recreational walking route, the focus of receptors is highly unlikely to be on the surrounding landscape. **Receptor Sensitivity:** *Low*
ASSESSMENT:	For the majority of Holloway Lane the site is obscured by the tree cover alongside the road, however as receptors get closer to the Holiday Inn the change in the angle of view means that there are potential glimpses of the building through the landscape structure. However, due to the density of the intervening vegetation the development will not be legible and the visible change extremely limited, only being seen during times of reduced leaf cover. Moreover, when the proposed planting to the site frontage establishes, the extra cover it will provide will mean views are obscured throughout the year. **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* (*None* when vegetation is in full leaf/proposed planting is established)

	Level of Effect: *Minor/None* (*None* when vegetation is in full leaf/proposed planting is established) **Nature of Effect:** *Neutral*

SUMMARY OF VISUAL EFFECTS

5.2.5 The Overall Visual Sensitivity of the study area is considered *Low*, taking account of the area's limited public access but also the generally degraded appearance of the Green Belt and the large areas of built form which dominate the surrounding landscape and detract from its visual amenity. The site is extremely well contained within the landscape, with the proposed development having a restricted visual envelope due to existing development and vegetation, both around the site and across the study area.

5.2.6 While the new building is theoretically visible from the wider landscape, these views would be extremely restricted and limited to only potential glimpses of the top of the new building, with any visible change being extremely difficult to discern. As regards views from the immediate landscape, for the most part the proposed development will not result in any additional views of built form where the existing garden centre and the proposed development of the previous application are/would be seen. For a short section of Sipson Road there will be uninterrupted views back into the site, however the development will maintain the established north/south orientation of the on-site built form, with the proposed landscaping eventually largely obscuring the development and enhancing the site frontage.

5.2.7 The development will see an increase in ridge height over the existing and proposed garden centres, however the uppermost ridge height has actually been reduced from what was previously proposed and is now only approximately 1.00m higher than that of the previously approved permission. Furthermore, the building will not cover as great of an area, being well contained by existing tree cover to the north and the proposed tree belt to the east alongside the M4. The building will be seen in the context of the Holiday Inn, which will continue to dominate the view post development. The proposed solar panels will be largely subsumed into the mass of the building, however from certain viewpoints they will become more apparent when sunlight is glinting off them, although this will not to such a degree as to make the building visually prominent. The proposed materials palette, and revised fenestration of the office building, will mean that service building has an agricultural appearance, retaining the quasi-rural visual character associated with the garden centre. Additionally localised views of the built form will be softened by both the inclusion of green roofs and extensive tree planting around the site.

5.2.8 The expansion of the hardstanding to the east, will mean vehicle movements are seen across a wider area. However, views of on-site vehicles will notably differ from those seen in the recorded

viewpoints, in that vehicles will not be seen across the entire area of hardstanding, and their storage will not be permanent. Moreover, the remodelling of the parking area to the front of the site will be apparent but will not represent a detrimental change, with parking actually being moved away from receptors and better contained within the context of the building. Furthermore, recent revisions to the proposals have seen the parking of larger vehicles consolidated to the east of the proposed service building, and the overall parking area associated with the on-site operations reduced.

5.2.9 The overall effect on the visual amenity of the study area will be limited, as the baseline condition is generally one where on-site development is already seen. While from some locations the new building will be noticeably distinct, it would be unlikely to affect the established visual character as a whole, due to the on-site operations remaining commercial in nature.

5.2.10 The extent of the visual envelope being considered changes the perception of the development as a new visual component in the landscape, with effects generally reducing the further receptors are from the site. As regards the immediate landscape the Magnitude of Visual Change is Moderate – *Slight*, resulting in the Level of Visual Effect being *Moderate/Minor – Minor*. From this area the Nature of Effect of the proposed development at Year 0 is *Adverse*, although not to a degree where it is considered unacceptable. However, as the proposed planting matures any adverse effects will be mitigated, with the development having an overall *Neutral* effect, although it is worth nothing that the proposed planting to the site frontage will result in a *Positive* effect in respect of views and visual amenity experienced by users of Sipson Road.

5.2.11 From the wider landscape the Magnitude of Visual Change is Negligible, resulting in the Level of Visual Effect being *Minor/None*. From this area the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is *Neutral* as whilst theoretically visible from certain locations, the level of intervisibility is so minimal that changes to the view will be virtually imperceptible.

5.3 EFFECTS ON OPENNESS

5.3.1 As regards the effects of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt, the PPG states that: "*Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case.*" In respect of the proposed development the following aspects are relevant considerations when assessing the potential effect of development on the openness of the Green Belt:

- The spatial and visual aspects of the proposed development, specifically:

- The physical openness of the Green Belt – is the site free of development/is there a form of development already present/approved?
- The visual openness – what kind of views are there across the site and to what degree are these restricted by development, both existing/approved and proposed, as well as other features?

- The duration of the development, and its reversibility – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness.
- Secondary effects relating to the degree of activity likely to be generated (e.g. traffic generation and user movements).

5.3.2 The volume of the proposed development is a material consideration in this case, while it has been notably reduced from the scheme that was initially presented to the council (8894.96m^3 reduced to 7833.82m^3), it is still 912.54m^3 larger than the previously approved garden centre. This is primarily as a result of the increase in ridge height of the built form (a requirement due to the nature of the proposed on-site operations), as opposed to an increase in building footprint, which has actually reduced from 2383m^2 to 1219.57m^2. It is not simply the case to state that by virtue of the development being of a greater volume that it will have a greater effect on openness, the spread of development (sprawl) also needs to be taken into consideration.

5.3.3 While the volume of the on-site built form is still greater, the total area of the site that it is proposed is developed (buildings and hardstanding) is actually less than that of both the existing and lapsed developments. The proposed hardstanding has extended approximately 12.00m further east than that of the existing garden centre, however it has been stepped back by approximately 17.00m to the south and 26.00m to the west. This rearrangement of the hardstanding has improved the visual openness of the site, with the parking areas being consolidated further into the site and in context of the proposed buildings, with there also being greater provision of open space around the development.

5.3.4 Any change to the visual openness of the site is primarily due to the increase in height of the proposed building. While the new building is taller than the existing and previously approved garden centres, it maintains the established north/south orientation of the on-site development and will not result in the loss of any additional views across the site. Moreover, taking into account these provisions to restore and enhance previously developed land/land approved for development, the proposals will

actually see an improvement to the site's state of openness, in respect of the total area of development that is proposed.

5.3.5 As regards the duration of the development and its reversibility, the proposals will represent a permanent change to the landscape, which while theoretically reversible, is highly unlikely due to the long-term nature of the scheme proposed. However, it is important to note that the previously approved garden centre also represented a permanent, irreversible development within the Green Belt. In this regard, effects on the openness of the Green Belt, between the proposed scheme and approved development are considered comparable. However, as previously stated, the proposed development will actually see a greater percentage of the site area returned to open space.

5.3.6 The nature of the proposals means that there will be secondary effects as a result of vehicle movements across a greater area of the site, specifically across the proposed hardstanding around the service building. However, while vehicle movements were only concentrated to the front of the garden centres (both existing and previously approved), their operation as retail centres meant that they would likely attract numerous, short term, visitors, to the site, resulting in comparatively greater traffic generation and more vehicle movements than the proposed development. Specifically, when compared to the staff at the proposed site, who are unlikely to move their cars until the end of the working day, and the limited number of vehicles having to drive to and from the service building. Furthermore, like the proposed development, the garden centres would see activity across their entire site area, due to having large sales areas to the east. While this is a comparison of pedestrian and vehicle movements, it still represents activity within the Green Belt.

5.3.7 While the circumstance of development and activity at the site will change from that of the existing and previously approved garden centres, for the most part they are largely comparable. The key consideration is in respect of the effect of the proposed building, and whether the consolidation of the built form, into a structure that is larger by volume, presents a greater level of harm to the openness of the Green Belt than built form with a lower ridge that is spread across a much wider area.

5.3.8 The land on which the garden centre building is proposed is already developed with/had permission for, a greater area of development than that which is proposed. Furthermore, while the proposed building is larger by volume, the effects of visual openness are limited by the fact that any views of the new development will be had from where the existing/previously approved would

already be seen, with the proposed ridge height of the of the service building (7.50m) only being 1.00m greater than the previously approved permission, which covered a larger area. Overall, the proposed development will have a negligible effect in respect of the Green Belt's key characteristic of openness, over and above that of the existing/previously approved garden centres.

5.3.9 In terms of the specific landscape and visual effects of the scheme (discussed in 5.1 and 5.2) as well as the specific consideration of the effect of openness in 5.3, it is considered that the proposal, while different, represents no greater harm to the Green Belt than the existing and approved developments.

5.4 CONSTRUCTION EFFECTS

5.4.1 During construction access to the site will be taken through the existing access off Sipson Road, providing a direct link with the site without the need to create any additional access points or remove any boundary tree or hedgerow cover. There will potentially be some short-term residual effects as a result of construction traffic driving across the field in which the site is located, however these effects would be temporary and will largely be lost as the site is built out.

5.4.2 Machinery working on the site will be visible from the majority of viewpoints that have intervisibility with the proposed built form, without the benefit of mitigation planting. However, these visual effects will only be temporary and will have no lasting adverse effects on the recorded visual receptors. Appropriate storage of construction materials and equipment will help minimise any effects during construction.

5.5 RESIDUAL EFFECTS

5.5.1 Post development there will be no residual effects following the construction of the development, with the landscape structure being repaired as part of the proposals. There will potentially be secondary effects as a result of the site being brought back into commercial use, with an increase in traffic along Sipson Lane, as well as light spill resulting from the development during darker times of the year. However, these are effects that would have also occurred during the operation of the original and approved garden centres, moreover light spill from the development will be largely subsumed into that already created by the street lighting along Sipson Road and the M4 Spur. Overall, there will be no discernible residual effects on both landscape and visual receptors.

6. MITIGATION STRATEGY

6.1 The following recommendations are appropriate to reduce the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, with the aim being to further integrate the site into the landscape while providing enhancements to the area's landscape structure through a comprehensive scheme of planting and management. An indicative landscaping scheme has been provided as a part of the application and is largely successful in respect of addressing potential effects, as such it will be incorporated into the mitigation strategy for the site, being adapted and appropriately detailed as necessary. However, details such as internal amenity shrub bed locations and compositions are beyond the scope of this LVIA and as such will be addressed as part of the detailed design or by way of condition.

6.2 Mitigation measures will mainly focus on detailing and enhancing the indicative landscaping proposals, introducing distinct structural elements around the site boundary as well as creating structure within the development itself through the use of strategic tree planting. Where appropriate existing vegetation will be retained, managed and enhanced but not at the expense of improving the local green infrastructure network. The aim is to not only integrate the proposed development into the landscape, but also provide landscape and ecological enhancements through a comprehensive scheme of new planting and management using native species characteristic of the area, as well as select domestic species where appropriate. Full details can be found in the accompanying Landscape and Implementation Maintenance Plan (LIMP) prepared by WHLandsape.

General:

- The materials palette is appropriate; however, the colouration of these elements should be muted to help the structure blend in with the surrounding landscape.
- Lighting should be of a colour and intensity appropriate to its wider setting.
- The existing palisade fencing along Sipson Road should be removed and replaced with weld mesh fencing stepped back into the site to allow for more meaningful landscaping along the site frontage.
- Existing poor quality/diseased vegetation or invasive species should be removed and replaced if necessary/appropriate.

Existing Trees – Maintenance Operations:

- Removal of trees marked for felling will take place before any development takes place.

- All trees to be retained will be inspected before development begins on the site, and remedial work, (e.g. thinning, crown raising, etc), will be undertaken where necessary in the interest of site safety and general management.
- Suitable root protection area stand-offs should be applied around all trees to be retained and protective ground mats and no dig construction methods used where necessary.
- Post-construction any trees within or bordering publicly accessible areas, or in close proximity to the development, must be checked on an annual basis for signs of deterioration or distress, and the appropriate actions taken where a potential safety hazard is identified.
    - Heavy branches should be removed in sections and undercut to avoid the tearing of the bark, and thereafter lowered by slings. No branch stumps should be left, and no cuts should be capable of holding water.
    - Any dense ivy infestation should be removed if evident on site or during the maintenance period.
    - All diseased wood, pruning's and rubbish should be removed from the site, and the site left clean and tidy.
- All works shall be carefully carried out to avoid damage to the tree being treated, or neighbouring trees. No trees to be retained shall be used for anchorage or winching.
- All tree works will be undertaken by a suitably qualified arborist in accordance with the BS 3998:2010 British Standard Tree Work - Recommendations. Proof of experience and insurance provision will be required. All work shall be undertaken at the appropriate time and with the consent of the Management Company.

Existing Hedges – Maintenance Operations

- Where hedgerow repair is necessary, planting will be undertaken as described in the LIMP, using the detailed Mixed Native Hedge Species Mix. Any gaps smaller than 1.00m are to be gapped up with hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).
- Any existing hedging around the site boundary should be maintained at a minimum of 3.00-3.50m in height.
- Hedgerow management will take place between mid-December and early March. This will avoid the dormice active period and bird-nesting season and allow berries to be used for foraging wildlife.
- Hedgerows should be cut in an "A" shape or a "topped A" shape to create tall bushy hedges with maximum wildlife potential.

Proposed Mitigation and Planting:

- The following recommendations should be taken into account in respect of plants being used for mitigation purposes:
    - All new planting, including planting for the purposes of replacement should comprise appropriate species.
    - Boundary planting and feature/open space tree planting should comprise native species, with domestic planting being restricted to the landscape buffer zone at the front of the site.
    - At planting, a range of tree sizes should be used to create instant impact and structure.
    - Tree pits with root barriers (GreenBlue Urban design or similar) should be used where necessary to protect services, structures and surfaces.
- For the most part tree planting should take place within the locations indicated on the development proposals plan, however additional tree planting to the site frontage is recommended to the west of the proposed staff/visitor parking.
- The proposed boundary hedging should be grown and managed at 3.00-3.50m in height, comprising a standard mixed native hedge species mix.
- The proposed hedgerow along Sipson Lane should be positioned in front of the new weld mesh fencing and grown and managed at 2.00-2.50m in height, comprising a revised mixed native hedge species mix, more appropriate for the site frontage. Larger transplants should be used for an element of 'instant impact'.
- Low maintenance Domestic shrub planting should take place around the staff and visitor car parking area in the interests of visual amenity.
- The swale and attenuation pond should be planted with an appropriate mix of riparian species, including shrubs and herbaceous species where appropriate.
- The green roofs should comprise a sedum rich mix of plants to create a lightweight, low-maintenance, resilient green roof across both buildings.
- Areas of existing hardstanding that are to be returned to grassland should be restored using an appropriate general purpose meadow grass mixture.
- Swaths of bulb planting should take place to the site frontage.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The key considerations when determining the acceptability of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposals are the receptors that will be potentially affected by the development and how far any effects are/can be mitigated. Of particular importance to the consideration of the developments overall effect is whether the redevelopment will have a notable effect on the landscape character and visual amenity of the study area, particularly that which is associated with the essential characteristics of Green Belt (openness and permanence), over and above that of the existing and previously approved garden centre developments.

7.2 As a result of the assessment of landscape and visual effects, it has been determined that the development will have an overall *Moderate/Minor* effect. Due to the established built form context of the site and its high level of containment within the local landscape, any potential effect on landscape and visual receptors will be lessened and change will be localised. While the garden centre itself is an established feature within the local area, overall, the proposed development will not be particularly detrimental to any of the key characteristics or descriptions of the site and the surrounding landscape as identified in this document, including the essential characteristics of Green Belt. It is acknowledged that, despite the reduced footprint, the height of the proposed building is such that within the immediate landscape there will be adverse effects on views and visual amenity as the proposed planting establishes, however these are short term effects and are not considered to have an unacceptable effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

7.3 As such the mitigation measure in Section 6 (and expanded on in the accompanying LIMP) were developed to address these specific effects, with a focus on detailing and enhancing the outline landscape proposals to address these specific effects. It is acknowledged that new planting takes approximately 15 years to becomes established to the point that it can adequately mitigate views, therefore larger tree stock has been recommended to create an element of instant impact, while retention and enhancement of the existing landscape structure is a key aspect of the proposals. As such any adverse effects is deemed acceptable when considered against the long-term operational life of the proposed development.

EFFECT OF MITIGATION ON LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

7.4 At Year 0: Effects will remain largely the same as any changes associated with the mitigation will primarily become apparent when planting reaches maturity. However, removal of inappropriate vegetation, general remedial work and new planting, as well as the replacement and stepping back

of the fencing along the frontage, will be an improvement to the local area. Furthermore, larger stock having an element of 'instant impact', will assist in integrating the proposals into the local landscape.

7.5 At Year 5: The overall Magnitude of Landscape Effect will remain *Moderate – Slight*, with an overall Level of Landscape Effect also remaining Moderate – *Moderate/Minor*. The planting will be well established and features such as mixed native hedges will be providing the site with good level of containment. Tree cover will still be of a relatively low height; however it will have begun in integrate into the existing landscape structure and will be beginning to provide the development with an appropriate landscape setting. Furthermore, while still maturing, the landscape will provide notable environmental benefits as a result of improved green links and new habitat areas, as well as the repair and enhancement of the existing landscape structure.

7.6 At Year 15: The Overall Level of Effect will be reduced to *Minor* with the development being better integrated into the landscape. In particular the proposed planting along the M4 will create a better-defined edge between the site and the surrounding landscape, while the use of structural planting within the development will break up the on-site built form without screening the site. The Overall Nature of Effect will remain Neutral, however there will be notable benefits in respect of the provision of additional tree and hedgerow cover, as well as enhancements to the green infrastructure network around the site, with a hierarchy of tree ages also being established in the area.

EFFECT OF MITIGATION ON VISUAL RECEPTORS

7.7 At Year 0: Effects will be largely the same from the majority of Viewpoints. However, the use of larger stock will help create 'instant' structure around the development, helping break-up views from year 1.

7.8 At Year 5: The overall Magnitude of Visual Effect will remain Moderate – Slight, with the overall Level of Visual Effect also remaining Moderate – Moderate/Minor. However, the planting will be well established with the tree and hedgerow planting breaking up views throughout the year, and while the development will still be visible, it will not be unduly prominent. As the planting matures the development will begin to be further integrated into the landscape with new planting, coupled with the 'naturalistic' materials palette of the proposed houses. As a result the development will blend into the landscape far more effectively than the dairy unit. The Nature of Visual Effect continues to be

varied at year 5, however, in the case of all viewpoints, the proposed landscaping will see an improvement to views from Year 0.

7.9 At Year 15: The Level of Effect within the immediate landscape will be reduced to *Minor* with the site being better contained within the landscape. Furthermore, additional planting will help filter views and create a more appropriate setting for the development, specifically in respect of views from Sipson Road. While there will still be glimpsed views of the development, the Overall Nature of Effect will become *Neutral*, with the established planting having some localised benefits in respect of visual amenity, particularly along the site frontage.

CONCLUSIONS

7.10 As a result of the assessment of landscape and visual effects, it has been determined that, due to the removal of an area of largely incongruous built form, coupled with the site's high level of containment within the local landscape, the proposed development can be successfully integrated into the landscape of the study area.

7.11 The proposed development will not be significantly detrimental to any of the key characteristics or descriptions of the site and the surrounding landscape as identified in this document. Furthermore, the proposals will have no greater effect on the openness of the Green Belt than both the existing and approved garden centre developments. Post-mitigation the proposed development will have a *Minor* effect, with the effect on specific receptors being notably reduced as mitigation continues to mature.

7.12 Taking account of the proposed landscape mitigation recommendations, the proposed development can be undertaken in compliance with the relevant guidance and policies in the NPPF, with the application meeting the criteria for appropriate development within the Green Belt as listed in paragraph 154. Bullet Point g of the NPPF. Furthermore, it complies with The London Plan 2021, and the Hillingdon Local Plan, Parts 1 and 2.

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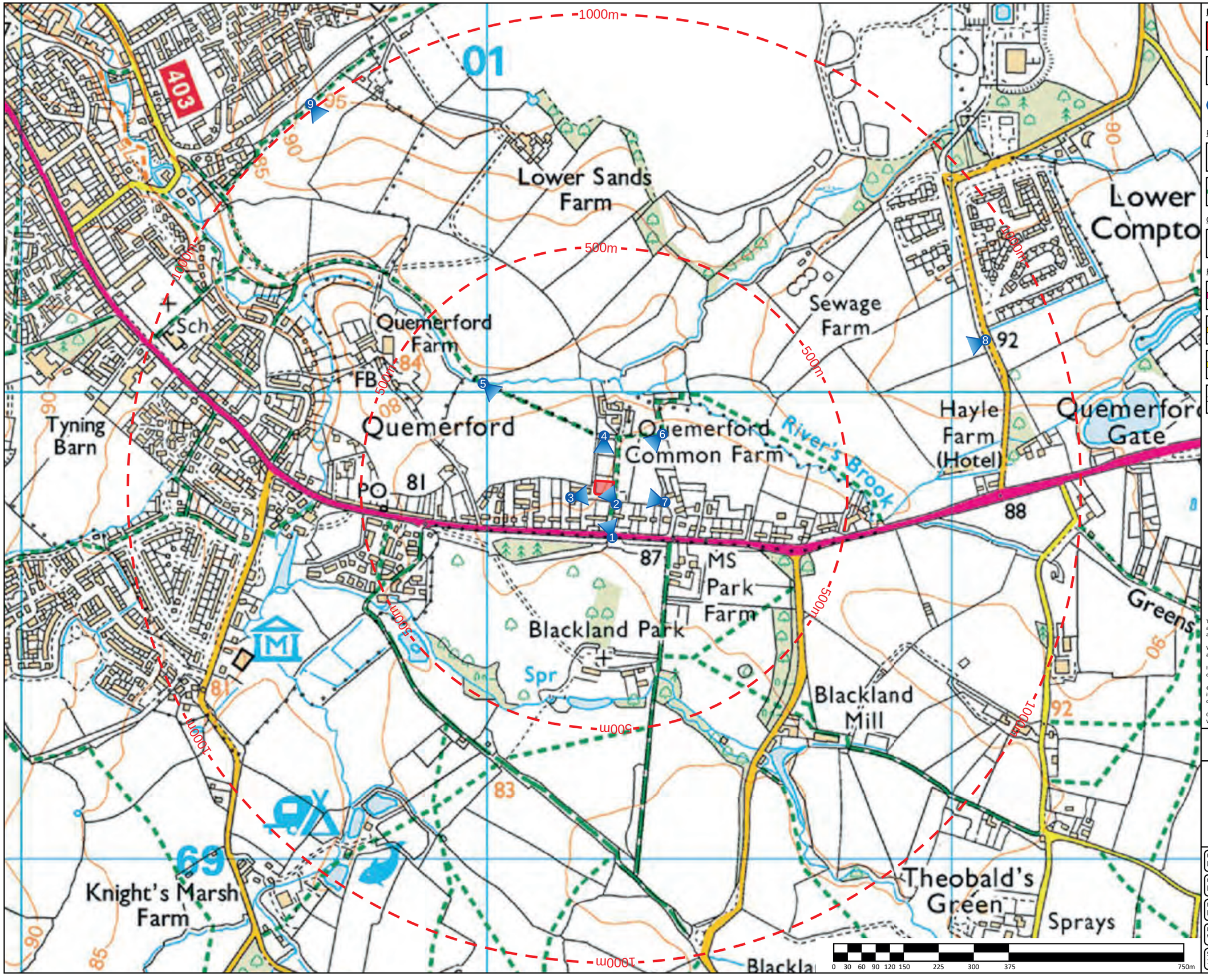
ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL



KEY:

- Site
- Off-set from site boundary
- Viewpoint

Public Rights of Way

- Footpath
- Bridleway

Other Public Access

- Permissive footpath

Roads

- Main road
- Road generally more than 4m wide
- Road generally less than 4m wide
- Other road, drive or track

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Project: Residential Development - Quemerford, Calne

On behalf of: Mr & Mrs Mayo

Drawing title: Location and Viewpoint Plan

Drawing number: WHL-1747-01 | Rev: | Date: Dec 23

Scale: 1:7500 @ A3 | DB: GH | CB: WH

KEY:

- Site

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Project: Residential Development - Quemerford, Calne

On behalf of: Mr & Mrs Mayo

Drawing title: Vertical Aerial

Drawing number:	Rev:	Date:
WHL-1747-02		Dec 23

Scale:	DB:	CB:
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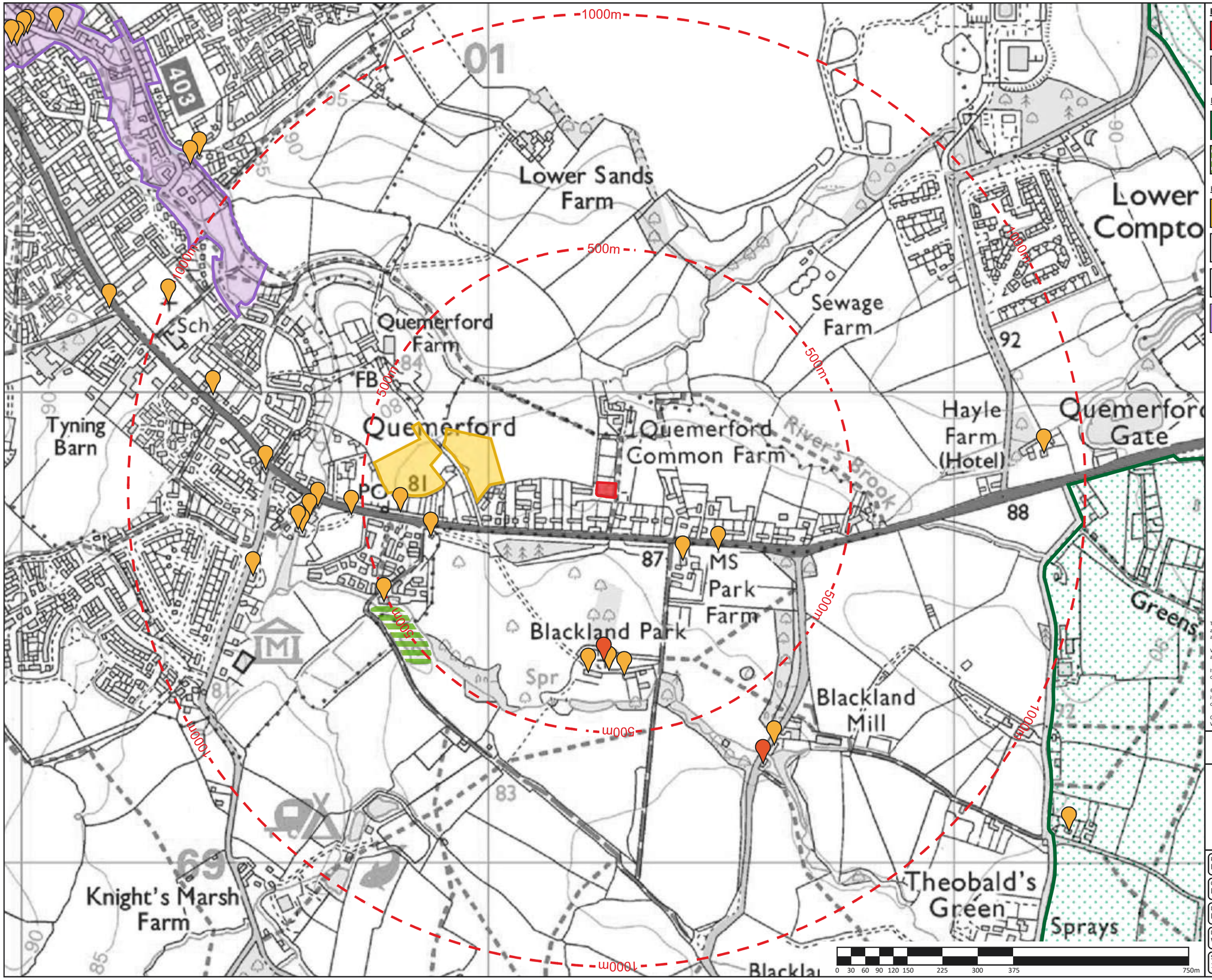

KEY:

- Site
- Off-set from site boundary

Environmental Designations

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- County Wildlife Site

Heritage Designations

- Scheduled Monuments
- Grade II* listed building
- Grade II listed building
- Conservation Areas

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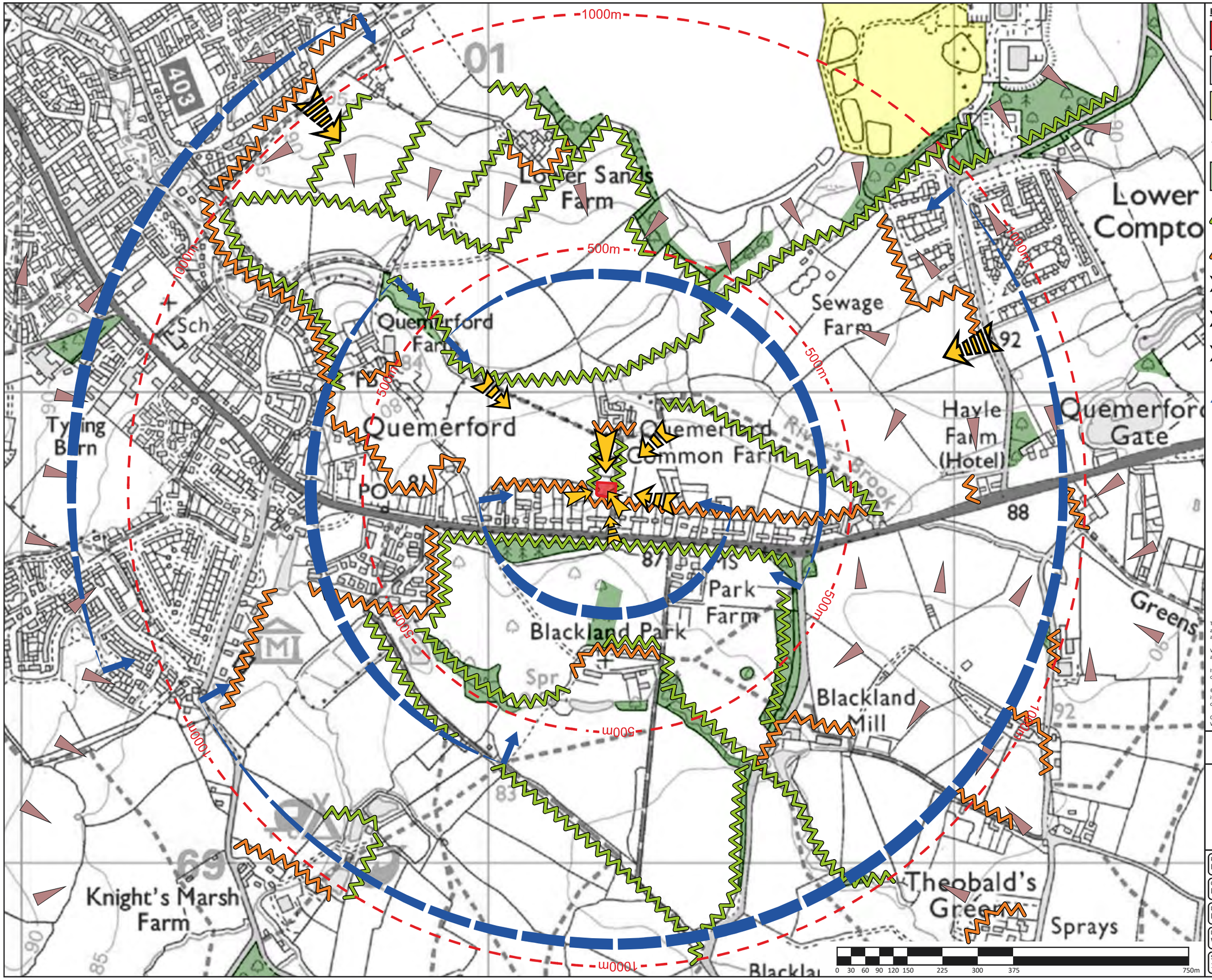
Drawing title: Designations		
Drawing number: WHL-1747-03	Rev:	Date: Dec 23
Scale: 1:7500 @ A3	DB: PF	CB: WH



KEY:

- Site
- Off-set from site boundary
- Gravel pit
- Downslope
- Significant vegetation
- Trees and hedgerows obscuring/ filtering views
- Notable development
- Open views
- Partial/filtered views
- Heavily restricted views
- Views obscured by landform and vegetation

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On behalf of: Mr & Mrs Mayo		
Drawing title: Landscape and Visual Analysis		
Drawing number: WHL-1747-04	Rev:	Date: Dec 23
Scale: 1:7500 @ A3	DB: PF	CB: WH

Recommended Open Space Tree Species

Plan Ref.	Scientific name	Common name	Specification	Girth (cm)	Approx. height (m)	Clear stem height (m)
Ac	*Acer campestre*	Field Maple	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Cb	*Carpinus betulus*	Hornbeam	Selected Standard	10-12	3.00/3.50	Min 2.00
Cm	*Crataegus monogyna*	Hawthorn	Light Standard	6-8	2.50/3.00	1.50/1.75
Ms	*Malus sylvestris*	Wild crab apple	Light Standard	6-8	2.50/3.00	1.50/1.75
Pp	*Prunus Padus*	Bird Cherry	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
St	*Sorbus torminalis*	Wild service tree	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00

Recommended Front Garden Tree Species

Plan Ref.	Scientific name	Common name	Specification	Girth (cm)	Approx. height (m)	Clear stem height (m)
Ac'QE'	*Acer campestre* 'Queen Elizabeth'	Field Maple 'Queen Elizabeth'	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Axg	*Amelanchier × grandiflora 'Autumn Brilliance'*	Serviceberry 'Autumn Brilliance'	Light Standard	6-8	2.50/3.00	1.50/1.75
Cl	*Crataegus laevigata 'Paul's Scarlet'*	Hawthorn 'Paul's Scarlet'	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Sa	*Sorbus aria*	Whitebeam	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00

Recommended Rear Garden Fruit Tree Species

Plan Ref.	Scientific name	Common name	Specification	Root-stock	Approx. height (m)	Clear stem height (m)
Md'JG'	*Malus domestica 'James Grieve'*	Apple 'James Grieve'	Half Standard	MM106	Min 1.50	Min 0.80
Pc'WC'	*Pyrus communis 'Williams' Bon Chrétien*	Pear 'Williams' Bon Chrétien	Half Standard	Quince A	Min 1.50	Min 0.80

Mixed Native Hedge Species

Scientific name	Common name	Specification	Approx. height (cm)	%
Acer campestre	Field maple	1 + 1 transplants	80-100	5
Corylus avellana	Hazel	1 + 1 transplants	80-100	20
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	1 + 1 transplants	80-100	60
Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	1 + 1 transplants	80-100	5
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	1 + 1 transplants	80-100	5
Viburnum latana	Wayfaring tree	1 + 1 transplants	80-100	2.5
Viburnum opulus	Guelder rose	1 + 1 transplants	80-100	2.5

KEY:

- Site

Existing Vegetation

- Existing boundary trees
- Existing boundary hedge

Proposed Planting

- New trees
- Mixed native hedge
- Wildflower meadow (Emorsgate EM5 or equivalent)
- Garden lawns (Emorsgate EG22 or equivalent)

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Project: Residential Development - Quemerford, Calne

On behalf of: Mr & Mrs Mayo

Drawing title: Landscape Mitigation Strategy

Drawing number: WHL-1747-05 | Rev: | Date: Dec 23

Scale: 1:200 @ A3 | DB: GH | CB: WH