Appendix 9.1 International and National Landscape Policy Context

International Landscape Policy Context

The UK signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2006-2007. This international convention focuses specifically on landscapes, promoting the importance of policies relating to their protection, management and creation. It applies to all landscapes, towns, open countryside, coast and inland areas, and includes ordinary and degraded landscapes as well as those afforded protection. The ELC does not confine itself to cultural or man-made landscape elements alone, but to all elements and the way they interact. The use of Landscape Character Assessment to inform policymaking is a well-established example of the implementation of the convention in the UK.

The ELC recommends that landscape policies should aim to 'protect, manage or plan' as defined below:

- *"Landscape protection: action to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by the landscape's heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or human activity.*
- *Landscape management: action from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.*
- *Landscape planning means: strong forward looking action to enhance, restore or create landscape."*

National Planning Policy Context

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (HM Government, 2018, updated 2019)

The 25 Year Plan sets out strategic environmental policy covering a range of aspirations. Goal 6 'enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment' sets out the commitments to ensure we conserve and enhance the beauty of the natural environment, and make sure it can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone. It sets out the following measures as ways to achieve this goal:

- *"Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our natural scenery and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.*
- *Making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing.*
- *Focusing on increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society." (Page 28)*

This goal, along with the other seven presented in the 25 Year Plan, are supported by the National

Planning Policy Framework.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) ('NPPF') is a material consideration in dealing with planning applications for development. The Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied and provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

The NPPF describes how the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieve sustainable development through three overarching objectives. Objective c), the 'environmental objective', is to:

> *"protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy" (NPPF Chapter 1, paragraph 17).*

Policy sections that are particularly relevant to the landscape design of the Site are:

> Chapter 13 'Protecting Green Belt land'
> Chapter 14 'Achieving well-designed places'
> Chapter 19 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'

The Site is situated within the London Metropolitan Green Belt. The objective of the Green Belt as set out in Chapter 13 of the NPPF is to *"prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence".*

NPPF Policy GB2: 'Assessing existing Green Belt land' sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt, which are to:

> *"a. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
>
> *b. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
>
> *c. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
>
> *e. Assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*

Policy GB6 states that development in the Green Belt in inappropriate unless it falls within one of the categories in policy G7. Part 'g' of Policy GB7 sets out a number of requirements whereby development may not be 'inappropriate'. These include the use of 'grey belt' land that is in a sustainable location, where there is an evidenced unmet need for the development and where the development would not *'fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan'.*

The NPPF glossary defines grey belt as:

> *"land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in policy GB2."*

Policy DP1: A Strategy for Design under Chapter 14 'Achieving well-designed places', sets out clear design expectations by:

> *"a. Ensuring the vision for the plan reflects the desired design and placemaking outcomes. This should be informed by an evaluation of the area's existing characteristics and potential, …*"

DP3: Key principles for well-designed places states:

> *"1. Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their Site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings…"*

In Chapter 19 of the NPPF, the objective of the natural environment policies is to:

> *"influence the design and location of new development to help drive nature's recovery and contribute to wider environmental outcomes, safeguarding our most important habitats, species and landscapes and recognising the centrality of natural capital to delivering sustainable growth".*

Policy N2 states that, to contribute positively to the natural environment and support nature's recovery, development proposals should:

> *"a) Consider the environmental qualities of land proposed for development, including habitats, landscape character and the natural beauty of the countryside, and identify opportunities for those qualities to be conserved or enhanced…"*
>
> *…d) Conserve and enhance existing natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value (such as established trees and hedgerows) where possible; and use appropriate landscaping to help create a well-designed place and integrate the development into its surroundings".*

Planning Practice Guidance

The NPPF is supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The *Natural Environment* PPG (published 2016, updated February 2025), explains the key issues in implementing policy to protect biodiversity and natural environment and provides advice on how the character of landscapes can be used to inform planning decisions and what green infrastructure is and why it is important in delivering sustainable developments. The *Green Belt* PPG (published 2019, updated February 2025) sets out how to judge whether land is grey belt.

It makes reference to the National Planning Policy Framework, stating:

"it is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes".

The Natural Environment PPG also goes on to state, "*the cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully*" (Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721, Revision date: 21 July 2019).

At paragraph 037, the PPG identifies that landscape character assessments can be prepared, as well as Landscape and Sensitivity and Capacity Assessments to help assess the type and scale of development that may be accommodated without compromising landscape character (Paragraph: 037 Reference ID: 8-037-20190721, Revision date: 21 July 2019). The PPG also states that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used to demonstrate the likely effects of a Proposed Development.

The Green Belt PPG describes how 'grey belt' should not make a 'strong' contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B and D. Land that makes a 'strong' contribution to Green Belt Purpose A is likely to:

"be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features:

- *be adjacent or near to a large built up area*
- *if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt)"*

Land that makes a 'strong' contribution to Green Belt Purpose B is likely to:

"…be free of existing development and include all of the following features:

- *forming a substantial part of a gap between towns*
- *the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns"*

Land that makes a 'strong' contribution to Green Belt Purpose D is likely to:

"…be free of existing development and to include all of the following features:

- *form part of the setting of the historic town*
- *make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town".*