Land to the East of Hardingstone
North of Newport Pagnell Road
Northampton
PINS Reference: APP/V2825/A/14/2228866

Proof of Evidence
Prepared by:
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CMLI
On behalf of:
Northampton Borough Council
Local Authority Reference: N/2013/0338

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1 Introduction

Qualifications and Experience
1.1 My name is Sara Howe. I am a Director of Influence Environmental Ltd (Chartered Landscape Architects, Urban Designers and Environmental Planners).

1.2 I hold a BA Hons and Postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Leeds Metropolitan University and am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute. I have worked as a Landscape Architect for over 15 years, most recently at Hyland Edgar Driver, before joining Influence as a founding Director in 2008.

1.3 I have significant experience in advising on landscape matters, on a range of projects in all sectors. These include carrying out Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, Feasibility Studies, developing Strategic Masterplans and advising on mitigation.

1.4 This proof of evidence (PoE) is my own professional and expert opinion and is, to the best of my knowledge, a full and truthful representation of landscape matters in relation to the appeal case.

Proposed Development
1.5 Appeal APP/V2825/A/14/2228866 concerns a proposal for up to 1000 dwellings, local centre consisting of retail, professional and financial services and restaurants/cafes, public house, primary school, community uses including medical centre, pharmacy and community centre, infrastructure improvements including a pumping station, green infrastructure and highway access.

Project Background
1.6 In March 2013 the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) submitted an application\(^1\) for outline planning permission\(^2\) to Northampton Borough Council (NBC) for the development described above on land to the east of Hardingstone, to the north of Newport Pagnell Road and south of the Brackmills Industrial Estate. The application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) containing a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in Chapter 8.

1.7 Outline planning permission was refused by the Council’s Planning Committee on 15\(^{th}\) May 2014. The relevant Reason for Refusal (RfR) is set out in paragraph 1.10 below.

1.8 HCA submitted their appeal of the refusal on 13\(^{th}\) November 2014.

\(^1\) LPA Reference N/2013/0338.
\(^2\) All matters reserved except means of access.
1.9 I was instructed by NBC on 22\textsuperscript{nd} December 2014 as an external landscape consultant to deal specifically with all landscape matters relating to the appeal and had not had any prior involvement with the application.

**Purpose and Scope of this Evidence**

1.10 This proof of evidence addresses matters relevant to the second RFIR as set out in the decision notice dated 15\textsuperscript{th} May 2014:

- The site is identified in the Northampton Landscape and Green Infrastructure Study 2009 as being of high-medium landscape and visual sensitivity comprising of a rural landscape which has a **stronger visual connection with the surrounding countryside than with Northampton**
  . Furthermore, Policy E7 of the Northampton Local Plan identifies part of the site as **an important skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley**. Public Footpath KN6 runs across the site in a south-easterly direction providing amenity access through the rural landscape. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that any detrimental effects on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities arising from major developments are moderated. The proposed development would have an **urbanising effect and be of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area and would result in the loss of land of significant amenity value**. In the absence of **sufficient information to demonstrate appropriate mitigation** for the impact of the development on the landscape, skyline and rural character of the area the proposal is therefore contrary to Policies E1, E7 and H7 of the Northampton Local Plan and the overarching intentions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Structure of this Evidence**

1.11 In order to test elements of the second RFIR, this PoE will do the following:

- Introduce the relevant national and local planning policy and supporting guidance for the appeal site;
- Establish the landscape character of the appeal site through a detailed Landscape Sensitivity and Character Assessment and the impact upon this character from the proposed development;
- Establish the visual impact of the proposed development on identified receptors;
- Conclude as to whether, having regard to applicable planning policies, the proposed development is acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

\footnote{All emphases which occur in this PoE have been supplied.}
2 Legislative and Policy Context

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 Below I outline the overriding intentions and the relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.2 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF refers to a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

2.3 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF explains the three dimensions of sustainable development. This PoE relates to the environmental role, with the social and economic roles being dealt with by others within the Council’s team. However, it is a given that these strands should not be looked at in isolation and the balance of all three should be considered when assessing a proposed development (see Paragraph 8 of the NPPF).

2.4 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF describes the core planning principles specifically as including: always seeking to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants (point 4), recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (point 5) and contributing to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment (point 7).

2.5 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

2.6 NPPF Paragraphs 56 – 64 set out the requirements for good design, particularly Paragraph 58 which considers character, context and sense of place and Paragraph 61, which states that planning policies should address, inter alia, ‘the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment’.

Local Planning Policy

Local Plan

2.7 The statutory development plan comprises the saved policies of the Northampton Borough Local Plan (NBLP) 1998-2006 together with the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) which was adopted in December 2014. The ‘saved’ policies of the NBLP which are directly relevant to this PoE are:

- Policy E7 – Skyline Development;

2.8 Policy E7 requires that when considering the impact of development upon the landscape, special importance will be attached to its effect upon the
skyline of a number of areas listed within the policy. Of relevance to this appeal, these areas include the land between Houghton and Hardingstone (as seen from the Nene Valley to the north).

2.9 The supporting text to this policy (paragraph 2.21 on page 7) states that:

- ‘It is important that the skylines around the town are safeguarded to ensure that these important elements of the landscape are retained. For any development to be considered appropriate, it should be low rise and should seek to maintain and enhance existing landscape features’;
- ‘The southern skyline from Hardingstone to Great Houghton…appears remarkably free from development’;
- ‘Between Great Houghton and Hardingstone, the skyline provides a strong feature within which Brackmills employment area is contained’.

2.10 The adoption of the WNJCS resulted in a number of the ‘saved’ Local Plan policies being replaced. Of relevance to this appeal, Policy E1 (which is cited in the second RfR) was replaced by BN2 Biodiversity and BN5 the Historic Environment and Landscape.

Core Strategy

2.11 As stated above, Policy E1 of the NBLP has been replaced by policies BN2 and BN5 of the WNJCS with BN5 being the policy relevant to this PoE. Policy BN5 addresses ‘Landscape’ in addition to the ‘Historic Environment’. Policy E1 resisted development which by reason of its siting, design and layout was likely to be detrimental to the character and structure of the landscape.

2.12 The main text of Policy BN5 states that ‘…landscapes will be conserved and enhanced in recognition of their individual and cumulative significance and contribution to West Northamptonshire’s local distinctiveness and sense of place.’ Further, that ‘development in areas of landscape sensitivity will be required to; sustain and enhance … landscape features which contribute to the character of the area including – the skyline and landscape settings of towns and villages; and be sympathetic to locally distinctive landscape features…in order to contribute to a sense of place’.

2.13 The supporting text to this policy (paragraph 10.37, page 121) states that ‘…The relationship between new development and the existing built form is one that requires careful consideration. New development, when designed well, can help to enforce the character of an area which makes it unique. Whilst there are individual examples of good design…the majority of recent housing developments…have compromised the area’s character resulting in areas that are “placeless”.

2.14 Green Infrastructure is also an essential element in helping to manage the environmental impact of continued economic growth (paragraph 10.12). Policy BN1 (page 114) provides that measures to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure provision will, amongst other things, reflect local character through the planting of native
and other climate appropriate species and consideration of natural and cultural heritage features (criteria d).

**Sustainable Urban Extensions**

2.15 The WNJCS proposed a number of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) at each of the towns of Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley. The SUE of relevance to the appeal site is ‘Northampton South of Brackmills’ SUE. The associated policy is Policy N6 of the WNJCS (page 157).

2.16 Policy N6 provides that the development of the SUE will make provision for (amongst other things) the following:

- ‘An integrated transport network focused on sustainable transport modes including … walking and cycling with strong links to adjoining neighbourhoods, employment areas and the town centre’;
- ‘Structural greenspace and wildlife corridors as indicated on the proposals map’; and
- ‘Open space and leisure provision’.

2.17 Policy N6 further provides that development proposals must be accompanied by a masterplan.

2.18 Key passages within the supporting text are:

- ‘The Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (NLS&GIS) indicates that the majority of the site is of a medium sensitivity in respect of development potential’;
- ‘A masterplan will be required to be submitted alongside any proposal to demonstrate how the land use elements positively respond to context, design issues, connectivity and sustainable planning requirements’;
- ‘The potential for development within the SUE to impact on the skyline when viewed from the north and the east must be taken into account and addressed within the masterplan’;
- ‘The creation of a green corridor running from north west to south east across the northern site boundary will help protect existing habitats to the north as well as providing for a new greenway linking existing and proposed urban areas to the wider countryside’;
- ‘A further green corridor should be created along the eastern boundary of the site which will provide a link to the woodland to the north and also ensure that the development creates a positive rural edge to the east’;
- ‘Along part of the western and southern boundaries of the site a landscaped buffer will be required to provide screening between existing residential development and the proposed SUE’; and
‘A public footpath runs through the site and should be incorporated into future development’.
3 Landscape Character

3.1 This section reviews the landscape character of the appeal site and the impact of the proposed development upon it. In order to carry out this exercise:

- I first set out the existing relevant landscape character assessments which form a baseline;
- Following a review of the supporting material and the nature of the proposed development, in order to fully inform this PoE I considered it essential to carry out my own independent and detailed Landscape Sensitivity and Character Assessment (LSCA) for the appeal site. I present the key findings of this assessment in the second part of this section;
- I then describe the proposed development in so far as is relevant to landscape considerations;
- Finally, I assess the impact of the proposed development on the landscape character of the appeal site.

3.2 Local landscape value is an important consideration in respect of the appeal site. As stated in the Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) the fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value’. Natural England’s ‘Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ (October 2014) states that:

‘As the European Landscape Convention acknowledges, “the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas.”. All landscapes matter to someone. By setting down a robust, auditable and transparent, baseline Landscape Character Assessment can not only help us to understand our landscapes, it can also assist in informing judgements and decisions concerning the management of change’.

Landscape Character Assessment

3.3 The regional, national and local landscape character areas are clearly set out in the appellants updated LVIA. Below is a brief summary.

National Character Context

3.4 The study area lies within National Character Area (NCA) 89: Northamptonshire Vales.

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Local Landscape Character

3.5 The Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment (NCLCA) is the source of baseline information on the landscape character of the study area. The landscape character area within which the appeal site falls is LCA 12a Limestone Valley Slopes – Wollaston to Irchester. The characteristics and key features of this landscape are detailed in Appendix 1.

3.6 LCA 12a is part of a wider character type that extends north along the eastern edge of the River Nene.

3.7 The landscape is characterised by ‘gently undulating, productive farmland’ and is ‘generally an open landscape, with long distance views possible, although more enclosed areas can occur where local landform and woodland contain views’.

3.8 The Northampton Current Landscape Character Strategy and Guidelines (NCLCSG, 2009) builds on the NCLCA and should be read in conjunction with that more detailed document. The purpose of the NCLCSG is to provide a strategic framework in respect of Northampton’s landscape character. It does this by ‘providing a brief review of the 19 Landscape Character Types that were identified in the Northamptonshire CLCA and identifies Key Landscape Character Features. It then sets out a Landscape Strategy for each of the Types followed by Generic Landscape Guidelines for the conservation, enhancement, restoration and creation of the distinctive range of landscapes, and landscape elements and features, which are characteristic of each Type’.

3.9 Pages 61-65 of the NCLCSG refer to LCT 12 Limestone Valley Slopes and make the following relevant statements within the Landscape Strategy section:

- ‘New development…should be controlled and encouraged to conserve and enhance the diversity of this settled and productive rural landscape’;
- ‘the changing patterns of openness and enclosure that form an integral part of the diversity of the landscape should remain’;
- ‘It is therefore particularly important that where development is considered, the subtle changes in the landform are responded to and incorporated in a creative and positive way’.

Other Landscape Character Documents

Sustainability Appraisal

3.10 In order to support the selection of the preferred SUE locations a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was carried out to ensure that sustainable development considerations were an integral part of the development of and the final version of the Core Strategy. This

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5 NCLCA page 124.  
6 NCLCSG page 4.  
7 NCLCSG page 62.
process was first published in July 2009. As part of a matrix appraisal process, ‘SA objectives’ were aligned with ‘Issues’ and ‘potential effects’ in a table which addressed each of the preferred SUEs. Those effects were then given a significance score ranging from ‘Significant positive impact’ to ‘Significant negative impact’.\(^8\)

3.11 The ‘Issue’ with relevance to this PoE is ‘Landscape and townscape’, the relevant SA objectives are to:

- Ensure that the quality, character and local distinctiveness of the landscape, and the features within them are conserved and enhanced (original said special and distinctive landscapes and the features within them are conserved...); and
- Enhance the form and design of the built environment.

3.12 Following the JCS examination hearing in April 2013 the Joint Planning Unit (JPU) was asked to address acknowledged shortcomings in the SA, particularly in relation to the reasons for selecting SUE sites and the assessment process. Each SUE site was given a site code. Northampton South of Brackmills SUE was referenced as SA03 and SA53. The individual site is shown on Figure 5 of the Proposed Main Modifications (PMM) and also on Figure 11 of the PMM (together with the alternative sites located around this area of Northampton).

3.13 A matrix appraisal process was carried out as explained above and is detailed in Appendix 11 of the PMM. SA Objective 9 on page A11-91 assesses that:

- This site is within an area that is classed as being of high to medium sensitivity. Therefore development here could have a significant negative effect on landscape character. However, this potential effect is uncertain as the exact impacts on the landscape will depend on factors relating to the specific design and layout of the new development.
- The policy specifies that development proposals for the site must be accompanied by a Masterplan which the supporting text states should demonstrate how the development will positively respond to context and design issues.
- The likely effect of the development is potentially mixed (minor positive and significant negative) and is currently uncertain as effects will depend on the final design of the SUE and the extent to which appropriate design is able to mitigate potential negative landscape impacts and potentially result in enhancements.

**Northamptonshire’s Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite 2005 - 2015**

3.14 In 2006 the River Nene Regional Park – Community Interest Company and Northamptonshire County Council launched the Northamptonshire Environmental...
Character and Green Infrastructure Suite (EC&GIS), an initiative placing the environment at the heart of decision making for Northamptonshire.  

3.15 The EC&GIS is presented online as a suite of documents in the form of maps and documents which give detailed assessments of the historic, biodiversity and landscape character along with a green infrastructure model and strategy for the county presented in the form of ‘Green Infrastructure – Making the connection’.  

3.16 The aforementioned NCLCA forms a core part of this suite of documents in relation to landscape character. The EC&GIS sets out a number of characteristics, opportunities and principles for green infrastructure in and around Northampton. Relevant Strategic Aims and Objectives for Infrastructure in the county are to:

- Define a green infrastructure approach that promotes a functioning landscape of high quality and character that sustains urban and rural populations;
- Conserve and enhance the intrinsic qualities of landscape, historic and biodiversity character; and
- Create distinctive places through a celebration of landscape, historic and biodiversity character.

Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study 2009

3.17 The NLS&GIS covers all land within Northampton Borough plus one parish beyond in each direction. The document does the following:

- Part A - reviews the current baseline, understanding the natural and cultural resources of the area and how they contribute to the setting and character of Northampton;
- Part B - landscape and designated sites identified in Part A are ascribed a level of sensitivity;
- Part C – a Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy considering the opportunities for GI enhancement and consequential recommendations for an improved GI network around the town is proposed; and
- Part D – conclusions.

3.18 The appeal site is identified as being a part of Study Area 3 – South.

3.19 Part A analyses the Visual Baseline of Study Area 3, stating that:

- This ridge forms the southern backdrop to the east side of Northampton and is an important part of its setting;
- There are panoramic views from the ridge looking back towards Northampton.

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9 www.mrrenvironmentalcharacter.org.uk.
10 Green infrastructure – Making the connection, page 42.
11 Prepared by Living Landscape Consultancy Ltd on behalf of the River Nene Regional Park CIC. February 2009.
Otherwise, the horizon is wooded and the town is very ‘green’ in appearance in the summer months.

3.20 Part A section 7 sets out the GI network. According to Figure 21, the appeal site falls between Sub Regional Green Infrastructure Corridors 2 (The Nene – Newham to Northampton) and 7 (Northampton to Salcey).

3.21 Part B of the NLS&GIS assesses the sensitivity with reference to the national level but carried out on a more local level. Landscape and Visual Sensitivity is dealt with in section 8.5 of the NLS&GIS, which states that:

- The following sections identify the overall sensitivity of the landscape within each Study Area based upon the primary landscape characteristics identified. Given the impact of local landform and vegetation on landscape impact at the local (scheme) level, more detailed site-specific appraisals would be required to reach a definitive position on actual sensitivity to change. These would need to be undertaken for a specific development proposal.

3.22 Study Area 3 references the ridge which runs from Cogenhoe to Hunsbury Hill as being visually prominent and therefore a high sensitivity landscape. This ridge is relevant to the appeal site as it is the wider context of the portion between Great Houghton and Hardingstone.\(^{12}\)

3.23 The remainder of the Study Area is described as ‘an open rural landscape of high – medium sensitivity, where medium or large scale development would seem incongruous’.

3.24 High-Medium Sensitivity is defined as:

- ‘These areas contain significant constraints, although smaller-scale development may be appropriate subject to further detailed assessment and appropriate mitigation. They include areas of gently undulating landform which has indivisibility with Northampton and generally contributes to the setting of the town;

- **Areas of rural landscape which have a stronger visual connection with the surrounding countryside than with Northampton** and some areas of landscape which functions as a gap preventing the physical or visual coalescence of Northampton and surrounding settlements are included in this category’.

**Landscape Sensitivity and Character Assessment**

3.25 As explained earlier, I have undertaken my own Landscape Sensitivity and Character Assessment (LSCA).

3.26 The LSCA is structured as follows;

\(^{12}\) As referenced in Policy E7.
- a methodology and assessment criteria for the study are first described;
- this is followed by a description of the existing relevant national and local landscape character areas;
- the LSCA then explains the Local Character Zones (LCZ) which I have determined exist on the appeal site;
- the final section advises on the scale and type of development appropriate in each LCZ.

Findings of the Landscape Sensitivity and Character Assessment

3.27 The appeal site contains three distinct LCZs. I have referred to these as LCZ A, LCZ B and LCZ C. They are mapped on Figure N0300_PL02 and supported by photographs in N0300_LC01-03. They can be summarised as follows:

3.28 The character of LCZ A is of a medium scale landscape, with an undulating landform. The landscape pattern is simple, made up of large open fields but influenced by a variety of surrounding built and natural features. The landscape unit is characterized by predominantly contained views. There are some longer views available over rooftops to the south and south east and there is a visual relationship to LCZ B and to part of LCZ C.

3.29 The character of LCZ B is of a simple, small scale landscape, with a uniform landform. The character area is quite removed from human influences, enclosed by hedgerow boundaries and topography. Although there is some influence from the built form it is buffered by vegetation, topography and a large skyline which contributes to the openness of the LCZ and adds an element of disconnection from the settlement edge. There is stillness to the LCZ. The unit has a strong visual connection to LCZ C.

3.30 The character of LCZ C is that of a simple, still landscape consisting of large fields separated by low, fragmented hedgerows. There is a limited relationship with human scale features due to separation from existing built features by landform and screening vegetation, and the character is heavily influenced by features of the landscape beyond. The dipping landform, vegetation and strong visual connection to the local and wider rural landscape make a clear separation from the built form to the south.

3.31 The appeal site features Public Right of Way KN6 (‘the footpath’) which runs northwest-southeast across LCZ A and along the boundary between LCZs A and B. This footpath provides public access to the countryside and therefore users of it are key visual receptors. The footpath contributes to the overall character of the appeal site. Sequential views along the footpath are shown on Figure N0300_SVP01-08 (App.3)

3.32 Within LCZ A the character of the footpath is initially relatively enclosed by Brackmills County Park to the north and views to the south and east are contained by landform and the settlement edge of Hardingstone. This settlement edge is broken by boundary vegetation. The character of the footpath becomes more open as it heads towards Landimore Road, with long views over the rooftops of Pagnell Court to the ridgeline in
the east. The walking experience could be described as ‘edge of village making the transition into the wider countryside’.

3.33 As the footpath crosses Landimore Road, although it remains open, the enclosed nature of the LCZ (created by the topography, vegetation along Landimore Road and Brackmills Country Park) contains the views to the north and south, and connects the footpath visually and physically to the rural edge. There are no views of the edge of Hardingstone, the northern edge of Wootton is glimpsed and Pagnell Court is visible although there are views over the rooftops to the landscape beyond. Figures N0300_SVP07 & 08 show that to the north the character of the view remains enclosed and rural, to the south the edge of Wootton is visible however this is for a short period before the footpath splits around a remnant hedgerow. To the north of the footpath the view remains enclosed with longer views to the east and the countryside beyond. There are very few manmade features and the character is increasingly rural.

3.34 In summary the footpath has an open, edge of development character, bound by rural fields and woodland and transitioning into the wider countryside. Once to the east of Landimore Road it has strong connections to the wider countryside, no physical or perceptual connection to the edge of Hardingstone, physically and perceptually, and a much reduced connection to the built form of Wootton.

3.35 I consider that local value is attached to the footpath as a source both of recreation and of access from Hardingstone to the countryside and ultimately the wider rural landscape.

3.36 The footpath also has value as part of the wider Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors. It connects into existing corridors from the town centre and Delapre Abbey. These corridors are defined on Figure 21 of the NLS&GIS and although the appeal site is just to the north of the marked route, as stated ‘they are not intended to indicate rigid corridors … but instead identify broad landscape zones …’.

3.37 As explained earlier in this proof, the NLS&GIS establishes that the appeal site has a medium–high sensitivity to medium to large scale development. The findings of my LSCA combined with the baseline information lead me to determine that:

- Overall LCZ A has a Low to Medium sensitivity to development of the nature proposed. Elements such as the openness and transitional nature of the landscape of the LCZ would be sensitive to change. Other aspects such as visibility of existing development, the existing intrusions by transport infrastructure and eroded condition of hedgerows and historic landscape, reduce the landscape sensitivity.
- I consider LCZ B to have an overall Medium to High sensitivity to development of the nature proposed. The smaller landscape field pattern and vegetated field boundaries that often limit distant views, in combination with relatively flat topography reduce the sensitivity of the LCZ to residential development.

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13 NLS&GIS para 7.4.2 page 34.
However, due to the availability of longer views across adjacent fields there is a strong connection to the rural landscape and features to the east. There is a sense of detachment from existing settlement, due to the containment of the site and visual links to the rural surroundings.

- I consider LCZ C to have a High Sensitivity to development of the nature proposed. Although there is some influence from the existing settlement edge on Newport Pagnell Road, there is a clear and open character with strong visual and physical connection to the rural countryside and villages beyond. The local value placed upon this landscape as an open wedge of green land, and the expansive views out to the east, contribute to the sensitivity.

### The Development Proposals

3.38 A central thread of RfR 2 is clearly related to landscape, considering that the proposed development would have;

- ‘an urbanising effect and be of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area and would result in the loss of land of significant amenity value.’

3.39 This section outlines the development proposals in so far as they appear to me to be relevant to this PoE, in order to enable the impact of those proposals upon the established landscape character to be assessed.

3.40 In support of this planning application a set of Proposed Layout Framework Plans (Framework Plans) have been submitted. These are supported by an Illustrative Masterplan (IMP) and a Design and Access Statement (DAS).

3.41 The Framework Plans set out the fundamental principles of the layout of the appeal site, including the character of the development, the scale and type of development, the structure and legibility of the layout, access and movement through the layout, the GI response and SUDs. Whilst the application is for outline planning permission (except for means of access), I understand that the Framework Plans set the cornerstones of the development proposals and will form the basis of any landscape conditions. The Framework Plans indicate that development will be taken to the edges of the appeal site (with no significant buffer provided) across all three proposed ‘character areas’ (discussed below).

3.42 Policy N6 of the WNJCS leaves the layout of the site to be determined by any subsequent application for planning permission, subject to a masterplan being provided. The IMP is the only document I have seen which demonstrates how the appellant proposes to deliver circa 1000 houses and associated development on the appeal site. The IMP shows that housing will be distributed across the whole of the appeal site, enclosing the footpath and up to the eastern boundary\(^{14}\).

\(^{14}\) The buffer shown on the IMP is minimal.
3.43 The DAS indicates that there will be ‘in the region of 1000 dwellings’ provided on the site resulting in a density of between 30 & 35 dwellings per hectare. The DAS and Framework Plans show the appeal site divided into three proposed character areas. These are shown on Dwg. No. 3228_203 Rev A and are defined within the DAS as ‘Permeable Edge’, ‘Permeable Grid’ and ‘Village Core’.\(^\text{15}\) These character areas appear to be based on Figure 16 in the DAS and section 1.3.1 (‘The key drivers that shape the Masterplan’).

3.44 The three character areas are further defined within the DAS as follows:

- **Permeable Edge** – A looser arrangement of buildings and well treed green area that relates to Brackmills Wood and the elevated position along this boundary;
- **Permeable Grid** – More regular groupings of buildings, green space and trees to relate to the existing development of Hardingstone and Wootton;
- **Village Core** – An area with a village character that has its own identity and relates to the countryside to the east.

3.45 Allotments are proposed between the western parcel of the appeal site and The Warren and between the eastern parcel of the appeal site and Brackmills Wood.

**The Impact of the Proposed Development on Landscape Character**

3.46 In my view the appellant has failed to give proper consideration to the landscape characteristics of the appeal site.

3.47 The appeal site is a valuable piece of transitional land between the urban edge of Northampton and the surrounding rural landscape, providing an important green wedge, retaining the visual and physical link to the countryside beyond. This would be lost as a result of the development proposals, especially in LCZ C.

3.48 The sensitivity of the appeal site increases from the edge of Hardingstone to the rural eastern edge. This increase in sensitivity across the site, although acknowledged to a degree\(^\text{16}\) has then not been considered or translated into an appropriate layout by the appellant; the three character areas proposed in the Framework Plans and the DAS\(^\text{17}\) are simplistic and were originally based on landform alone rather than the actual assessed character of the appeal site.

3.49 The Framework Plans and the IMP show that built development will be spread across the whole of the appeal site and will be taken almost right up to each of the site boundaries, with little or no screening between the proposed development and the existing land use. Allotments have been proposed adjacent to The Warren, but whilst these provide an offset, they do not have any significant screening qualities.

\(^{15}\) Primary School and Mixed use local centre are also defined.

\(^{16}\) In section 6.2.3, page 47, 4th paragraph down.

\(^{17}\) DAS Figure 29, page 72.
3.50 The density, scale and layout of the proposed scheme appear, on the IMP, to be uniform across the appeal site.

3.51 In terms of the impact of the proposals upon landscape character, I have identified three consequences which particularly concern me, namely (i) the impact of the proposed scheme upon the skyline as viewed from the north; (ii) the loss of the open nature of the footpath; and (iii) the landscape character impact of the development proposed within LCZ C.

**Impact upon the skyline as viewed from the north**

3.52 With regard to the impact upon the skyline as viewed from the north, Viewpoint 10\(^\text{18}\) shows that the development, across the extent of the appeal site, breaks the skyline to a greater or lesser degree. The greatest impact is from the development proposed within LCZ B, due to the breaks in Brackmills Country Park and the lack of substantial planting along the northern boundary of this LCZ. At year 15, the development will still break the skyline, albeit to a much lesser degree\(^\text{19}\), even following the growth anticipated in Brackmills Wood and the proposed planting.

**Loss of the open nature of the footpath**

3.53 In my opinion inadequate consideration has been given to the value of the footpath in the LVIA, the Framework Plans and the DAS. Whilst it is proposed to retain the footpath along its existing route, the footpath will become, for the most part, an urbanised feature enclosed by built form (as shown in the DAS on page 84). Its character will therefore change from open and transitional, within a natural environment which allows views of the rural landscape to the south and east, to a closed, contained environment, sometimes alongside roads and built form and in close proximity to housing, which no longer experiences the open countryside.

3.54 The nature of the wider connection from Delapre Park to the wider countryside to the south will be changed: access to the countryside will be delayed and the “urbanisation” of the network will increase.

**The landscape impact of the development proposed within LCZ C**

3.55 The landscape character of the appeal site will be significantly changed from a rural setting with strong physical and visual connection to the countryside. The appeal site as a whole will lose its transitional and open character, which responds accordingly to its surroundings.

3.56 In this respect my primary concern is the impact of the development proposed within LCZ C, particularly within the northern and eastern parts and along The Green. The key

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\(^{18}\) LSoCG Dwg No 3943_PM_10_YR1 & YR15.

\(^{19}\) As discussed in detail in Section 4.
features and characteristics of LCZ C (such as the open rural edge, its still character, the increased separation from the built form of Hardingstone and Wootton and the interconnecting views across the fields) are shown in Viewpoint 2 (3943_PP_002_R) and Photomontage 3943_PM_15_YR15, Illustrative Viewpoint 1 Newport Pagnell East and N0300_LC03 of this PoE, which show the rural nature of the eastern part of the appeal site, reduced impact from built form and the importance of the visual connection across the appeal site.

3.57 All of these features are identified as having a high sensitivity to change. I consider that the development proposed within LCZ C will – having regard to the established sensitivity of that landscape - remove completely the intrinsic rural character qualities of this LCZ.

3.58 The Framework Plans do not demonstrate that the development proposals for LCZ C respond either to the characteristics and sensitivity of this part of the appeal site or to the rural edge. In this respect it is notable that section 5.3 of the updated LVIA, ‘Landscape Design and Infrastructure Response’, is intended to list ‘key aspects of the design that were particularly informed by the landscape assessment’ but does not include any reference to the eastern parcel of the appeal site and the need to respond to its specific character features.

3.59 The open visual character across much of the study area is important, as is the function this helps to provide in maintaining a sense of connection to the rural landscape that these settlements were once surrounded by. These visual connections have not been considered in the Framework Plans and supporting DAS. The development of the eastern edge as proposed will result in the complete loss of key visual connections to the rural landscape across large skies from the western parcels and will change to enclosed views along streets or across rooftops.

3.60 Photomontage 3943_PM_15_YR15 also shows that the landscape buffer proposed along the eastern edge of the appeal site does nothing to enhance the characteristics of the site and instead acts simply (and unsuccessfully) as a green wall to cover up the built form.

3.61 As presented in the Framework Plans, the IMP and the DAS, the appeal scheme will result in the complete loss of the openness and rural character of LCZ C and of the connecting views through to the wider countryside. In this respect, the scheme as presented is in my opinion of an unacceptable scale and density.
4 Visual Effects of the Proposed Development

4.1 In this section of the PoE I consider the visual impact of the proposed development. I will first explain my initial concerns as regards the adequacy of the visual impact assessment work undertaken by the appellant. The main focus of this section, however, is my assessment of the visual effects of the proposed development, which leads me to conclude that the appellant has failed to acknowledge the scale of the negative visual impact of the appeal scheme from a number of key locations.

Inadequacies in the Original Visual Impact Assessment Work

4.2 The 'Visual Baseline Correspondence' between LDA Design (the appellant's landscape consultants) and NBC is found in Appendix F.9.1 of the Environmental Statement (ES). Only seven viewpoints were initially offered by the appellant to NBC on 22 November 2011. NBC queried whether there should be four additional viewpoints, of which LDA carried one through to be a representative viewpoint, resulting in a total number of eight viewpoints being assessed.

4.3 Only the title page for Appendix F9.1 was submitted as part of the ES, the actual contents of the appendix were missing and were provided on request as part of this appeal on 4th March 2015.

4.4 The justification for the limited number of viewpoints initially provided was:

- We have checked these locations in the field ... there is very limited visibility at these locations;
- We will describe visibility more widely from these locations in the report but will not assess specific viewpoints at these locations;
- As a general rule we do not take representative viewpoints from locations where it is known there will be no change in the view;
- The purpose for an EIA is to assess whether there are any significant effects on the landscape/views;
- The viewpoints set out (below) have been included due to the possibility of recording significant effects.20

4.5 Upon considering the original visual impact assessment work and carrying out a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) having been instructed by NBC in relation to this appeal in December 2014, I formed the opinion that an inadequate number of viewpoints had

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20 Appendix F9.1 Topography and Viewpoints – email communications.
been assessed as part of the original LVIA given the scale and nature of the proposed development. GLVIA3 states that\textsuperscript{21}:

- ‘The viewpoints used need to cover as a wide range of situations as is possible, \textbf{reasonable} and \textbf{necessary} to cover the \textit{likely} significant effects; and
- The emphasis must always be on proportionality in relation to the \textit{scale and nature} of the development proposal’.

4.6 There was no evidence that any further viewpoints had been put to NBC and then scoped out as part of the EIA process.

4.7 As part of the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (LSoCG), LDA Design and I subsequently agreed the following nine additional viewpoints\textsuperscript{22}:

- 9 – The Nene Way, Barnes Meadow, Northampton;
- 10 – The Nene Way, Northampton Washlands;
- 11,12 and 13 – Along KN6 PRoW (a number of viewpoint locations);
- 14 – Brackmills Woods Country Park\textsuperscript{23};
- 15 – The Green west of Hardingstone Lodge;
- 16 – Public Footpath HW26 Delapre Golf Course; and
- 17 – Public Footpath KM1 west of The Grange.

4.8 Existing views, wirelines and photomontages have been carried out for Viewpoints 9, 10 and 15.

4.9 In reviewing the original visual impact assessment work I also noted that the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)\textsuperscript{24} had taken into account the principal woodlands and settlements, which had been allocated a height of 15m and 7.5m AOD respectively. As explained in the LSoCG, I recommended that a ‘bare earth’ ZTV should be carried out to support the initial selection of viewpoints and the field survey. This is based on my professional experience and the advice in GLVIA3 which advises that:

- ‘the recommended approach is that which: treats the word as ‘bare earth’ and does not take account of potential screening by vegetation or buildings’.\textsuperscript{25}

4.10 LDA Design subsequently submitted an updated Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) on 6\textsuperscript{th} May 2015.

**The Visual Impact of the Proposed Development**

4.11 I agree that, as stated on page 62 of the updated LVIA, ’the extent of large scale visual effects, where the proposed development would form a major alteration to key elements,
features, qualities and characteristics of the view such that the baseline will be fundamentally changed, would generally be limited to locations within or immediately adjacent to the site, where the proposals are clearly visible and occupy a wide extent of the view’. However, although large scale effects are generally experienced close to the appeal site, this does not reduce the need for the appeal scheme to respond to those impacts.

4.12 Paragraphs 3.32 to 3.36 of the GLVIA3 is titled ‘Judging the overall significance of effects’ and makes reference to a number of points relevant to this section of the PoE:

- It should also be made clear that effects not considered to be significant will not be completely disregarded (3.34);
- (In reference to the requirement for a clear and accessible explanation) potential pitfalls are ‘failure to distinguish between the significant effects that are likely to influence the eventual decision and those of lesser concern’ and ‘losing sight of the most glaringly obvious significant effects because of the complexity of the project’ (3.35).

4.13 I have two concerns in relation to the visual impact of the proposed development. First, I disagree with the appellant’s judgement as to the visual impact of the appeal scheme from Viewpoint 10. Secondly, I consider that insufficient weight has been accorded to the visual impact of the proposed development upon "local" receptors, in the Framework Plans, the DAS and the IMP. My concerns in this second respect relate to Viewpoints 2, 11, 12, 13 and 15 and the receptors they represent.

4.14 I shall address each concern in turn.

**Viewpoint 10 –The Nene Way, Northampton Washlands**

4.15 This view is taken from The Nene Way, a long distance walk which is used by both visitors and commuters, within the Northampton Washlands, one of the most important refuges for wetland birds in Europe\(^26\). It is also part of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The viewpoint is approximately 3.2 km from the edge of the appeal site.

4.16 The value of this receptor is also important in landscape terms, as the ridgeline which forms the backdrop to the south is protected under Policy E7 of the NBLP. The ridge forms a green backdrop to the units on Brackmills Industrial Estate and links the Northampton Washlands to the countryside.

4.17 Having regard to the above I consider the sensitivity of this receptor to be **High**. LDA Design rate its sensitivity as Medium to High. The justification for an increased sensitivity is that the Nene Way is a long distance it is sub-regional walk\(^27\) and the site is designated as a SSSI and SPA\(^28\). The location of the viewpoint is promoted for

\(^{26}\) Appendix 2
\(^{27}\) From the coast of The Wash to west of Northampton.
\(^{28}\) Both national ecological designations.
recreational use as well as its ecological value with the views forming a part of that experience, heightened by its surroundings.

4.18 The original and updated ZTV shows that there is the potential for the appeal site to be visible from this location. Paragraph 8.5.52 of the original LVIA refers to the effects on designated landscapes and refers to this viewpoint location and its consideration within Policy E7. The conclusion reached is that ‘the development is unlikely to be visible’ from the Nene Valley, mainly due to Brackmills Wood, even over time and following the implementation of the screening as set out in the Framework Plans.

4.19 Viewpoint 10 and the associated photomontage show clearly that the proposed development will break the important landscape feature of the skyline in a number of locations. This will occur most prominently in relation to the development proposed within LCZ B, with multiple rooflines across the proposed development visible together with the upper storeys of the properties in the foreground at day one.

4.20 At Year 15 the proposed development will still be visible but to a much lesser extent. However, applying the LDA Design methodology, I do not consider the scale of the effect to be negligible even at Year 15.

4.21 The effect remains a fundamental change to the landscape feature and will be heightened during the construction period as a result of the cranes, lighting and movement over a sixteen year period.

4.22 Furthermore, paragraph 5.26 of GLVIA amplifies the value of a landscape feature if it is recognised in policy. The skyline is protected by Policy E7. I therefore consider that inadequate consideration has been given to the visual impact of the proposed development from Viewpoint 10. In my opinion the effect that the proposed development has on this receptor is to introduce the perception of continuous development along this ridgeline, a landscape feature protected by a policy which references views from the Nene Valley. I consider that the viewpoint has a high sensitivity; coupled with a low magnitude of effect that would suggest a moderate to slight significance according to the LDA Design ‘sliding scale’.

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29 Appendix 2 Northampton Washlands Interpretation Board and Leaflet.
30 LSSCG, Dwg. No. 3943_EX_10 &PM_10_YR1 & YR15_.
31 Updated LVIA, Summary of Effects table, page 78.
32 Page 6, scale of effect updated LVIA.
33 The stated construction period – Updated LVIA page 38.
34 Page 9, Updated LVIA.
The Impact on ‘Local’ Receptors

Viewpoints 2 and 15 - The Green (to the southeast of the appeal site and to the west of Hardingstone Lodge)

4.23 These views are from The Green, a minor road between the edge of Wootton and Great Houghton. As acknowledged in the updated LVIA, the receptors along The Green and Landimore Road suffer a large scale effect of Major-Moderate significance.

4.24 From these receptors the proposed development will substantially encroach into the countryside. I consider that this visual impact is particularly significant given the related effect upon landscape character. One of the key characteristics of this landscape is the interconnecting views. These will be diminished by the proposed development, which will have the effect of enclosing the view and materially changing the experience of the receptor from that of primarily rural environment to prominent built development, having an urbanising effect. The photomontage at Year 15 shows that the development will still be visible over the planting proposed along the eastern edge. The proposed screening does not succeed in significantly reducing the impact of the development at this location. Accordingly, I consider that the proposals for the appeal site do not respond appropriately to the Adverse impact suffered with Major–Moderate significance. In particular, the proposals for the eastern parcel of the appeal site fail to provide an adequate response, the layout instead showing development across the totality of LCZ C.

Viewpoints 11, 12 and 13 – Along PRoW KN6

4.25 The updated LVIA discusses the effects of the proposed development on the footpath on page 71. I am in agreement with the overall findings that the effects would be large scale and of major significance and adverse. The findings of the assessment in relation to the users of the footpath are that ‘[v]iews across arable fields to existing development, woodland and more distant land would change to views of the proposed green broad spine enclosed by housing’.

4.26 It is then stated that ‘[t]he proposed development would result in some beneficial effects, creating a diverse urban landscape incorporating the green corridor’.

4.27 I do not agree that the visual impact of the proposed development upon the footpath is beneficial in any way. Viewpoints 11, 12 and 13 show that although the residential edge of Northampton is visible in all views to a greater or lesser degree, the openness of the footpath, its transitional character and the views beyond the appeal site boundary to the south and east will be lost and the settlement will encompass the footpath.

35 Figure 9.2 and paragraph 6.4.3.
36 Page 71, 2nd paragraph updated LVIA.
37 Page 71 5th paragraph updated LVIA.
4.28 I therefore agree that on balance the change from the existing views to more enclosed views would be of High magnitude, Major significance and Adverse. Again, in my opinion the design proposals fail to respond adequately to the significant adverse visual impact of the proposed development.

**Conclusion in Relation to the Visual Impact of the Proposed Development**

4.29 The proposed development as shown in Viewpoints 2 and 15 erodes the strong visual connection with the rural landscape which the appeal site provides, both physically and visually diminishing the countryside at this point and creating a more prominent perception of the settlement edge. Receptors along The Green will lose the open view of the rural edge and the setting of the built edge of Hardingstone and Wootton. The view will change to one in which housing is the central feature, detracting from the existing experience. The photomontage view\(^\text{38}\) shows that this impact will not be adequately reduced by the proposed screening.

4.30 The visual impact of the proposed development upon receptors along the footpath will be a complete change in the rural view of the open edge of Hardingstone and Wootton, and removal of the views across large skies to the east and south. The visual experience of the footpath user will be fundamentally altered, from the freedom of walking in the rural edge and open countryside to the restricted nature of the enclosed urbanised built form. Whilst the appeal scheme proposes the retention of the footpath, I consider that insufficient regard has been paid to its existing characteristics, especially the views which contribute very significantly to the value of the user’s experience.

4.31 I consider that the level of visibility of the proposed development from Viewpoint 10 in the Nene Valley fails to safeguard the skyline as a view free from built development along the ridgeline (as is currently the case). As stated in Policy E7 of the NBLP, ‘the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone provides a strong feature which contains the Brackmills estate to the north’. It is my opinion that the proposed development will erode the strength of this skyline. It will appear broken and disjointed, especially during the construction period and prior to the proposed planting becoming mature.

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\(^{38}\) LSoCG Dwg No. 3943_PM_15_YR15.
5 Evaluation of the Proposals against Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.1 Having identified the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF in paragraphs 2.1 - 2.6 of this PoE, I will now evaluate the appeal scheme’s performance against them in turn.

5.2 The following aspects of the core principles at NPPF para 17 are relevant here:

- ‘Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment’;
- ‘always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings’;
- ‘take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it.’

5.3 High quality design is of course extremely subjective. However, a central thread of good design is the extent to which design reflects character and context. I have explained above the respects in which the appeal scheme proposals fall short in their appreciation of character and context. In summary:

- failure to preserve key characteristics such as openness, rural character and interconnectivity with the rural edge, in LCZ C;
- failure to respect the character of footpath KN6 through the site; and
- failure to protect the important skyline feature when viewed from the north.

5.4 In relation to Section 7 of the NPPF "Requiring good design", paragraph 56 recognises good design as one of the central planks of sustainable development. Paragraph 58 sets out the need for a response to local character and a reflection of the identity of local surroundings. Paragraph 61 requires integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment. Paragraph 64 states that planning permission should be refused for poorly designed schemes which fail to take the available opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

5.5 Clearly then, response to local character and integration with context and the wider natural environment are essential threads of good design. In this respect and for the reasons set out above, I consider that the Framework Plans, the IMP and the DAS put forward an inappropriate response.

5.6 In relation to NPPF paragraph 109 the key point is protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. As established in paragraph 3.2 of this proof, value can be attributed to
everyday landscapes. It follows from my assessment as set out above that the appeal scheme fails to protect or enhance the value of the landscape in which the appeal site is situated.

Policy E7

5.7 As discussed, Policy E7 and its supporting text is a saved policy from the NBLP and requires that when considering the impact of development upon the landscape, special importance be attached to the effect upon the skyline of a number of areas listed within the policy. Of relevance to this appeal, these areas include the land between Houghton and Hardingstone (as seen from the Nene Valley to the north). Contrary to the assertion in the original LVIA that the proposed development will not break the skyline, it is apparent that it will. The proposed development therefore fails to maintain (still less enhance) this existing landscape feature, as the supporting text to Policy E7 requires.39

Policy N6

5.8 As discussed, Policy N6 and its supporting text in the WNJCS set out the criteria which should be satisfied by any development proposal for the SUE. These are set in paragraph 2.18 of this PoE.

5.9 In respect of Policy N6 my observations are that:

- The IMP fails to address the potential for development within the SUE to impact on the skyline when viewed from the north and east. As explained above, the proposed development will have a negative impact on views of the skyline and the proposed screening is inadequate.

- As to the requirement in the supporting text to Policy N6 that ‘a green corridor should be created along the eastern boundary of the site which will … ensure that the development creates a positive rural edge to the east’, the photomontage from Viewpoint 15 demonstrates that the existing positive rural edge will be lost and will be replaced with built form, creating an urban edge where previously one did not exist.

- Paragraph 12.49 of the supporting text requires that the masterplan ‘demonstrates how the land use elements positively responds to context, design issues, connectivity and sustainable planning requirements’. As discussed above, I do not consider that the Framework Plans, the IMP or the DAS respond positively to the context of the footpath or to the rural character, in particular, of LCZ C.

- Paragraph 12.46 of the supporting text requires a landscaped buffer to provide screening along part of the southern and western boundaries. This is only proposed in the form of allotments to the back of The Warren, which will not act as an appropriate visual screen.

39 Supporting text to Policy E7.
Policy BN5

5.10 This policy is outlined at paragraphs 2.12 and 2.13 above. As regards the requirements of this policy, as explained above the Framework Plans compromise the area's character and result in a ‘placeless’ proposal which does not sustain or enhance the character of the surrounding area.
6 The Appeal Site's Capacity for Development

6.1 Having regard to the findings of this PoE as set out above, I will now comment on what I consider to be an appropriate level of development within the identified LCZs on the appeal site.

**LCZ A**

6.2 Recognising that LCZ A has been assessed as having a low to medium sensitivity to development and is influenced to a degree by the adjacent built edge of Hardingstone, in my view it is appropriate to conclude that the principle of development in this LCZ is acceptable, especially adjacent to the existing built edge (i.e. restricting settlement sprawl across the rural landscape). However, I consider that in order to be appropriate, development would need to consider the context of the footpath in more detail, the appropriateness of allotments as screening and the depth of buffer to Brackmills Wood. The appeal scheme is unsatisfactory in these respects.

**LCZ B**

6.3 With regard to LCZ B, it has a medium sensitivity to development, due to its detachment from existing development, the enclosed nature of the site and the stronger connection to the rural landscape to the east. This PoE and the appellant’s photomontages have established the impact which the proposed development would have upon the skyline (when viewed from the north) and the impact on the character of the footpath from the scale of the development proposed within this LCZ. I consider that whilst some development in LCZ B would be acceptable,(in association with development in LCZ A) it would need to be of a smaller scale so as to conserve the character of the footpath, protect the skyline as viewed from the north and retain the rural views through the LCZ out to the east.

**LCZ C**

6.4 LCZ C has been assessed as being of high sensitivity to development of this nature, due to its strongly rural character and its visual and physical connection with the countryside to the south and east. As is evident in the submitted photomontages, it provides a level of separation between the settlements of Hardingstone and Wootton which, along with the other key characteristics will be wholly lost as a result of the appeal scheme. I do not
conserves (still less promotes or enhances\textsuperscript{40}) the existing rural views and key characteristics of the landscape.

6.5 A much reduced proposal could be acceptable in LCZ C. It would be necessary to restrict development to the southern edge of the LCZ along The Green, retaining a clear and open green swathe through into LCZ B and conserving those key interconnecting views. Development would also need to be set back from the eastern edge of LCZ C so as to reduce the effect of blurring the settlement edges of Hardingstone and Wootton and encroaching into the countryside.

\textsuperscript{40} Supporting text to policy E7.
7 Conclusions

7.1 I consider that the specific characteristics of the appeal site, particularly those of the eastern parcel (LCZ C), have not been established by the Appellant in enough detail to successfully inform its proposals.

7.2 In my opinion the appeal scheme as presented in the Framework Plans would introduce an inappropriate scale, level, density and type of development onto LCZ B and LCZ C within the appeal site, which would result in an inappropriate and harmful urbanising effect.

7.3 The proposed development breaks the important skyline as viewed from the Nene Valley to the north as represented in Viewpoint 10. The original LVIA judged that the skyline would not be broken and therefore the proposals did not consider this impact fully, resulting in the proposed development being of an inappropriate scale and layout.

7.4 Although the footpath has been retained, its character - and therefore the experience of the user - is seriously impacted upon. The existing characteristics and views are replaced with a green corridor surrounded by built form and only punctuated with green spaces along the route. The local value of the footpath as an immediate connection from the edge of Hardingstone into the countryside will be compromised.

7.5 The Appellant’s failure to inform its proposals by an adequate appreciation of the characteristics of the appeal site has also resulted in a proposed scheme which inadequately acknowledges the strong rural character of the eastern parcel of the site and the importance of preserving the same. That parcel functions as a green boundary to the edge of Hardingstone and Wootton and although there is some evidence of development within views from the LCZ, the rural landscape is the dominant influence. The effect of the proposed development is the loss of the interconnecting views, the strongly rural character of the LCZ and the existing settlement edges of Hardingstone and Wootton.

7.6 I disagree with the conclusion in paragraph 7.5 of the updated LVIA, which states that ‘the changes in character and significance of effects as described above are the inevitable effects of development in accordance with policy N6 of the adopted Core Strategy’. The level of change in character and the significance of effects could plainly be significantly reduced through a more appropriate design proposal.

7.7 Taking account of the above, it is my view that the proposals amount to an over development of the appeal site and are simply not appropriate in their context. The layout fails to pay adequate regard to its landscape setting by way of design response.
7.8 It follows that the proposed development also fails to satisfy the requirements of paragraphs 17, 109 and Section 7 of the NPPF, Policies N6 and BN5 of the WNJCS and Policy E7 of the NBLP, as discussed in Section 5 above.

7.9 I have taken account in writing my evidence that the planning application is for outline planning permission only. However, the IMP is the only suggestion provided by the Appellant as to how 1,000 houses could be brought forward on the appeal site in accordance with the Framework Plans. I consider that the development shown in the Framework Plans and the IMP would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape. A lesser amount of development could be acceptable on the appeal site, following the principles set out above in Section 6, but my professional opinion is that the appeal scheme would have such adverse landscape impacts that it should be refused.