Land South of Brackmills

Proof of Evidence of
Philip Brashaw BSc (Hons) BLD CMLI
On behalf of the Appellant

Landscape and Visual Matters

PINS Ref: 2228866
LPA Ref: N/2013/0338

May 2015
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Version: 1.5
Version date: 19 May 2015
Comment Final
This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2008
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1.0 Qualifications and Experience

1.1. Professional Qualifications

1.1.1. I am a Landscape Architect and I have a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Environmental Science from the University of East Anglia and a Bachelor degree in Landscape Design from the University of Manchester. I was elected as a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute in 1990. I am an Associate at LDA Design.

1.2. Experience

1.2.1. I have 28 years experience as a Landscape Architect and am a core member of LDA Design’s development planning team. My experience ranges from strategic planning and masterplanning, to landscape character assessment, landscape and environmental impact assessment, design, implementation and landscape management. I have been responsible for a wide range of projects including the planning, design and implementation of residential and other developments, and projects relating to health, business, leisure, community, employment, energy, infrastructure and minerals. The major proportion of my work involves advising landowners, developers and planning authorities on environmental and development issues and the landscape planning of new developments.

1.2.2. Much of my work is concerned with the design and planning of residential development, particularly urban extensions. A key issue is often the integration of new development into its surrounding context, where the ability to analyse and understand the urban and rural context within which a site is located is essential.

1.3. LDA Design

1.3.1. LDA Design is one of the UK’s leading design and environmental consultancies providing services in masterplanning, urban design, landscape architecture, environmental planning, architecture, energy and ecology. We work on development and regeneration projects of all kinds in both urban and rural locations, ranging in scale from regional studies to individual small development sites. Our work covers all stages of the development process from strategies and
appraisals through visioning and design to implementation and ongoing management of sites.

1.3.2. We work for a wide range of private and public sector clients and provide advice to national and local government, English Heritage, Design Council CABE, developers and others on design and sustainable development. The practice has won numerous design and other awards for its work.

1.3.3. We have extensive experience of the assessment of landscape and visual impacts arising from proposed developments. We contributed to recent and current changes to guidance (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Managers, 2013) (hereafter referred to as GLVIA) which features our work as examples of good practice) and Scottish Natural Heritage's Visual representation of Wind Farms Best Practice Guidance 2014.
2.0 **Introduction**

2.1 **Scope of Evidence**

2.1.1 My evidence addresses Reason for Refusal 2 of the decision notice issued by Northampton Borough Council on 15 May 2014. Reason 2 is concerned with matters of landscape and visual impact and amenity, and these are the subject of my proof.

2.1.2 Other members of my client's team address Reason 1.

2.2 **Involvement in the Project**

2.2.1 I have been involved in this site for over 10 years. LDA Design provided masterplanning, landscape design and assessment and other services for a consortium of housing developers and English Partnerships (now the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)) on the design and promotion of Wootton Strategic Development Area (SDA), from about 2004 until 2009. The proposed SDA comprised up to approximately 4,500 dwellings and associated development and infrastructure within the Appeal site and land to the east (including the full extent of the land allocated for 1,300 dwellings by Policy N6 (Northampton South of Brackmills SUE) of the adopted Joint Core Strategy (CD-28) (hereafter referred to as the Core Strategy)) and south extending along the western edge of Wootton as far south as Grange Park. I worked on landscape and visual and other environmental and design matters.

2.2.2 Figure 11 showing the extent of the SDA previously proposed, the allocated SUE and the Appeal site is included in Appendix 1. Figure 11 also shows the area of a residential area under construction. This is Wootton Fields which has outline and reserved matters consent for 300 dwellings (S/2007/0813/PO and S/2011/0989/MAR). Phase 1 (the northern most section adjacent to Newport Fagnell Road) is currently under construction but baseline maps and aerial photographs show the site as green fields.

2.2.3 I have been involved on this project (Land South of Brackmills) since LDA Design was appointed in 2011 to provide masterplanning and landscape services on the
planning application which is the subject of this Appeal. I provided landscape advice in relation to the masterplan and was involved in preparation of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which formed part of the Environmental Statement submitted with the planning application (Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement Volume 2 and Volume 3 (CD-6). I have subsequently prepared an updated LVIA in support of the Appeal due to Reason for Refusal 2, the length of time that the Third Edition has been in place and because some aspects of the baseline environment will have changed since the submitted LVIA was prepared, as stated in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (paragraph 1.1.5) (CD-17).

2.3. **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

2.3.1. The assessment and design process was iterative. The LVIA which formed part of the EIA submitted with the planning application was prepared in 2012 following the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 2nd Edition* (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2002). New guidelines were published in 2013 (*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition* (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) (GLVIA)) and my updated LVIA follows the new guidelines. My updated LVIA also provides an up to date assessment taking into account any changes to the baseline environment, and is informed by further detailed information comprising a detailed Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study and photomontages, and includes new photography.

2.3.2. The updated LVIA (CD-134) was submitted to the Council on 6 May 2015 and to PINS on 12 May in advance of submissions of Proofs of Evidence.

2.4. **Relevant matters of agreement**

2.4.1. A number of matters are agreed in the Landscape SoCG and the Principal SoCG (CD18) which are relevant to my proof as follows:

- Description of the proposed development (Principal SoCG).
• The Principal SoCG names the Illustrative Masterplan, Design and Access
  Statement (DAS) and Parameters Plans that the assessment of environmental
  effects within the ES was based upon. My updated LVIA was also based on
  these.

• Agreement of the 4km study area for my updated LVIA (Landscape SoCG).

• Agreement of the 17 representative viewpoints used in my updated LVIA
  (Landscape SoCG).

• Agreement of six of the 17 representative viewpoints from which I produced
  wireframes and photomontages of the proposed development. These are
  included in Appendix 6 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17) and the method for
  producing them is provided in Appendix 7 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17).

• References to the Officer’s Report (CD-61) and Inspector’s Report (CD-44) in
  both the Principal SoCG and Landscape SoCG.

• The Development Plan is summarised in the Principal SoCG

• Baseline information relevant to the updated LVIA and my proof as follows:
  – Published documentation on landscape and townscape character
    (Landscape SoCG).
  – Description of the proposed development site and surroundings including
    landscape features within the site (Landscape SoCG and Principal SoCG).
  – Relevant landscape designations (Landscape SoCG).
  – The approximate height of trees within Brackmills Wood today is 8 – 10m
    (Landscape SoCG para 3.6.4).

• Agreement of nil detriment effects on Hardingstone Conservation Area
  (Principal SoCG para 8.4)

• Agreement that significant effects would occur to the following landscape or
  visual receptors (Landscape SoCG para 2.1.4):
  – landscape character of the appeal site in accordance with policy N6 of the
    Core Strategy; and
views along the public footpath (KN6) which crosses diagonally through the site.

• Agreement that the following visual receptors have potential to be affected by the Proposed Development (Landscape SoCG para 3.7.5) (significance to be tested in my updated LVIA):
  – Settlements – people in publicly accessible areas within Northampton close to the Appeal site.
  – Public Rights of Way – users of KN6 where it crosses the Appeal site.
  – Publicly accessible land - users of Brackmills Country Park to the north of the Appeal site.
  – Roads - users of roads within the Appeal site and adjoining the Appeal site boundary (Landimore Road, Newport Pagnell Road and The Green).

• Agreement that the proposed development would be visible from other visual receptors but effects on them would not have the potential to be significant (Landscape SoCG para 3.7.6).

2.4.2. I have assessed effects on landscape and visual receptors in detail in my updated LVIA and conclude that the only receptors that would experience significant and adverse landscape or visual effects would be locally to the site as follows:

• Part of landscape character area 12a Wollaston to Irchester within and close to the Appeal site;

• Local roads outside the urban area within 0.5km of the Appeal site (Newport Pagnell Road, The Green and Landimore Road); and

• Public Right of Way KN6 which runs through the Appeal site.

2.4.3. I discuss this further in section 7.4 of my proof.
3.0 Policy and Guidance

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In this section I review aspects of design and landscape policy which are relevant to Reason for Refusal 2. A key point to note is that the site and land to the east is allocated for in the region of 1,300 dwellings plus associated development under Policy N6 of the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (JCS).

3.1.2 Given that Mr Tulley deals with the policy context in his proof I do not repeat the policy analysis here, except where it is relevant to Reason for Refusal 2.

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework Policies

3.2.1 The ministerial foreword to the NPPF makes clear that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development, and that design is an important component of this. Paragraph 17 lists twelve core land use planning principles underpinning both plan making and decision-taking, which include that planning should (inter alia):

- “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;
- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk ... and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution...;
- promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);
- conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;
• actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and
• ... deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs."

3.2.2. Section 7 of the NPPF focuses on good design and includes the following:

“56. The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.”

“58. ... Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:
• 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;
• establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
• optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
• respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
• create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
• are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”

“61. ... planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.”

“64. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”

3.2.3. Section 11 of the NPPF is headed ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’. Paragraph 109 states:

“The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by [inter alia] protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...”
3.2.4. Paragraph 113 states:

“Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance…”

3.2.5. Following on from the Core Principle regarding “character of different areas” and “recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”, some aspects of landscape character are dealt with under section 12, which relates to the historic environment. Paragraph 126 indicates that “local planning authorities should take into account … the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

3.3. **West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (CD28)**

3.3.1. The West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee adopted the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) on 15 December 2014.

**Section 12.0 Northampton**

3.3.2. Under the heading Northampton Today, paragraph 12.6 refers to the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study. It states that:

“The distinctive landform, which provides views from/to Northampton including: the Limestone ridge to the south-east between Whiston and Hunsbury; … are all also areas of high sensitivity.”

3.3.3. Whiston is a village in a rural setting over 7km north east of the Appeal site and Hunsbury Hill is a Country Park within the urban area of Northampton approximately 3km west of the Appeal site. Figure 12 in Appendix 1 illustrates the approximate alignment of the ridge and it can be seen how the ‘ridge’ is a broad area of rolling landform elevated above the Nene valley which lies to the north, typical of the landform within this part of Northamptonshire, and is not a sharp or abrupt ridge. Development within the appeal site would extend the existing pattern of development on the ridge, on land adjoining the urban area.
3.3.4. I discuss the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study in section 3.6 below.

**Policy N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills SUE**

3.3.5. Policy N6 states:

“The boundary of the Northampton South of Brackmills SUE is shown on the policies map (Figure 5). The development will make provision for:

a) in the region of 1,300 dwellings;
b) a primary school;
c) a local centre to include local retail facilities of an appropriate scale (including a small convenience store), health care services and community facilities;
d) an integrated transport network focused on sustainable transport modes including public transport, walking and cycling with strong links to adjoining neighbourhoods, employment areas and the town centre;
e) structural greenspace and wildlife corridors as indicated on the policies map (Figure 5);
f) the creation of a landscape buffer to the south west of the site as indicated on the policies map (Figure 5);
g) archaeological and ecological assessment of the site and required mitigation;
h) open space and leisure provision; and
i) flood risk management including surface water management and from all other sources.

Necessary infrastructure is required to be phased alongside the delivery of the development.

Development proposals must be accompanied by a masterplan.”

3.3.6. The supporting text states that:

“Policy N6 below details the required elements of development. 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.” (Paragraph 12.49.) This statement acknowledges the importance of considering all the relevant issues that shape a sustainable masterplan. The Appeal proposals have been developed through an extensive period of assessment and consultation, which have established the contextual issues to the
Appeal site, considered them and developed a positive design response to them, as presented in the Illustrative Masterplan and DAS.

3.3.7. Figure 5 (inset 11) of the Core Strategy shows the boundary of the Northampton South of Brackmills SUE (Policy N6) and the location of Indicative Structural Green Space along part of the southern boundary, and the western, northern and eastern boundaries of the SUE, referred to in items e) and f) of the policy. Supporting text at paragraph 12.46 explains this in more detail:

“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 southern and western boundaries of the site a landscaped buffer will be required to provide screening between existing residential development and the proposed SUE.”

3.3.8. I discuss compliance with this part of Policy N6 in relation to Indicative Structural Green Space in sections 6.7 and 7.6 of my proof.

3.3.9. The main text of Policy N6 does not refer to the issue of the effects of development within the SUE on views of the Limestone ridge or elevated land that are mentioned in supporting paragraph 12.6 (see above) and in saved Local Plan Policy E7 which is referred to in the second Reason for Refusal (see below). However, paragraph 12.46 of the text supporting Policy N6 does discuss views of the skyline as follows:

“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 for the site.”

3.3.10. I discuss effects on the elevated skyline when viewed from the north and the east in sections 6.2 and 7.7 of my proof.
Policy SA – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

3.3.11. Policy SA states:

“When considering development proposals the relevant council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the national planning policy framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals for sustainable development will be approved and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this local plan (and, where relevant, with policies in other local plans and neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the appropriate council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise - taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that framework indicate that development should be restricted.”

Policy S5 – Sustainable Urban Extensions

3.3.12. Policy S5 states:

“Outside the existing urban areas development will be focused on sustainable urban extensions to the urban areas.

Sustainable urban extensions will be provided at:

1. Northampton

....

e) Northampton South of Brackmills (1,300 dwellings, local employment opportunities)
The broad location of each sustainable urban extension is shown on the key diagram (Figures 2 and 3). The boundary of each sustainable urban extension is shown on the policies map (Figure 5).”

**Policy S10 – Sustainable Development Principles**

3.3.13. Policy S10 states:

“Development will: …

i) Protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment …

j) Promote the creation of Green Infrastructure networks ...”

**Policy H1 – Housing Density and Mix and Type of Dwellings**

3.3.14. Policy H1 states:

“... Housing developments will be expected to make the most efficient use of land having regard to the following considerations:

a) The location and setting of the site;

b) The existing character and density of the local area;

c) Accessibility to services and facilities;

d) Proximity to public transport routes;

e) The implications of density for affordability and viability;

f) The living conditions provided for future residents; and

g) The impact on the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Development within the sustainable urban extensions will be expected to achieve a minimum average densities of 35 dwellings per hectare.”

3.3.15. Paragraph 9.13 which supports Policy H1 states:

“Policy H1 adopts a design-led approach to determine densities on a site by site basis having regard to the objective of securing the efficient use of land and the particular characteristics of a site and the area in which it is located. It is ultimately good design that should determine the densities that are adopted for a particular site. Notwithstanding this design led approach, it is important that minimum densities are achieved within the proposed SUEs to reduce the amount of greenfield land that needs to be released for development. For this reason Policy H1 expects the allocated SUEs to achieve average minimum densities of 35 dwellings per hectare. The
calculation of minimum average densities will be based on the net developable area of the allocated SUE site.”

3.3.16. The quantity and density of dwellings proposed is described in section 7.4 of my proof.

Section 10.0 Built and Natural Environment

3.3.17. The introduction to Section 10.0 and supporting text to Policy BN1 introduces the Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite, version 2.2, April 2008 (CD-101) and the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study 2009 (CD-94). These are not Supplementary Planning Documents as agreed in paragraphs 3.3.4 and 3.4.1 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17), and are for guidance where referred to in Policy.

3.3.18. I discuss the Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite, version 2.2, April 2008 in section 3.5 of my proof.

3.3.19. I discuss the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study in section 3.6 of my proof but note here that I do not consider that the method, assessment and conclusions are robust and of sufficient detail to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the landscape and visual sensitivity of the Appeal site to the proposed development. It is also important to note that it was not subject to public consultation as agreed in the Landscape SoCG (CD-17).

Policy BN1 – Green Infrastructure Connections

3.3.20. Policy BN1 addresses how Green Infrastructure (GI) will be conserved, managed and enhanced. Paragraph 10.9 states that GI is defined as:

“a network comprising the broadest range of multi-functional green spaces, their connections and other environmental features including but not limited to parks, private green spaces, woodlands, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and disturbed grounds, rivers and canals and their banks, roads and rail corridors, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards.”
3.3.21. Policy BN1 states:

“... Measures to enhance and provide new Green Infrastructure provision will: ...

(c) be designed to the highest quality in terms of appearance, access provision and biodiversity enhancement and protection;

(d) reflect local character through the planting of native and other climate appropriate species and consideration of natural and cultural heritage features;...”

3.3.22. Supporting paragraph 10.12 states that the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study by Living Landscapes (2009) identifies GI assets and opportunities, and provides a framework for planning GI at the site specific level, particularly advising how development can enhance the GI networks.

3.3.23. I describe how the proposed Illustrative Masterplan provides extensive new Green Infrastructure provision in compliance with Policy BN1, and also N6, of the Core Strategy in section 6.3.

**Policy BN2 Biodiversity**

3.3.24. Policy BN2 of the Core Strategy discusses biodiversity which, while important to the proposed development and addressed within the planning application documents, has not been cited as a reason for refusal. It states that:

“Development that will maintain and enhance existing designations and assets or deliver a net gain in biodiversity will be supported....”

3.3.25. The Policy is focused on protecting and enhancing designated biodiversity resources and sites of ecological importance. In section 6.6 of my proof I describe how the Appeal site has limited ecological value (as agreed in the Principal SoCG (CD-18 paragraph 8.10)) and the proposed development will provide improved habitats for a wider range of species than currently exist on the site, in the form of substantial areas of new Green Infrastructure and improved connections for wildlife through the site and into adjacent areas.

**Policy BN5 – the Historic Environment and Landscape**

3.3.26. Policy BN5 addresses the historic environment and landscape. Supporting text at paragraph 10.32 states that:
“In addition to natural features, such as green infrastructure networks and habitats, the historic environment is an important element of the overall landscape sensitivity and reflects human interaction with geology, topography and the natural environment over time.”

3.3.27. In relation to landscape, this policy addresses how the historic environment has shaped the landscape and contributes to overall landscape sensitivity. It does not address landscape sensitivity in its broader sense (i.e. considering a number of other aspects which I will discuss later in my proof).

3.3.28. The historic environment is addressed within the planning application documents (Environmental Statement Chapter 6 Cultural Heritage (CD-6)) and effects on it have not been cited as a reason for refusal, and are not relevant to my proof except where it contributes to landscape character and sensitivity.

3.3.29. In relation to areas of landscape sensitivity Policy BN5 states:

“... development in areas of landscape sensitivity ... will be required to:
1. Sustain and enhance the heritage and landscape features which contribute to the character of the area including:

... c) the skyline and landscape settings of towns and villages:

... 3. Be sympathetic to locally distinctive landscape features, design styles and materials in order to contribute to sense of place

...”

3.3.30. I discuss effects of the proposals on the skyline and setting of Northampton in sections 7.4 and 7.5, and matters of design in section 6.0 of my proof.

3.4. **Northampton Local Plan 1993-2006, Adopted 1997**

3.4.1. Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy (CD-28) identifies which previously saved policies of the Northampton Local Plan have been replaced by Core Strategy policies. Two policies referred to in Reason for Refusal 2 have been replaced as follows:
### Previously Saved Policy in the Adopted Northampton Local Plan 1997

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### Policy E7 Skyline Development

**3.4.2.** The only saved policy of the Northampton Local Plan that is relevant to my proof is Policy E7 which is referred to in the second reason for refusal. Mr Tulley demonstrates in his proof that Policy E7 should be given limited weight which I agree with.

**3.4.3.** Policy E7 is included in the Local Plan that was adopted in 1997. Since then many notable things will have changed in the townscape of Northampton and its landscape setting. For example, it was written before Brackmills Wood was planted and Brackmills Industrial Estate developed to its current extent; two factors that result in significant change to the townscape and landscape (and importantly the skyline) relating to the Appeal site.

**3.4.4.** Policy E7 states:

“*When considering, in the context of policy E1, the impact of proposed development upon the landscape, special importance will be attached to its effect upon the skyline of the following areas:*

*between Great Houghton and Hardingstone (as seen from the Nene Valley to the north)*

*...*
3.4.5. As noted above and in Mr Tulley’s proof, policy E1 has been replaced and policy E7 can no longer be considered in its context.

3.4.6. The supporting text to Policy E7 states:

“The topography of Northampton is another important feature which has influenced the growth of the town. The areas of major expansion in the east and south have both been developed in the context of the major characteristics of the landscape. The southern skyline from Hardingstone to Great Houghton and Delapre Park to Hunsbury Hill appears remarkably free from development. ... 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. ... Between Great Houghton and Hardingstone, the skyline provides a strong feature within which Brackmills employment area is contained. ...” (Paragraph 2.21.)

3.4.7. I discuss this further in section 7.4 of my proof where I demonstrate that, today, the skyline is likely to be much less visually sensitive to the Appeal proposals and the accepted allocation by Core Strategy Policy N6 than it was in 1997.

3.4.8. I assess effects on visual receptors within the Nene Valley and Northampton to the north of the valley in my updated LVIA (CD-134) and conclude that effects on all receptors in this area would be limited to small areas and would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance during construction and operation. This includes users of the Nene Way which runs along the River Nene across the 4km LVIA study area.

3.4.9. Such inconsequential effects on views of the skyline seen by visual receptors within Northampton and the Nene Valley to the north would not be contrary to Policy E7 of the Local Plan. The predominantly treed character of the skyline as seen from Northampton and the Nene Valley would be preserved, and the proposed development complies with Policy E7 of the Local Plan.
Policy E9 Locally Important Landscape Areas

3.4.10. Policy E9 states:

“When considering, in the context of Policy E1, the impact of proposed development upon the landscape, special importance will be attached to its effect upon the character, as described in Appendix 28, of the locally important landscape areas…”

3.4.11. The locations of locally important landscape areas are shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map (CD-24).

3.4.12. The supporting text confirms that this policy is to protect the areas from development within them:

“For development to be considered appropriate within locally important landscape areas in must be capable of being integrated with existing development and should protect and enhance existing landscape features such that the impact on development will be minimised.” (Paragraph 2.24.) (My bold emphasis added.)

3.4.13. The Appeal site does not lie within any of these areas and the policy is therefore not relevant to the Appeal proposal. I have nevertheless reviewed potential effects on views from these areas. Analysis of my detailed ZTV within my updated LVIA (Figure 3, Appendices Volume II, Appendix 13 (CD-134)), and field work has identified that there would be little or no visibility of the proposed development from any locally important landscape areas. The area with potential for greatest visibility indicated by the ZTV is Brackmills to Great Houghton (north west of Great Houghton). If parts of the proposed development are visible from locally important landscape area Brackmills to Great Houghton it will be seen as a minor element beyond much more prominent large buildings within Brackmills Industrial Estate and will have negligible scale effects on views. As stated in paragraph 8.5.54 of the submitted LVIA (CD-134), “The proposals will have no impact upon ... Locally Important Landscape Areas within the study area.”
3.5. **Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite, version 2.2, April 2008 (River Nene Regional Park CIC) (CD-101)**

3.5.1. The Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite is described in the Core Strategy as considering:

“the different elements that influence the landscape, including:

- **Environmental Character;**
- **Historic Landscape Character;**
- **Biodiversity Character Assessment; and**
- **Green Infrastructure.” (Paragraph 10.3.)**

3.5.2. It is discussed in the introductory supporting text to Policy BN1 of the Core Strategy, paragraphs 10.1 to 10.13, and introduced in the Landscape SoCG (CD-17).

3.5.3. The Suite preparation was coordinated by the River Nene Regional Park. It is composed of two main parts, each including a number of elements; the key elements relevant to my proof are:

1) Environmental Character Strategy (ECS)
   a) Current Landscape Character Assessment, Strategies and Guidelines
   b) Historic Landscape Character Assessment, Strategies and Guidelines
   c) Biodiversity Character Assessment, Strategies and Guidelines
2) Green Infrastructure Strategy

3.5.4. LDA Design prepared the Current Landscape Character Assessment, Strategies and Guidelines, and the Green Infrastructure Strategy with support from Northamptonshire County Council and the River Nene Regional Park, but I have not found any reference to it in the Inspector’s report (CD-44).
3.5.5. The Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite, version 2.2, April 2008 formed part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy (see CD-28 - Appendix 2, page 223).

1) Environmental Character Strategy

3.5.6. Character assessments form the core of the ECS, mapping and describing the landscape resource. They are detailed assessments of current landscape, biodiversity and historic character, and are supported by guidelines to facilitate positive management in the future.

3.5.7. The ECS is published and presented online as a suite of documents which outline the policy context in regards to historic, biodiversity and current landscape character at the national, regional and local level. The documents provide detailed assessments and descriptions of the physical environment of Northamptonshire.

a) Landscape Character Assessment

3.5.8. The Current Northamptonshire Landscape Character Assessment provides the most detailed published assessment of the landscape character baseline within the agreed 4km LVIA study area and identifies the most localised changes in landscape character; it identifies 19 landscape character types (excluding urban areas), and 63 rural landscape character areas across the county as agreed in the Landscape SoCG.

3.5.9. I have assessed effects on landscape character in detail in my updated LVIA (CD-134 section 6.2) and discuss these effects in section 7.0 of my proof.

2) Green Infrastructure Strategy

3.5.10. The GIS provides a Green Infrastructure (GI) model and strategy for the county and includes a report *Making the Connection – Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework for Northamptonshire* (which LDA Design authored) which presents the strategy.

3.5.11. Policy BN1 Green Infrastructure Connections and Objective 14 of the Core Strategy (discussed in section 3.3 above) sets out the framework for enhancement and provision of Green Infrastructure as part of new developments, referring to the
Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite (CD-101) and the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (CD-94) (discussed below). The Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework was the basis of Policy BN1 and Figure 6 in the Core Strategy. It is intended that the policy will be 'localised' through the Local Plan Part 2 where it will move from the strategic framework to a local level network enabling the local planning authorities to deliver GI through planning. This 'localised' information is not available yet, but some detail is presented in the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study. Correspondence from NBC setting this out is included in Appendix 3.


3.6.1. The Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (the Study) was prepared by Living Landscapes Consultancy Ltd on behalf of the River Nene Regional Park CIC, who commissioned the Study on behalf of the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU). It formed part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy Local Plan. Stakeholders were consulted on a draft of the document by email in December 2008 but, as I state in section 3.6, it was not subject to public consultation and it is not adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance. Correspondence from NBC confirming this is included in Appendix 3.

**Summary of my review of the Study and its application in relation to the Appeal proposals**

3.6.2. The Study was taken into account in preparation of the Appeal proposals, the submitted LVIA and my updated LVIA. I have reviewed the Study and how it sits in relation to the allocation of the site and land to the east for in the region of 1,300 dwellings, and have drawn conclusions on its limitations. I provide a summary of my review and conclusions below, before providing more detailed discussion:

1) The Study identifies part of the Appeal site and the SUE as lying within a broad brush area of landscape that is of High landscape and visual sensitivity to major mixed-use urban extension development in excess of 5ha;
2) The Study method and analysis lacks adequate detail, explanation and justification to substantiate its conclusions, and does not provide robust evidence applicable to the Appeal site and proposals;

3) The Study does not provide any parameters for “major mixed-use urban extension development in excess of 5ha” which have been used to inform its assessment and conclusions. This is of key importance because, for example, the Appeal site could be deemed to be of High landscape and visual sensitivity to such a development including tall buildings, but it is not of High landscape and visual sensitivity to the Appeal proposals which have been designed sensitively and within parameters set by the Framework Plans, including limiting buildings to two to three storeys as agreed with NBC’s Planning Officer as I explain in section 7.4.

4) The Study formed part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Inspector was clearly aware of the alleged High landscape and visual sensitivity of the ‘ridge’ between Hunsbury Hill and Whiston / Cogenhoe, but did not consider this to be a limiting matter for the allocation of in the region of 1,300 dwellings, if designed within parameters set by Policy N6.

5) The Study is referred to a number of times in the adopted Core Strategy, including within paragraph 12.6 under the heading Northampton, where it states that the Study identifies areas of high landscape sensitivity including “The distinctive landform, which provides views from/to Northampton including: the Limestone ridge to the south-east between Whiston and Hunsbury”. The Core Strategy is then silent regarding the High landscape and visual sensitivity of this ridge when describing Northampton South of Brackmills SUE (paragraphs 12.44 to 12.49) and within Policy N6.

6) The allocation was therefore found sound by the Inspector and this alleged area of high sensitivity was not noted as a limiting factor or constraint to the scale and density of development that will be required by Policy N6.

7) Policy N6 of the Core Strategy provides the framework and parameters for an urban extension. The Application masterplan has been designed sensitively and
complies with Policy N6 of the Core Strategy, and also Policy E7 (Skyline Development) of the Local Plan.

3.6.3. I now discuss these matters in more detail, with reference to relevant documents.

**Introduction to the Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study**

3.6.4. The Study is presented in four parts as follows:

- **Part A** – review of the baseline data.
- **Part B** – a sensitivity review described on page 6 as:
  - “Landscapes and designated sites within the Study Area identified in Part A are ascribed a level of sensitivity (high, medium or low) to large scale residential/mixed use development. The results are illustrated graphically, and also described through text. The sensitivity review includes four topics: biodiversity sensitivity; cultural heritage sensitivity; landscape and visual sensitivity and floodzones & minerals sensitivity. In addition, there is a combined sensitivity map, which brings the all the [sic] results together showing areas of high, medium and low combined sensitivity.

- **Part C** – examines the Green Infrastructure requirements and sets out a GI strategy for Northampton.
- **Part D** – conclusions.

3.6.5. I now discuss Part B.
Sensitivity (Part B of the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study)

My review of the method used by the Study

3.6.6. The Study refers to the method for defining landscape sensitivity given in Landscape Character Assessment Topic Paper 6 published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002). Topic Paper 6 was best practice when the study was undertaken and has not been replaced, but more up to date information on landscape sensitivity assessment is included in GLVIA3 (CD-152), which I have followed in my updated LVIA.

3.6.7. The Study states that it adopts the following definition of landscape sensitivity given in Topic Paper 6 (paragraph 8.1.5):

“Landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change: This term should be used where it is necessary to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to a particular type of change or development. It should be defined in terms of the interactions between the landscape itself, the way that it is perceived and the particular nature of the type of change or development in question.”

3.6.8. As I note above, the specific type of change or development is defined as major mixed-use urban extension development in excess of 5ha (paragraph 8.1.8) and no parameters for such an extension are given, unlike the Appeal proposals which contains parameters used for design and assessment in the submitted and updated LVIA.

3.6.9. The Study combines landscape and visual sensitivity to give an assessment of Landscape and Visual Sensitivity to major mixed-use urban extension development in excess of 5ha (section 8.5). It does not give detailed criteria by which landscape and visual sensitivity were assessed, or set out the analysis and results of the assessment in manner that can be followed and checked to understand if the conclusions are justified.

3.6.10. In essence, the method and analysis lacks sufficient detail and explanation and the conclusions are not substantiated with reference to a detailed and robust
assessment. It does not provide substantial assistance in assessing the Appeal site against the specific proposals and the Appeal scheme. As set out in my LVIA the appeal site is not of High landscape and visual sensitivity when assessed in relation to the Appeal proposals.

3.6.11. The method is given in paragraphs 8.1.1 to 8.2.10 where it acknowledges limitations of the study and need for further more detailed work:

“The assessment of landscape sensitivity has therefore been undertaken at the strategic scale using information and data that have been available at the town-wide scale of the study. As such, judgements on the inherent sensitivity of landscapes, views, settings and features are considered at this broad scale. More detailed research and further site-specific assessment would be necessary to confirm the levels of sensitivity attributed to individual features.” (Paragraph 8.13.)

3.6.12. The method does not state clearly how sensitivity is judged and applied to different areas of landscape in coming to its conclusions. It only provides short paragraphs defining High, High-Medium, Medium and Low and Lowest sensitivity in paragraphs 8.2.4 to 8.2.10, and then presents the results as statements on different broad areas of landscape. The Study states that the elevated land on which the site lies is part of a broad sweep of land (approximately 12km long as I discuss later) of High Landscape and Visual Sensitivity (identified as “the ridge which runs between Whiston and Hunsbury Hill”)(paragraphs 8.7.14 and 12.6). This is based on the following limited definitions provided in the method:

“High Sensitivity

Definition: Significant constraints such that development is inappropriate

Features and areas identified as having international or national statutory designation status are considered to be of high sensitivity. High-sensitivity sites are regarded as presenting a significant constraint to development, such that large-scale development would result in significant harm. Development is regarded as inappropriate or would present wide-ranging challenges to accommodate in these areas.” (Paragraph 8.2.4.)

The landscapes in these areas contain significant constraints such that development is inappropriate. They include key ridgelines and elevated land; areas of distinctive landform which have intervisibility with and contribute to the setting of Northampton; areas of high quality landscape; landscape which functions as a gap preventing the physical or visual coalescence of Northampton and surrounding settlements; distinctive settings of villages and open spaces within Northampton.”
(Paragraph 8.5.4.)

3.6.14. No further description to define High Landscape and Visual Sensitivity is provided in the method which, in my opinion, lacks detail and is not robust.

Assessment in relation to the Appeal site and proposals

3.6.15. The Appeal site and the SUE are identified as being part of a broad brush area of high sensitivity landscape from within the urban area to the west of the site, and out into the rural landscape to the east of the site, in paragraphs 8.5.15 and 8.7.14 of the Study. Paragraph 8.5.15 states:

“Within this Study Area [south of Northampton] there are three discrete areas of high-sensitivity landscape. These are 1) the ridge of land which runs from Cogenhoe to Hunsbury Hill, which is visually prominent and forms the southern setting to Northampton.....”

3.6.16. Cogenhoe is a village in a rural setting over 5km north east of the Appeal site, (approximately 1.5km west of Whiston which is referred to in paragraph 12.6 of the adopted Core Strategy as discussed above). I have drawn where I consider the ‘ridge’ broadly runs, based on the above description, on Figure 12 in Appendix 1 of my proof. It measures approximately 12km in length and the Appeal site extends for approximately 1.3km (c. 11% of the ‘ridge’) between its western and eastern boundaries. West of the Appeal site the ‘ridge’ runs for approximately 4km within the urban area, and east of the Appeal site it runs for approximately 7km across the rural landscape. Approximately one third of this High landscape and visual sensitivity ‘ridge’ is therefore already developed as part of Northampton.
3.6.17. However, Figures 14 and 24 in the Study show how coarse and broad brush the assessment areas are. They illustrate sensitivity areas as 'hazy' shades of green that do not show clearly the sensitivity of the Appeal site, or many other areas around Northampton. For example Figure 24 shows hazy areas of High Landscape and Visual Sensitivity as dark green, grading through to lighter green and then yellow which represents areas of Low sensitivity. On Figure 24, the Appeal site is shown as shades of green not as dark as land on the 'ridge' further north east or elsewhere, implying that the Appeal site is not of such high landscape and visual sensitivity as the land further north east. In fact, Brackmills Industrial Estate is shown as similar shades of green, or possibly lighter green, that the Appeal site; Brackmills Industrial Estate already contains significant large scale buildings and is certainly not of high landscape and visual sensitivity to much smaller scale residential development assessed by the Study.

3.6.18. The conclusion of the Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study states that the Appeal site and the SUE lie on part of this long ridge that is of High sensitivity for reasons that relate to the visibility on the skyline and the contribution to the setting of Northampton:

“Areas of High Sensitivity

A visual survey and analysis of the Core Study Area and adjacent landscapes identified the key issues and principles that are critical to, or supportive of, the distinctive setting of Northampton. The findings of this assessment (see figs. 14 and 24) have guided the identification of areas of highest visual sensitivity, within which large-scale significant development would present wide ranging challenges. These areas comprise:

- Areas of distinctive landform, which are visible from, have views to Northampton and contribute to the setting of the town. Such areas include the limestone ridge to the south-east of the town between Whiston and Hunsbury Hill;...” (para 8.8.3).

3.6.19. The definition of High sensitivity given in paragraph 8.2.4 of the Study is framed around the presence of features or areas of international or national statutory
designation. There are none within the area, and the proposed development would not affect any international, national or local landscape designations which is ratified as follows:

- The Study does not identify any landscape features or areas of international or national statutory designation in the area (Area 3 Northampton South – Figure 1 and paragraphs 8.5.15 to 8.5.17, 8.7.14 and 8.8.3);
- The Head of Planning confirmed that the Appeal site is not subject to any nationally or locally important designation in paragraph 7.32 of her report to Development Control Committee (CD-57), as I discuss in Section 4.1 of my proof.
- It is agreed in the Landscape SoCG (CD-17 paragraph 3.5.1) that there are no landscape designations within the Appeal site, and no landscape designations would be directly affected by the proposal.
- I have confirmed in my updated LVIA that there are no designated landscapes within the 4km LVIA study area (i.e. within 4km of the site) and no designated landscapes would be affected by the proposed development, as I explain in section 7.5 of my proof.

3.6.20. The ‘ridge’ and Appeal site are not, therefore, of high landscape and visual sensitivity due to relevant landscape designations.

3.6.21. No other landscape or visual reasons are given for defining the site and the SUE as lying within or close to a broad brush area of High sensitivity. The two key issues relating to the Appeal proposal arising from the Study are therefore:

1) effects on views of the undeveloped skyline as seen from Northampton; and
2) how development on the “distinctive landform” would affect the setting of the town.

3.6.22. I assess effects of the proposed development on views from Northampton and on the setting of the town in my updated LVIA which demonstrates how the Appeal proposals would have limited effects on these aspects, and is not of High landscape
sensitivity to the Appeal proposals. Given the urban context and the significant screening of the site on the skyline afforded by Brackmills Woods to the north, development to the west and south, and vegetation and landform to the east, I consider that it is not of high visual sensitivity. The Study gives four categories of Landscape and Visual Sensitivity at paragraphs 8.5.4 to 8.5.7 and I consider that an assessment of Medium sensitivity to the proposed development within the Appeal site would be more applicable. Medium sensitivity is defined as:

“Significant constraints have been identified in these areas, although some development may be possible subject to further detailed investigation and appropriate mitigation. Medium-sensitivity landscapes include areas which are not visually prominent and do not make a major contribution to the setting of Northampton.” (Paragraph 8.5.6.)

3.6.23. The judgement that the whole 12km ridge of land from Hunsbury Hill to Cogenhoe is of High landscape and visual sensitivity to an undefined “major mixed-use urban extension development in excess of 5ha” is too coarse to apply to the specific characteristics of Appeal site proposals. The site and proposal needs to be judged at a more detailed level, as acknowledged at paragraph 1.2.2 of the Study which states (my bold emphasis added):

“This report has been prepared as a technical study and is based on a desktop review of various sources of information complied by other agencies that focus on green infrastructure and landscape issues in and around Northampton. In addition to the desktop review that has been conducted, several site visits were undertaken between April and June 2008 to supplement the information available, and in particular to gather evidence in support of the landscape character and visual assessment analyses that form part of this assessment. The site visits were limited to the consideration of strategic issues, rather than detailed issues pertaining to individual sites. Further work would be required to assess visibility and character issues at the local scale as part of more detailed site-specific assessments such as those conducted as part of Environmental Impact Assessments for proposed new development.”
3.6.24. Extensive “further work ... to assess visibility and character issues at the local scale as part of more detailed site-specific assessments” and consultation was undertaken during the iterative impact assessment, design and mitigation process which led to the submitted Illustrative Masterplan and LVIA. I have undertaken further work as part of my updated LVIA, and I consider that the submitted application contained sufficient information to justify approval as proposed by the Head of Planning. Despite this, and the fact that at no point prior to publication of the Decision Notice did Northampton Borough Council say that there was insufficient information or request Further Environmental Information under Section 22 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011, the Council refused the application based on an “absence of sufficient information to demonstrate appropriate mitigation for the impact of the development on the landscape, skyline and rural character of the area” (CD-61).

3.6.25. My further work in support of this Appeal including the updated LVIA, a more detailed Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study, wireframes and photomontages confirm my original conclusions based on the material submitted with the planning application. The proposed development would cause impacts that are both beneficial and adverse and I consider that the degree of harm to views of the skyline, the setting of Northampton and landscape character is acceptable and compliant with policy in this regard. I discuss landscape and visual effects in section 7.0 of my proof.

3.6.26. In any case, paragraph 8.8.1 of the Study states that development is not precluded from areas identified as high sensitivity:

“...The conclusions from the exercise have identified areas that would be more, or less, challenging for new development at a strategic scale, and for which further study would be required before any definitive judgment should be made. It should be emphasised that whilst a designation of high sensitivity does not preclude development, any development in these areas would require full justification, strong mitigation and site-specific schemes to achieve the appropriate design and type of development in such locations.”
Allocation N6 and the Study

3.6.27. The fact that development is not precluded from these areas is confirmed in the adopted Core Strategy (CD-28) where, in the introduction to Section 10.0 (Built and Natural Environment) it states (my bold emphasis added):

“Further Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Studies have also been carried out for the towns in West Northamptonshire. These studies provide additional broad advice on the overall sensitivity of an area, including historic character, green infrastructure, biodiversity and overall landscape sensitivity. These studies have informed the selection of the areas for development identified in this plan. The development of areas highlighted as having High Landscape Sensitivity in the study is not precluded, but it does mean that additional care and appropriate mitigation will be required when planning for new development…” (para 10.7)

3.6.28. New development at a strategic scale within the Appeal site and land to the east and south east was has been accepted and ratified by the allocation despite:

- the Appeal site and SUE being located on a swathe of land identified by the Study as being of high sensitivity; and
- the special importance attached to the effects of potential development upon this skyline as seen from the Nene Valley to the north under saved Policy E7 of the Local Plan.

3.6.29. The sensitivity is explicitly mentioned at paragraph 12.6 (Northampton) of the Core Strategy where it states:

“The distinctive landform, which provides views from/to Northampton including: the Limestone ridge to the south-east between Whiston and Hunsbury … are all also areas of high sensitivity:”

3.6.30. It is notable that, under the heading Northampton South of Brackmills SUE which supports Policy N6, and within Policy N6, the alleged High landscape and visual sensitivity is not mentioned.
The Inspector's Report and the Study

3.6.31. The Study formed part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy and the Inspector was fully aware of its conclusions regarding alleged sensitivity of the ‘ridge’, and this did not prevent him from supporting the allocation of N6.

3.6.32. In his report (CD-44), the Inspector referred to landscape sensitivity of parts of site N6 as follows:

“The local landscape sensitivity of parts of the site can be addressed and partly mitigated through such measures [a park, informal green spaces, a green corridor running roughly north west to south east across the site, peripheral green spaces (paragraph 140)], together with the backdrop of woodland to the north, which forms a strong local landscape feature, as part of a comprehensive masterplan for the whole site. The masterplan should also take into account the potential skyline views of buildings on the site from the north and east, as well as the retention, if at all possible, of existing footpaths, Landimore Road and the minor road within the site to help integrate the scheme into its surroundings. As a result, the development should not materially threaten the separate identity of the settlements of Hardingstone and Wootton.” (Paragraph 141.)

3.6.33. The Appeal proposal has addressed sensitivities relating to the Appeal site and it would be for any planning application(s) on the remainder of the allocation to the east demonstrate how they address sensitivities. I demonstrate how the remainder of the allocation can be developed as part of a comprehensive masterplan without being compromised by the Appeal proposal in section 6.7. I note that the Planning Officer, in her report to Development Control Committee (CD-57 paragraph 141), stated that a detailed Design Code and Masterplan covering the whole site would be required by condition; this could, if appropriate, be extended to cover the whole allocation.

3.6.34. The Inspector did not refer to the alleged High Landscape and Visual Sensitivity identified by the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study in relation to draft Policy N6 but did refer to the sensitivity ratings it gave in relation to other proposed sites (e.g. Policy N4 at paragraph 116 and page 66). He was
clearly aware of the alleged High landscape and visual sensitivity of the ‘ridge’ between Hunsbury Hill and Whiston / Cogenhoe, but did not consider it a limiting matter, or worthy of note, in supporting the allocation, if designed within parameters he describes and which have fed through to Policy N6 (which the Appeal proposal is).

My summary and conclusion

3.6.35. The Appeal site is not of High landscape and visual sensitivity in relation to the Appeal proposals as could be implied from the Study. The Study's method is too simplistic and its judgements too coarse and not sufficiently robust to apply to the Appeal proposals. The Study acknowledges that it considers strategic issues, rather than detailed issues pertaining to individual sites, and that further work would be required to assess visibility and character issues at the local scale as part of more detailed site-specific assessments. Such detailed work has been undertaken in support of the Application and Appeal which demonstrates limited landscape and visual effects in relation to the ‘sensitive’ issues alleged by the Study, confirming that effects are acceptable and compliant with the Local Plan and the Core Strategy.

3.6.36. Even if the Appeal site were of High landscape and visual sensitivity, which I do not consider is the case, the Study acknowledges that development is not precluded from such areas; this is also stated in the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy takes this a step further by allocating the Appeal site and land to the east for in the region of 1,300 dwellings. The Inspector at the Examination of the Core Strategy was clearly aware of the alleged High landscape and visual sensitivity of the ‘ridge’ between Hunsbury Hill and Whiston / Cogenhoe, but did not consider it a limiting matter in relation to Policy N6 and the allocation, if designed within parameters he described which fed through to Policy N6 (which the Appeal proposal is).

3.6.37. The conclusions of the sensitivity study (Part B) of the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study do not, therefore, preclude development as allocated under Policy N6 of the Core Strategy or as proposed within the Appeal proposals.

3.6.38. I now discuss Part C of the Study.
Green Infrastructure (Part C of the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study)

3.6.39. Part C of the Study takes the results of the baseline data and sensitivity and incorporates them into a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Northampton. It provides a series of recommendations for the delivery of a Green Infrastructure strategy.

3.6.40. The Green Infrastructure Strategy presented in the Study is informed by the findings of the *Green Infrastructure - Making the Connection* report (which LDA Design authored as I have explained above). Broad scale Biodiversity and Sustainable Movement GI Networks are defined at a strategic scale, and are shown on Figure 27 of the Study.

*Biodiversity Networks*

3.6.41. Figure 27 indicates that the Appeal site lies within a broad zone defined as *Water / Lowland Meadow Corridor* (defined as the Nene Valley and its tributaries in paragraph 7.2.5) which sweeps over the high land occupied by the Appeal site but which is not applicable to its elevated location devoid of significant watercourses or open water. The western part of the Appeal site is defined as *Priority Target Area for Additional Acid Habitat Survey (outside urban area)*. The Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study states that “*In the case of the Acid Grassland habitats this has been restricted to where the correct geology and soil types exist to support this habitat.*” (Paragraph 7.2.4.) The Appeal site does not currently support this habitat but there may be opportunities for its creation as part of the proposed GI network. The proposed layout is illustrative and all matters are reserved apart from access so this can, if necessary, be included at Reserved Matters stage if appropriate. The Appeal site lies south of Brackmills Wood which is identified as a Combined Habitat Reservoir which the GI proposed within the Illustrative Masterplan would potentially enhance, as I discuss below.

*Sustainable Movement Networks*

3.6.42. It can be seen from Figure 27 of the Study that there is a Primary Movement Network west of the site, running along The Warren; the proposed development
would provide a new pedestrian / cycle connection to this (item 6 on Figure 45 (page 45) of the DAS (CD-5) and Illustrative Masterplan drawing number 3238/200 (CD-4)).

**Delivery of Green Infrastructure**

**3.6.43.** Section 11.0 of the Study says that it provides “a strategy to direct the development of Green Infrastructure for Northampton and will also identify principle routes of importance with specific reference to:

- Potential Improvements to the Movement Network;
- Potential Improvements to Open Space Provision; and
- Enhancement of Biodiversity.”

**3.6.44.** The Study identifies six types of improvements to the Movement Network which are given in section 11.3 and located geographically on Figure 32. Only one of these lies close enough to the Appeal site for the proposed development to contribute to. The Warren west of the site (a Sustainable Movement Network) is identified as a road for improvement for safe walking (yellow dashed line on Figure 32 and section 11.3.4 of the Study) along the Primary Movement Network identified on Figure 27. As discussed above, the proposed development would provide a new pedestrian / cycle connection to this.

**3.6.45.** Section 11.4 of the Study identifies three types of potential improvements to Open Space Provision. The proposed development would contribute positively to two of these:

- Maintaining the Quality and Accessibility of existing Green Space
- Maximising the Biodiversity of Existing Open Spaces

**3.6.46.** The proposed development would provide new access and biodiversity links to Brackmills Country Park to the north and new links, open space and Green Infrastructure within and across land that is currently not accessible to the public, except for one existing PRoW which would be retained and incorporated into the proposals. The proposals would deliver improved access and amenity, and improved habitats and biodiversity within the Appeal site, and improved connections for
people and wildlife through the site and into adjacent areas, as I describe in Section 6.0.

3.6.47. Under the heading The Role of Structural Landscape Areas, the study states:

“GI enhancement can also be achieved through the careful design of development sites. The provision of structural landscape areas (usually achieved through the planting of trees/woodland and shrubs) which enhance the landscape infrastructure will be required as part of all major new developments. These structural landscape areas will help to mitigate adverse visual impact, strengthen local character and identity, and integrate new development into its wider landscape setting. The detailed assessment of development proposals may also necessitate off-site planting within the wider landscape. Site specific assessment of landscape and visual issues would be required to ascertain the nature of off-site mitigation proposals, paying particular regard to appropriateness to local character and other visual considerations.” (Paragraph 11.6.1.)

3.6.48. Extensive and carefully designed new Green Infrastructure, appropriate to the site and its context, would be provided on site as I describe in section 6.3. Detailed assessment has identified that no off-site planting is required to provide additional screening of the proposed development. The proposal has been designed to deliver Green Infrastructure consistent with paragraph 11.6.2 of the Study which states:

“A co-ordinated approach to the planning and design of structural landscape areas will contribute to local delivery of Green Infrastructure. Consistent with the principle of multi-functionality of green infrastructure provision, structural landscape areas have the potential to accommodate a wide range of functions and compatible uses. These potentially rich and diverse areas with a high level of accessibility to local people would contribute to the wider network of GI across and beyond the town. Examples of GI provision achieved through structural landscape include:

- Incorporation of a range of open space uses, including informal play areas and playing fields, and allotment areas (subject to appropriateness of location, discussions with LPA, required standards and the findings of the OSSR Audit);
• Biodiversity enhancement including strengthening and creation of new woodland, wetland and grassland and habitat links, or accommodation of more specific features such as a nature reserve;

• Sustainable water management;

• Sustainable movement network incorporating footpath, cycle ways and bridleways."

3.6.49. In section 6.0 I will demonstrate further how the new Green Infrastructure comprising open space, biodiversity enhancements, sustainable water management and a sustainable movement network would provide a strong Green Infrastructure framework and appropriate response to the site and its context, and to existing guidance and policy.
4.0  **Head of Planning’s report to Development Control Committee, Minutes of Planning Committee 6 May 2014, Core Strategy Inspector’s Report and NBC’s Statement of Case**

4.1.  **Head of Planning’s report to Development Control Committee 6 May 2014 (CD-57)**

4.1.1. The Head of Planning, in her report to the Development Control Committee where she recommended approval of the application (the Officer’s Report), provided commentary on the Landscape and Visual elements of the application in paragraphs 7.27 to 7.32, and commentary on design and layout in paragraphs 7.18 to 7.26 as agreed in the Landscape SoCG.

**Design and Layout**

4.1.2. The Head of Planning provided a summary of the key design and layout issues as follows.

4.1.3. Paragraph 7.19 states:

> “The application is submitted in outline and therefore the detailed design of the proposal in terms of layout, appearance, scale and landscaping would be a matter for consideration at reserved matters stage.”

4.1.4. This is of key relevance to the Appeal. The proposed development proposed in the submitted Illustrative Masterplan, DAS and Framework Plans (CD-2) was designed so that it met the requirements of the pre-submission draft Core Strategy (2011) and, in particular, Policy N6, and was agreed with Planning Officer’s through formal consultation. Policy N6 of the adopted Core Strategy (2014) has changed to increase the policy area to include land to the east of the Appeal site and increase dwelling numbers from 1,000 to in the region of 1,300 (which would be provided on the additional land). I explain in section 6.7 how the application Masterplan can be easily adapted to provide connections to this additional land without compromising the design principles set out in the outline planning application. The application Masterplan meets all of the other minor changes to Policy N6 and meets the
requirements of the adopted Core Strategy. Development of the type and scale proposed is therefore accepted by the Joint Planning Unit (as verified by the Planning Inspector at the Examination into the Core Strategy). If there are any details that the Inspector considers need to be amended, this would be a matter for consideration at reserved matters stage as stated by the Head of Planning, and can be modified and secured by condition.

4.1.5. This is also iterated in subsequent paragraphs of the Officers Report, where it refers to the detailed design of a number of elements that would be considered at reserved matters stage, and for which there was therefore sufficient information provided within the application material.

4.1.6. At paragraph 7.20 the Head of Planning confirms that detailed design would be guided by a Design Code:

- “The proposal is accompanied by a series of Framework (parameter) plans ... and a Design and Access Statement which set out the broad parameters for development going forward …”
- “A detailed Design Code and Masterplan covering the whole site would be required by condition based on these submitted details prior to the submission of any reserved matters application …”
- “The approved Design Code would seek to ensure a consistent approach throughout the development to design, layout and use of materials and identify key areas for design consideration within the site such as the local centre, the main ‘green link’ across the site and Landimore Road.”

4.1.7. In terms of acceptability of proposed building heights, the Head of Planning states:

“The parameter plans outline a broad framework of land uses identifying the key character areas for residential development including an indication of maximum building heights, the provision of a primary school, local centre, public house and interlinking green infrastructure and drainage. Building heights for residential are proposed at 2-storey or 2-3 storey and the local centre at a maximum of 3-storeys. These indicated heights are a maximum and a full assessment of the acceptability of
any proposed building heights would be carried out at reserved matters stage in relation to impacts on the character of the surrounding area and impact on neighbouring amenity.” (Paragraph 7.21.)

4.1.8. Building storey numbers are defined on the Scale Framework plan drawing number 3238_204 Rev A. Fixed maximum building heights in metres were not defined in the planning application. I have undertaken some more detailed studies as part of my updated LVIA as follows:

- Production of detailed Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) studies (Figures 3 and 4 of my updated LVIA (CD-134, Volume II Appendix 13), wirelines and photomontages (Appendix 6 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17)) showing buildings within the areas shown on the Scale Framework drawing number 3238_204 Rev A to the following heights:
  - 2 storey residential 8.5m
  - 2 – 3 storey residential 10.5m
  - Primary school 5.5m with a hall at 7m
  - Mixed use, max 3 storeys 10.5m

4.1.9. I consider that the material submitted with the original planning application, supported by my additional illustrative material and updated LVIA, confirm the acceptability of the building heights proposed.

4.1.10. In terms of ‘green links’ and the existing PRoW through the site, paragraph 7.23 states:

“The ‘Access and Movement Framework’ plan indicates a general street alignment from east to west across the site although detailed road layouts would form part of the reserved matters submission. The Framework indicates a permeable layout with connections to Hardingstone village, The Warren and informal tracks into Brackmills Wood. The existing public footpath which runs southeastwards across the site would be retained on its existing alignment and form a key ‘green link’ across the site. Provision has been made for potential links to future development
sites as proposed by the submitted Core Strategy on land to the southeast of the site. The detailed design of linkages would be considered at reserved matters stage.”

4.1.11. The Head of Planning was supportive of and had no concerns regarding proposed ‘green links’ including the existing PRoW through the site, stating that detailed design would be considered at reserved matters stage.

4.1.12. Paragraph 7.23 refers to “potential links to future development sites as proposed by the submitted Core Strategy on land to the southeast of the site”. I have described above, and demonstrate in section 6.7, how the Illustrative Masterplan can be simply adapted to connect through to potential development on the additional land to the east and south east of the Appeal site.

4.1.13. In terms of open space and green infrastructure provision, paragraph 7.24 states (my bold emphasis added):

“Provision has been made throughout the site for areas of open space and green infrastructure including allotments and officers are satisfied that the location and quantum of open space is adequate to provide a range of both formal and informal open space to serve the recreational and amenity needs of the development and provide sufficient green infrastructure to mitigate ecological impacts. The provision of appropriately designed SUDs throughout the development would further enhance these areas of green infrastructure. It is important to note however that the quantum of open space falls short of the local standard as defined in the Parks and Open Space Strategy for Northampton (November 2009). The requirement to provide adequate open space within new development arising from this local needs study is embodied in Policy RC2 of the submitted Joint Core Strategy. The local standard is broken down into various types of open space, such as amenity green space, play provision, sports facilities etc. For a development of this size, a total quantum of space equating to 14.64 ha would be required. The level proposed is 9.98 ha. It is considered that the proximity of Brackmills Wood to the development could mitigate this reduced level providing an existing area of informal open space the management of which could be further enhanced to serve the proposed development and surrounding area. The majority of the wood is owned by the
applicant with a smaller section to the east owned by the Borough Council. The submission of a Management Strategy for Brackmills Wood is therefore proposed as a S106 requirement.”

4.1.14. The open space provision was discussed and agreed with Northampton Borough Council at a pre-application meeting on 18th July 2012, minute items 3.3 and 3.4 (CD-122). I have prepared a note explaining how the onsite open space provision and off site contribution was agreed in Appendix 4 of my proof. In summary, the approach to the type, arrangement and quantity of open space provision was discussed with NBC’s Planning Officer who supported the provision within the application proposal. The planning application with open space provision was submitted on the basis of these agreements in March 2013 followed by a period of consultation of over twelve months up to the date of the Planning Committee Meeting 6th May 2014. In that time the planning case officer changed. The second part of paragraph 7.24 of Officer’s Report (CD-57), where it states that “the quantum of open space falls short of the local standard as defined in the Parks and Open Space Strategy for Northampton (November 2009). ... For a development of this size, a total quantum of space equating to 14.64 ha would be required. The level proposed is 9.98 ha...” does not reflect the following:

- It does not make it clear that the 14.64ha of open space is an overall total to guide the amount of on-site provision and off-site contribution through s106.
- It does not make it clear that it is not feasible or expected that a total quantum of 14.64ha of open space for each use type is provided on site. Nor does it make it clear in relation to this point; that the 9.98ha on site provision is a result of a balanced integrated masterplan for the delivery of open space and development to the density set for SUE’s in the adopted Core Strategy for the of development identified under Policy N6.
- It does not take into consideration the agreement to the arrangement for public access to green space on the land for the Primary School, which includes access to the proposed M.U.G.A and Junior Football Pitch, as well as the surrounding amenity green space on that site. The inclusion of these facilities increases the on-site provision of open space to 10.88ha.
• It does not make it clear that, whilst the overall figure for open space generated by each use type in isolation is not met by the on-site provision, **there is over provision on site for a number of use types as a result of the design response to the consultation and environmental drivers for the site.** The OR report also does not make it clear that **a burial ground would not be provided on this site in accordance with NBC expressed view in consultation** that it would not be appropriate.

4.1.15. Had there been an opportunity to do so, these are points that we would have discussed and corrected with the Council prior to the OR committee report being issued to the Planning Committee Members.

4.1.16. Open space provision is not a Reason for Refusal.

4.1.17. In terms of a **green buffer** between proposed development and existing properties, paragraph 7.25 states:

“The plan accompanying Policy N6 of the submitted Joint Core Strategy refers to a green buffer between proposed development and existing properties along Newport Pagnell Road. Local concern has been expressed regarding the loss of this buffer from the proposed plans. Pre-application discussions concluded that the ‘green buffer’ could potentially create a functionless green area at the rear of existing properties with maintenance and security issues. It was considered that there was a rationale for providing a positive green interface within private ownership which would provide a strongly defined and secure boundary for both existing and proposed occupiers. Properties along Newport Pagnell Road consist of both single and two-storey dwellings with a commercial garage in between. The majority of gardens to the rear of these properties are in excess of 30m long with the exception of No. 63 Newport Pagnell Road located at the end of this ribbon development the side boundary of which is diagonal to the application site resulting in a significantly smaller rear garden. The ‘Urban Structure and Legibility Framework’ [drawing number 3238_207 (CD-2)] plan identifies this neighbouring boundary as a ‘sensitive edge’ with development in this location to be managed and designed in a sensitive way to respond to the adjacent property. The Framework plan also identifies the
boundary to the rear of properties on Newport Pagnell Road as a ‘private green edge’ with the relationship between new and existing development to be managed through the design of rear gardens. Both issues would be considered with particular regard to residential amenity and consulted on in detail at reserved matters stage.”

4.1.18. In section 6.0 of my proof, where I describe the Appeal scheme, I explain how the illustrative masterplan and agreement with NBC has addressed this ‘green buffer’ which relates to Policy N6 item f) of the Core Strategy which states that “The development will make provision for: ... the creation of a landscape buffer to the south west of the site as indicated on the Policies Map (Figure 5)”. Figure 5 (Inset 11) shows “Indicative Structural Green Space associated with SUE”. In summary:

- the proposed treatment of these boundaries on the Illustrative Masterplan provides an appropriate response to Policy N6 and the context of the site, arrived at and agreed through consultation; and
- the Head of Planning is supportive of the treatment proposed.

4.1.19. However, if the Inspector considers that an alternative treatment should be provided, this can be agreed through condition and designed at the reserved matters stage, and I describe a possible alternative in section 6.5.

4.1.20. At paragraph 7.26 the Head of Planning discusses the design of the development along Landimore Road and how this would require specific consideration within the Design Code, which would be prepared at the Reserved Matters stage.

Landscape and Visual Impact

4.1.21. The Head of Planning provided a measured and informed summary of the key landscape and visual issues at paragraphs 7.27 to 7.32 as follows.

4.1.22. In terms of Policy E7, skyline and sensitivity paragraph 7.27 states:

“The NPPF seeks to ensure that planning protects and enhances our natural, built and historic environment contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. These aims are reflected in Policy E1 of the Local Plan which seeks to protect the character and structure of the landscape from adverse visual impacts.
Policy E7 places importance on considering the impact of development on the skyline, particularly between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley to the north. ... The Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study indicates that the majority of the site is of high landscape and visual sensitivity."

4.1.23. Paragraph 7.27 sets out policies of the adopted NBC Local Plan that were in place at that time. Policy E1 has since been replaced by Core Strategy Policies BN2 (Biodiversity) and BN5 (The Historic Landscape) as I have discussed earlier. Paragraph 7.27 also refers to the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study, the conclusions of which do not preclude development as allocated under Policy N6 of the Core Strategy or as proposed within the Appeal proposals, as I discuss in section 3.6.

4.1.24. In terms of visibility of the proposals paragraph 7.28 states:

"The site comprises of an area of arable land which slopes gently from north to south and occupies part of a limestone ridge. The land slopes down to the north to Brackmills Industrial Estate and the Nene Valley before the land rises again to the north where the site is visible on the skyline. Brackmills Wood would act as a visual buffer to development obscuring immediate views to the north. To the west and south development would be viewed within the context of existing development situated along the west and southern boundaries of the site. The development would be more prominently visible form (sic) the east and south-eastern boundaries which adjoin open countryside and are more exposed to the surrounding area."

4.1.25. I will demonstrate that very little of the site is visible on the skyline from land to the north of the Nene Valley or from within the valley itself, and that the proposed development would have limited effects on views from these areas and, in my opinion, is acceptable. I agree that Brackmills Wood would act as a visual buffer to development obscuring immediate views to the north, and will demonstrate that it also acts as a visual buffer to views from further north that are referred to in Policy E7 of the Local Plan and Policy N6 of the Core Strategy.
4.1.26. I agree that “To the west and south development would be viewed within the context of existing development situated along the west and southern boundaries of the site”. I will demonstrate that the proposal would form a good and appropriately designed extension to these urban areas, within an area of land already strongly influenced by the proximity of existing development.

4.1.27. I agree that the “development would be more prominently visible form (sic) the east and south-eastern boundaries” of the site but will demonstrate that this only applies to views from one local road (The Green that adjoins the south-eastern site boundary) with visibility reducing rapidly from further east and south-east of The Green due to filtering / screening by landform and vegetation, and existing development in Wootton. Future residential development of the land allocated by Policy N6 of the Core Strategy would screen views of the proposed development from most areas to the east, and further integrate it into the Northampton development area.

4.1.28. The land within the SUE to the south of The Green (outside the Appeal site) is a former quarry and landfill site, having been being reclaimed to rough grassland with native tree and shrub planting.

4.1.29. The importance of these points to the Appeal is that, although currently technically ‘open countryside’, part of the land adjoining the Appeal site to the south-east is not typical of the wider countryside and all land immediately beyond the eastern and south-eastern site boundary is allocated for housing development; factors which need to be considered when considering effects of the proposed development on the ‘rural character’ of the ‘open countryside’, as I discuss in section 6.0.

4.1.30. Paragraph 7.29 discusses the visibility of the proposals further, stating:

“The site would be visually prominent along undeveloped sections of Newport Pagnell Road and along Landimore Road and would significantly alter views along the public footpath which crosses diagonally through the site.”

4.1.31. The site is visible from these areas within and adjoining the site boundary and I agree that the proposed development would significantly alter views along the
public footpath which crosses diagonally through the site. I discuss the effects on views from these roads and footpath in section 7.4 and 7.5 of my proof, with reference to my updated LVIA.

4.1.32. In terms of effects on the skyline and masterplan proposals, paragraph 7.30 states:

“The EIA acknowledges that the site existing skyline is visible from a number of locations. The design seeks to integrate development into the wider landscape with the Masterplan structured around swathes of open space and a green infrastructure spine which runs along the existing public footpath from north-west to south-east along the ridgeline. This green spine is intended to be a wide open green space which will have an informal and formal treed character, with trees having the potential to soften views of adjacent buildings, giving a green layered appearance when viewed from the surrounding countryside, thus softening the development and helping to integrate it into the surrounding countryside. The northern boundary of the site abutting Brackmills Wood would be further enhanced with additional tree and hedgerow planting.”

4.1.33. This demonstrates that the Head of Planning had a good understanding of the proposals and agreed with the proposed design approach to integrate the development into the landscape, to minimise effects on the skyline, and to the treatment of the existing public footpath that runs through the site.

4.1.34. Paragraphs 7.31 and 7.32 discuss landscape effects. Paragraph 7.31 states:

“The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment identifies the effects of the development during construction and upon completion as being of “High” magnitude decreasing rapidly with distance from the site boundary and where intervening development, vegetation and landform provide screening. The effects 15 years from completion would have reduced as the tree planting within the site and particularly along the eastern and south-eastern boundaries will have matured”

4.1.35. This statement provides an accurate summary of the assessment presented within the LVIA submitted with the planning application (CD-6). My updated assessment carried out under the new GLVIA3 (CD-152) provides a similar assessment and is
discussed in section 7.0 of my proof, where it is confirmed that significant effects would only arise locally within and close to the site.

4.1.36. Paragraph 7.32 states:

“It is inevitable that the landscape character would change significantly with the development of the site and it is recognised in the allocation of the site as a SUE in the submitted JCS that the landscape is of high-medium landscape sensitivity. However, these impacts need to be weighed against the requirement for growth. The provision of sufficient and appropriate green infrastructure throughout the site and sensitive design of layout and building heights at reserved matters stage would assist in mitigating some of the impact on the existing landscape. The land has no nationally or locally important designation and officer opinion is that sufficient mitigation measures are proposed when balanced against the overriding requirements for housing provision.”

4.1.37. I agree that it is inevitable that the landscape character would change significantly with the development of the site; this is likely to apply to any greenfield site where arable fields are changed to housing development. The approach has been to respond to the site and its setting to provide a sensitively designed scheme that is appropriate to its context, as I discuss in sections 6.0 of my proof.

4.1.38. The Head of Planning, recognising that the application was in outline with all matters reserved apart from access, considered that some landscape impacts could be mitigated through detailed design at reserved matters stage; this can be achieved within the framework provided within the Appeal proposals, through the delivery of an agreed Design Code, and through the agreement of appropriate conditions.

4.1.39. I agree that “The land has no nationally or locally important designation”. It is important to note that the conclusions of the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study do not lead to recommendations for designation of the site due to its alleged sensitivity, and do not give the Appeal site any statutory protection against the type of development proposed. Policy E7 of the NBC Local Plan and Policy N6 of the Core Strategy provide some protection to the skyline within the Appeal site; their purpose is to ensure that proposals respond sensitively
to, and minimise adverse effects on, views of the skyline when viewed from the north and east. The Head of Planning considered that the Appeal proposals had achieved this, which I agree with. I will discuss this further in section 7.4 of my proof.

**Conclusion**

4.1.40. In conclusion (para 8.1), the Head of Planning stated as follows:

“Notwithstanding that the Joint Core Strategy has not been adopted, it is considered that the site’s allocation under Policy N6 of the submitted Core Strategy is a material consideration that should carry significant weight in the consideration of this application. It is recognised that there are outstanding objections, however the submitted Core Strategy is in an advanced stage of preparation, and no materially different issues were identified by the Inspector at the examination hearings sessions into the proposed allocation that would appear to call into doubt the principle of the site’s acceptability as an allocation. Officer opinion is that the policy and development of the site as proposed is consistent with the requirements of NPPF.”

4.1.41. The Joint Core Strategy has subsequently been adopted and the Appeal site allocated as part of Policy N6; the proposal is in compliance with Policy N6 as I will demonstrate in sections 7.0. I agree with the Head of Planning’s opinion that “the policy and development of the site as proposed is consistent with the requirements of NPPF”.

4.1.42. It is clear that the Head of Planning did not consider that there was an absence of sufficient information to demonstrate appropriate mitigation for the impact of the development on the landscape, skyline and rural character of the area, and I agree with her opinion; I consider that refusal on these grounds cannot be justified. I agree with the Head of Planning’s opinion that the Appeal site is acceptable for the proposed development in the context Policy N6, and that development of the site as proposed is consistent with the requirements of the NPPF.
4.1.43. At paragraph 8.1 the Head of Planning goes on to say:

“In considering the development proposal it is important whilst acknowledging the inevitable impacts of a development of this scale as outlined in this report these are balanced against the Government’s policies as outlined above. The visual and environmental characteristics of the site will change significantly with development, however it is considered that the proposed green infrastructure would assist in reducing the visual impacts and assist in mitigating the ecological impacts to an acceptable degree. Detailed consideration at reserved matters would seek to ensure the sensitive integration of the development within this green infrastructure and into the surrounding area.

... 

On balance, it is considered that the associated highway, environmental and flood impacts and infrastructure requirements can be suitably mitigated through the imposition of the conditions proposed and through the obligations of the S106 and as such should not in themselves represent a constraint to development.

The proposal supports the sustainable growth of Northampton and would make a significant and vital contribution towards the Council’s housing requirements and contribute towards the Government’s aims of improving economic development and the creation of employment and training opportunities in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the Northampton Local Plan and the submitted Joint Core Strategy subject to the conditions below and planning obligations contained within the associated S106 agreement, the proposed development is considered acceptable and is therefore recommended for approval.”

4.1.44. Paragraph 8.1 of the Head of Planning’s report re-iterates many of the points made earlier and supports my assertion that the development as proposed is acceptable. I agree with the conclusions and recommendation of the Head of Planning.

4.2. **Minutes of Planning Committee 6 May 2014**

4.2.1. NBC Planning Committee determined to refuse the planning application at the Committee Meeting on 6 May 2014, despite the recommendations of the Head of
Planning. The minutes only record that the development fails to comply with one Northampton Local Plan policy (H7). The second Reason for Refusal introduced two further Local Plan policies (E1 and E7).

4.2.2. The Planning Committee ratified the reasons for refusal in relation to the Appellant’s Outline Planning Application on 28 January 2015 (8 months post determination).

4.3. Inspector’s Report on the Examination into the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan, 2 October 2014

4.3.1. The chronology of events leading to the Inspector’s report and the adopted Core Strategy is set out by Mr Tulley in his proof. The report is made on the proposed allocation for in the region of 1,300 dwellings including the Appeal site and land to the east and south east.

4.3.2. It is agreed in the Landscape SoCG that the Inspector had the following documents that are relevant to landscape and visual matters before him at the Examination:

- Northampton Local Plan, June 1997 (CD-24)
- Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite (version 2.2) (CD-101)
- Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study 2009 (CD-94)

4.3.3. Under Issue 13 - Northampton South of Brackmills (policy N6) the Inspector confirmed the SUE’s suitability for development as proposed by the JPU, occupying a larger area and comprising a greater number of dwellings than the Appeal proposal. He recognised the good relationship between the SUE and the existing urban areas of Northampton stating:

“This site is well related to the existing built up area on the south eastern edge of the town with existing housing to the west and south and close to the substantial Brackmills employment area to the north...” (Paragraph 139.)
4.3.4. The Inspector noted that the **Policy would deliver appropriate facilities and elements**, all of which form part of the Appeal proposals:

“... A SUE here would provide a new local centre, primary school and medical facilities, as well as new housing. The scale is such that a mix of size and type of new homes should prove deliverable.

*This would include an appropriate percentage of affordable housing, in accordance with policy H2, together with a park, allotments, informal green spaces and sustainable drainage features. In addition, a green corridor running roughly north west to south east across the site, plus peripheral green spaces would help to define but also soften the edges of the development, especially to the east where it would adjoin open countryside.*” (Paragraphs 139 and 140.)

4.3.5. A green corridor “running roughly north west to south east across the site” is proposed along the retained route of PRoW KN6, as shown on the Green Infrastructure Framework Plan (3238_205 Rev A), Illustrative Masterplan (3238/200 item 4) and DAS (pages 82 and 83) CDs 4 and 5). The eastern edge of the Appeal site has been designed with a green corridor appropriate to join open countryside; however, the land to the east is allocated for housing (as shown on Figure 11 in Appendix 1) so it is likely that this edge of the Appeal site will not, in the future, form the eastern edge of Northampton.

4.3.6. At paragraph 141 the Inspector recognised that **local landscape sensitivity issues** addressed by saved Policy E7 of the 1997 Local Plan and by the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study 2009 can be mitigated, and the role that Brackmills Wood plays in this mitigation:

“The local landscape sensitivity of parts of the site can be addressed and partly mitigated through such measures, together with the backdrop of woodland to the north, which forms a strong local landscape feature, as part of a comprehensive masterplan for the whole site. The masterplan should also take into account the potential skyline views of buildings on the site from the north and east...”
4.3.7. I demonstrate that the Appeal proposals have addressed and mitigated local landscape sensitivity issues in section 6.0 of my proof.

4.3.8. The application Masterplan only covers the Appeal site, having been submitted before N6 was extended eastwards. However, my amended Framework plans in Appendix 5 illustrate how the Appeal Masterplan can successfully be extended eastwards (as I discuss in Section 6.7). If an application is submitted for the land to the east at a future date, it will be for the applicant to demonstrate how the Masterplan for the extended area addresses design and sensitivity issues.

4.3.9. The Inspector stated as follows in relation to existing roads and footpaths:

“... The masterplan should also take into account ... the retention, if at all possible, of existing footpaths, Landimore Road and the minor road within the site to help integrate the scheme into its surroundings. ...” (Paragraph 141.)

4.3.10. The masterplan retains these features and provides appropriate settings to them, and provides substantial additional connections and amenity routes and spaces as I discuss in section 6.0 of my proof.

4.3.11. The inspector concluded that “As a result, the development should not materially threaten the separate identity of the settlements of Hardingstone and Wootton.” (Paragraph 141.)

4.3.12. The Illustrative Masterplan fully addresses the issues raised by the Inspector and will not materially threaten the separate identity of the settlements of Hardingstone and Wootton.

4.4. Matters of Disagreement in the Landscape SoCG (CD-17) and NBC’s Statement of Case (CD-21)

4.4.1. I discuss each of the four matters of disagreement in section 4.0 of the SoCG, relating them to matters raised in NBC’s Statement of Case (SoC) regarding landscape and visual impact below.
Whether and if so to what extent the proposed layout is of a scale and density that results in an urbanising effect and is of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area (SoCG first bullet)

4.4.2. Paragraph 3.13 of the Council’s SoC (CD-21) states that the Illustrative Masterplan and Framework Plans “... proposes a layout that is of a scale and density that results in a very urban form which is out of keeping with the rural edge location of the site. It is considered that the proposed layout would result in an adverse impact on the local landscape character, including the openness of the large scale fields and long distance views across the valley from the important ridgeline.”

4.4.3. As I have discussed in section 4.1, detailed design will be undertaken at the Reserved Matters stage and subject to a Design Code, as noted by the Head of Planning. I consider that the Appeal proposal is an appropriate response to the location, and is of a scale and density that accords with Policy N6 of the adopted Core Strategy. As I have previously noted, Policy N6 also allocates land to the east and south-east for further housing and, once the SUE is fully developed, the Appeal site will not be on the rural edge, but enclosed within the urban area of Northampton by development to the west, south and east, and Brackmills Wood and Industrial Estate to the north.

4.4.4. I agree that the proposal would result in an adverse impact on local landscape character, including the openness of the arable fields, as is likely for housing development of the scale and density allocated on any arable fields. This would have been understood and accepted by the Inspector when he recommended that the site be allocated.

4.4.5. The only long distance views across the valley (presumably meaning the Nene Valley to the north) that are likely to be significantly affected are from PRoW KN6 running through the western part of the site. I have assessed effects on views from this PRoW in my updated LVIA and these are presented in section 7.4 of my proof, along with an analysis of typical views from the ridgeline to the east of the Appeal site.
The impact of the proposed development upon the important skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley (SoCG second bullet)

The degree of effect on local landscape character (SoCG third bullet)

4.4.6. Paragraph 3.12 of the Council’s SoC (CD-21) refers to impact on the principal ridgeline and Limestone Valley Slopes landscape character area, and the high landscape and visual sensitivity to “major mixed-use urban extension development in excess of 5ha” according to the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (CD-94). In section 3.6 I have explained that the Appeal site is not of high landscape and visual sensitivity when considered in detail and in relation to the Appeal proposals. I discuss effects on views of the ‘ridge’, on landscape character and the setting of Northampton in section 7.0, drawing on my updated LVIA (CD-134), where I show that significant effects will be local to the site and acceptable.

Adverse impact on long distance views across the valley from the important ridgeline (Council’s SoC (CD-21) paragraph 3.14)

4.4.7. I discuss effects on long distance views across the valley from the ridgeline in section 7.5. I note here that this has never been raised as an area of concern before and no indication of which views are of concern, or how an urban extension as allocated and proposed could be designed without having some adverse impacts on views, could be designed. It is likely that the views referred to are from PRoW KN6 which I discuss below.

The proposed treatment and context of public footpath KN6 where it runs through the Appeal site (Landscape SoCG (CD-17) fourth bullet)

4.4.8. Paragraph 3.14 of the Council’s SoC (CD-21) states that the proposals “… do not recognise the existing character of Public Footpath KN6 and that the proposed mitigation is inappropriate in its context.” I have explained how the Head of Planning agreed with the proposed treatment of the existing public footpath that runs through the site, that the scheme is illustrative, and that a detailed design of and context to the PRoW will be agreed by condition. The PRoW runs through a site allocated for 1,300 dwellings and will, therefore, pass through an urban area. The
illustrative design approach to this PRoW presented in the Appeal proposals provides a positive and appropriate response to its context which I discuss further in section 6.0.

4.4.9. Paragraph 3.15 of the Council’s SoC (CD-21) states that “… green infrastructure principles should be better incorporated within the proposed development.” I have explained how the Head of Planning agreed with the proposed Green Infrastructure (Officer’s Report (CD-61) paragraphs 7.24 and 7.30), that the scheme is illustrative, and that a detailed design of Green Infrastructure will be agreed by condition. The DAS (CD-5) and my LVIA (CD-134) set out how Green Infrastructure principles are incorporated into the development, and I describe this in section 6.0. As I have noted above in section 4.1, the Head of Planning stated that “the proposed green infrastructure would assist in reducing the visual impacts and assist in mitigating the ecological impacts to an acceptable degree. Detailed consideration at reserved matters would seek to ensure the sensitive integration of the development within this green infrastructure and into the surrounding area.” (CD-57 paragraph 8.1). I agree with this statement.
5.0 The Council’s objections to development on the site

5.1.1. In this section I discuss the history of the Council’s objections to the Appeal proposals and allocation under Policy N6 in relation to landscape and visual issues. Mr Tulley explains the chronology of events in his proof. I summarise this below, noting where landscape and visual concerns were or were not raised, and the nature of concern.

5.2. NBC’s objection to Policy N6

5.2.1. Mr Tulley explains that NBC has consistently supported the allocation of the Appeal site in the Core Strategy since 2009 when it formed part of Northampton South East Extension included in the Joint Core Strategy preferred location for growth. Only when the Inspector issued his proposed modifications in late 2013 to extend the Northampton South of Brackmills SUE allocation eastwards of the Appeal site and in doing so increase the SUE from 1,000 to in the region of 1,300 dwellings did NBC object to the extension on highway grounds – not on landscape or visual grounds.

5.2.2. Mr Tulley also notes that in objecting in February 2014, NBC was only objecting to the inclusion of the land outside the Appeal site to the east and additional housing numbers and not to the original allocation for 1,000 dwellings on the Appeal site.

5.2.3. N6 was then allocated for in the region of 1,300 dwellings in December 2014, after which NBC resolved to confirm its objection to the allocation at a Committee Meeting on 19 January 2015 (CC49). The minutes of the meeting record that seven councillors spoke setting out their views against the allocation, including reasons why they felt it should be voted against – none of the Councillors expressed concern regarding landscape and visual impacts or impacts on the setting of Northampton.

5.2.4. The report of the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning to the Committee Meeting on 19 January 2015 gives lengthy discussion on reasons why the Council should confirm its objection. Paragraphs 3.1.8 to 3.1.17 set out the history of the examination hearings of the Joint Core Strategy explaining the Council’s reasons for at different stages – in the ten paragraphs concern over landscape and visual issues is not mentioned once. Only towards the end of the
report when setting out three options for the Planning Committee to consider is anything related to landscape / visual mentioned, and then only once as follows (bold emphasis added):

“The Council’s Joint Strategic Planning Committee’s members considered that the transport, impact on setting of the existing settlements, increased flooding risk and social infrastructure implications of the policy N5 and N6 allocations are so significant that these sites should not be allocated in the Core Strategy.” (paragraph 3.1.33)

5.2.5. There is no discussion, explanation or evidence on why the implications of N6 regarding impact on setting of the existing settlements are of concern or significant in relation to Policy N6.

5.2.6. This demonstrates to me that, while the Council may have concerns on the allocation of N6, impact on the setting of settlements is not one of those, and is only referred to in the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning’s report in an attempt to bolster the objection which is fundamentally based on other grounds.

5.3. **NBCs objection to the Appeal proposal**

5.3.1. A similar pattern applies to the Appeal proposal. Extensive consultation was had with the Council, as well as other consultees and the public, leading up to the planning application. This is set out in the Joint Position Statement by WNJPU, HCA, and Martin Grant Homes for Policy N6 (CD-45, March 2014) where it states:

“5.2 The HCA has carried out a full range of technical work in support of an outline planning application for development of a residential-led scheme in accordance with the emerging West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. The outline application (with all matters reserved other than access which is provided in detail) was submitted to Northampton Borough Council in March 2013. The application, reference no. N/2013/0338, comprises ...  

5.4 With the support of a professional consultancy team the HCA has undertaken a masterplanning process for the site to ensure that the new development has a positive relationship with the existing neighbouring communities and creates a
characterful, green and accessible new community, integrated with its neighbours and considerate of its surrounding landscape context.

5.5 The master plan has evolved as a result of an iterative process of review and assessment of the parameters for development in the context of the opportunities and constraints provided by existing settlement, movement and access patterns; the existing connections, green spaces and community facilities and the site’s location and setting within the local landform. The master plan incorporates the main access and circulation routes for the new development; the location of the proposed local centre and primary school; the Green Infrastructure Framework to incorporate informal green space, parks, allotments and sustainable drainage features; and connections to adjoining settlements and green space areas.

5.6 A consultation strategy was established early in the master plan development process, to ensure that the outline planning application was developed with the input and involvement of a range of community and other stakeholder contributors. The consultation strategy drew on the extensive stakeholder consultation and public engagement work previously undertaken for the site as part of the former (Wootton Strategic Development Area) scheme proposals in 2008.

5.7 This earlier work enabled engagement on the outline application to build upon feedback already received from the public and to present initial development concepts, taking into account established key themes and concerns. It established as a baseline that the principle of development on the site was justifiable. This approach was agreed in advance with NBC by the HCA and, building on this, the specific consultation relating to the current outline application included:

- two stakeholder consultation workshop meetings (November 2011 and February 2012) setting out the development objectives and parameters for the scheme;
- two meetings with community (Parish Council) representatives (November 2011 and February 2012);
- a public exhibition of the emerging masterplan framework proposal (June 2012);
• a pre-planning exhibition of the final submission proposals reminding the public of the key drivers of the master plan framework; the main issues raised in the consultation process and the design response taken to incorporate positive solutions to these and other issues as part of the outline planning application

• a further public exhibition of the outline planning application proposals (July 2013).

5.8 The outline application was submitted to Northampton Borough Council in March 2013 and a determination of this application by the Borough Council is anticipated in Spring 2014…"

5.3.2. NBC therefore considered that the principle of development on the site was justifiable.

5.3.3. The Head of Planning, in her report to Committee 6 May 2014 (CD-57) supported the planning application and recommended that it should be approved, as I have discussed in section 4.1. The Committee minutes (at which it was resolved to refuse the application) (CD-58) record discussions and, in objection, only one matter related to landscape / visual issues was raised by Mr Punter representing Hardingstone Action Group as follows:

“He opposed the application and suggested it would result in Hardingstone losing its character…”

5.3.4. The minutes then record that the Committee voted to refuse the application on the grounds that:

“The development fails to comply with Policy H7 of the Northampton Local Plan and is not in conformity with the overarching intentions of the National Planning Policy Framework.”

5.3.5. Policy H7 (which has been replaced by Policy H1 of the Core Strategy) included the following statement relevant to my proof:
“Outside the preliminary residential areas identified on the Proposals Map, planning permission for residential development will only be granted where:

...

B) The development would not be at a scale and density which would be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area or would result in an over intensive development of the site

...

5.3.6. This Committee meeting was the first time the Council found the proposed development to be unacceptable on scale, density, landscape or visual grounds. I explain in sections 7.4 how the objection on density is contradictory to their own adopted Policy H1 which requires a minimum of 35 dwellings per hectare, and to the Appeal proposal which meets the minimum density requirement of Policy H1.

5.3.7. In the decision notice, in the Council’s Statement of Case, and in the Statement of Common Ground other landscape and visual concerns have been raised by the Council, that they had not raised before, namely:

- The impact of the proposed development upon the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley
- The proposed treatment and context of public footpath KN6 where it runs through the Appeal site.

5.4. **Summary**

- NBC has supported the allocation of the Appeal site until the allocation was proposed for extension east of, and outside, the Appeal site in late 2013.
- NBC objected to the extension to the allocation on highway grounds – not on landscape or visual grounds.
- NBC did not object to the allocation of the Appeal site for 1,000 dwellings, and indeed supported it in its representations, in the pre-submission draft Core Strategy.
• In objecting in February 2014, NBC was only objecting to the inclusion of the land outside the Appeal site to the east and additional housing numbers, and not to the original allocation for 1,000 dwellings on the Appeal site.

• The Core Strategy was then found to be sound by the Planning Inspector and was adopted by the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (of which NBC is part).

• NBC resolved to confirm its objection at the Committee Meeting on 19 January 2015 (CC48). At this meeting, the minutes record that none of the Councillors who spoke expressed concern regarding the scale and density of the proposal, landscape and visual impacts, or impacts on the setting of settlements.

• The report of the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning to the Committee Meeting on 19 January 2015 sets out the history of the examination hearings of the Joint Core Strategy explaining the Council's reasons for objection at different stages – in the ten paragraphs concern over landscape and visual issues is not mentioned once.

• Only towards the end of the report of the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning to the Committee Meeting on 19 January 2015, when setting out three options for the Planning Committee to consider, is anything related to landscape / visual matters raised where “impact on setting of the existing settlements” is mentioned for the first and only time. There is no discussion, explanation or evidence on why the implications of N6 regarding impact on setting of the existing settlements are of concern or significant in relation to Policy N6.

• In pre-application discussions on the Appeal proposals NBC considered that the principle of development on the site was justifiable.

• The Head of Planning, in her report to Committee 6 May 2014 (CD-57) supported the planning application and recommended that it should be approved

• The Committee minutes of 6 May 2014 (at which it was resolved to refuse the application) (CD-58) record discussions and, in objection, only one matter
related to landscape / visual issues was raised by one person on the basis that “it would result in Hardingstone losing its character…”

- This Committee meeting was the first time the Council found the proposed development to be unacceptable on scale, density, landscape or visual grounds.

5.4.1. This evidence strongly indicates that:

- the Council’s concerns are in relation the additional 300 dwellings on land to the east of the Appeal site and not in relation to the proposed 1,000 dwellings on the Appeal site;

- NBC’s main concerns with Policy N6 and the Appeal proposals relates to matters other than landscape / visual / scale / density / settlement setting; and that

- landscape and visual concerns have only been raised at the point of determination of the planning application in an attempt to bolster the objection which is fundamentally based on other grounds.
6.0 The Appeal Scheme

6.1.1. The Appeal scheme is described in detail in the DAS (CD-5) and matters relevant to landscape and visual effects are described in section 5.0 of my updated LVIA (CD-134). Road and PRoW names and references are shown on Figures 6, 7 and 10 of my LVIA (LVIA Appendices Volume II Appendix 13) (CD-134).

6.1.2. Landscape and Green Infrastructure considerations were considered as an integral part of the design process as the masterplan evolved, responding to the requirements of the emerging Core Strategy and in particular Policy N6. Key aspects of the design that were particularly informed by the landscape assessment are explained in detail in section 5.0 of my updated LVIA (CD-134).

6.1.3. The Application Masterplan responds to the existing urban fabric and character of Hardingstone to the west, Wootton to the south, Brackmills Country Park to the north and landscape to the east, as set out in the DAS and Framework Plans (CDs 5 and 2). The spatial arrangement of the principal elements of the plan responds to the key issues discussed with the community representatives in the early stages of consultation and agreed subsequently with the local authority officers, stakeholders and statutory consultees. The integrated masterplan framework proposes development character areas with design principles on landscape, built form and access that respond to the various context and edge conditions of the site.

6.1.4. I summarise the key design issues and how they address relevant policy below.

6.2. Skyline and integration with context

6.2.1. The approach to the skyline issue was informed by saved Policy E7 of the Local Plan and supporting text to Policy N6 of the pre-submission Core Strategy (paragraph 12.46) (CD-26). This was carefully considered when defining where built development should be located and how development and landscape should be designed. The existing landform within the site is not widely visible on the skyline due to the site being enclosed by woodland to the north, development to the west and south and rising landform to the east, but there is potential for the proposed
development to be visible on the skyline from some locations. The design seeks to address this and integrate development into the wider landscape.

6.2.2. Tree planting within proposed open spaces within the Appeal site will provide additional screening of the development to that provided by existing woodland within Brackmills Country Park and development adjoining the site. This will give the Appeal proposals a green and treed appearance when viewed from the surrounding countryside, and Northampton and the Nene Valley to the north, thus softening the development and helping to integrate it into the landscape and minimise effects on the skyline protected by Policy E7 of the Local Plan (CD-24) and discussed in paragraph 12.46 (which supports Policy N6) of the Core Strategy (CD-28).

6.2.3. Other measures have been incorporated into the masterplan in response to the skyline issue. The Proposed Layout Framework plan 3238_203 Rev A (CD-2) proposes a development character called 'Permeable Leafy Edge' around the north and eastern edges of the scheme. “A looser arrangement of buildings and well treed green area relates to Brackmills Wood and the elevated position along this boundary” (Page 73 of the DAS (CD-5)). Another characteristic of the Permeable Edge is the limit on building height up to 2 storeys, with three storey buildings further south (Scale Framework plan 3238_204 Rev A).

6.2.4. This approach will continue the existing treed appearance of the developed ‘ridge’ of high land which runs through neighbourhoods in Northampton to the west, and through the site where it adjoins Hardingstone. This can be seen by viewing my photomontages of the proposed development from Viewpoints 8, 9 and 10 within Northampton and the Nene valley to the north in Appendix 6 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17).
6.3. **Open space, pedestrian access, Green Infrastructure**

6.3.1. Responding to good design principles, local guidance\(^1\), and Policies BN1 and N6 of the Core Strategy, and also the report of the Inspector at the Core Strategy Examination, the Masterplan has been structured around swathes of open space including:

- a Green Infrastructure spine, which runs along the existing PRoW KN6 across the highest, western part of the site (see Green Infrastructure Framework drawing 3238_205 Rev A and item 4 on Figure 45 (page 94) of the DAS and the Illustrative Masterplan drawing 3238/200 (CDs 2, 5 and 4)). This green infrastructure spine will be a broad green space which will have an informal and formal treed character as shown on my illustrative views in Appendix 6.

- A green corridor will run around the interface with the northern, eastern and part of the southern boundaries of the site (see drawing 3238_205 Rev A (CD-2)). This will be a multifunctional green corridor that provides habitat improvements and ecological connectivity. Coordinated with the Access and Movement Framework Plan (see Figures 24 and 27 (pages 62 and 68) of the DAS (CD-5) and drawing number 3238_201 Rev A (CD-2)). These green corridors and spaces provide for cycle and pedestrian circulation as appropriate into adjacent publicly accessible green spaces including Brackmills Country Park. It will provide the Indicative Structural Green Space associated with SUE on the northern edge of the site adjoining Brackmills Country Park shown on Figure 5 Inset 11 of the Core Strategy (CD-28), and also along the eastern boundary if this were to become the permanent eastern edge to Northampton.

6.3.2. The proposed public open space, routes and Green Infrastructure will safeguard and provide an attractive setting for PRoW KN6 retaining the link between

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\(^1\) Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite, version 2.2, April 2008 (River Nene Regional Park CIC (CD-101) and Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study, February 2009 (CD-94) as discussed in sections 4.5 and 4.6
Hardingstone and the Newport Pagnell Road, and provide access to additional new routes and spaces that are currently on land not accessible to the public, increasing the amenity value of the land. This will also allow people in existing communities in Hardingstone and Wootton to have new access links to existing Green Infrastructure areas and routes such as Brackmills Country Park.

6.3.3. The proposed Green and Blue Infrastructure will also provide opportunities for increasing biodiversity through the introduction of elements including swales and water attenuation areas, grassland and tree and shrub planting. I describe how biodiversity will be enhanced in more detail below.

6.3.4. A range of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) solutions will be implemented in accordance with the Blue Infrastructure Framework (see Figure 44 (page 86) in the DAS (CD-5) and drawing number 3238_206 Rev A (CD-2)) to manage the surface water. These measures will include swales, attenuation basins, infiltration basins and trenches, filter drains and permeable paving solutions. These will be integrated as part of the Green Infrastructure framework to allow habitat creation, and opportunities for enhancements to biodiversity and landscape character. For example, responding to the topography within the site, drainage of the proposed development will fall to the south-east (lowest point of the site) where an area of public open space has been proposed (11 on Figure 45 (page 94) of the DAS (CD-5) and drawing 3238/200 (CD-135)), allowing for a retention pond, new habitat, a soft green edge to the proposed development seen from Newport Pagnell Road and The Green, and informal green space.

6.4. **Existing vegetation**

6.4.1. The extent of existing hedges, trees, scrub and woodland within the Appeal site is agreed in section 3.6 of the Landscape SoCG.

6.4.2. Existing mature trees and hedgerows within and on the boundaries of the site will be retained and enhanced (except where hedges are locally broken to enable access and trees need to be removed for safety reasons). This will retain the main landscape features within the Appeal site which defined the existing landscape structure, help to screen or filter views of the proposed development from the surrounding
landscape, as well as providing an established ‘green’ setting within and around the new development.

6.4.3. The principal areas of vegetation within the site comprising a small area of woodland and length of hedgerow north of Pagnell Court, and a length of hedge with four mature oak trees further east, will be incorporated into two open spaces.

- The wood and hedge north of Pagnell Court will be incorporated into a large public space (13 on Figure 45 (page 94) of the DAS (CD-5) and drawing 3238/200 (CD-135)) connecting to the green spine running along PRoW KN6, providing a new green amenity space accessible on an attractive route from Hardingstone. An illustrative view along the proposed green spine towards this open space can be seen at Viewpoint D in Appendix 6.

- The existing hedge and four mature oak trees running north south in the eastern part of the site will be incorporated into a green corridor that includes a ‘village green’ at its centre (10 on Figure 45 (page 94) of the DAS (CD-5) and drawing 3238/200 (CD-135)). It will provide a Green Infrastructure link between the southern perimeter Green Infrastructure corridor, The Green (a minor road) and the further allocated development area within the SUE to the south east of the site, and proposed allotments, the northern perimeter Green Infrastructure corridor and Brackmills Country Park to the north of the site.

6.5. **Proposals adjoining existing housing**

6.5.1. Areas of usable space will be developed between the rear gardens of properties located along The Warren and Pagnell Court (13 and 15 on Figure 45 of the DAS (CD-5) and drawing 3238/200 (CD-135)) ensuring that the spaces are overlooked by existing and proposed housing, providing casual surveillance to help ensure that it is safe and not misused.

6.5.2. An appropriate and secure interface between the existing residential properties and new development will be developed on other parts of the boundaries with The Warren and Newport Pagnell Road by having new gardens backing onto existing
rear gardens, as agreed with stakeholders including NBC, the JPU and Northamptonshire Police and discussed in more detail below.

**Policy N6 and Indicative Structural Green Space associated with SUE**

6.5.3. As discussed in section 3.3, Policy N6 of the Core Strategy (CD-28) states that development of the SUE will make provision for “structural greenspace and wildlife corridors as indicated on the Policies Map (Figure 5)” and “the creation of a landscape buffer to the south west of the site as indicated on the Policies Map (Figure 5)”. Figure 5 Inset 11 shows an Indicative Structural Green Space associated with SUE along its south west, west, north and east boundaries. Paragraph 12.47 supporting Policy N6 states “Along part of the southern and western boundaries of the site a landscaped buffer will be required to provide screening between existing residential development and the proposed SUE.”

Northern and eastern boundaries

6.5.4. A response to this on the northern and eastern boundaries in the form of a green corridor along the edges of the proposed development is proposed as I have described in section 6.3.

Western and south western boundaries

6.5.5. The Illustrative Masterplan on page 45 of the DAS (CD-5) and drawing 3238/200 (CD-135) shows proposed gardens adjoining existing gardens on most of the site boundary with properties on Newport Pagnell Road (south) and part of The Warren (west), and allotments and amenity green space along the remainder of the boundaries. These areas are subject to detailed design but, as shown, provide a positive and appropriate treatment in the context of the urban extension to Northampton, providing a normal well established design response to ensure the efficient use of land and the security of both the new and existing properties.

6.5.6. This was discussed with stakeholders including NBC, the JPU and Northamptonshire Police where it was agreed that:

“GD[LDA Design] reported that comments had been received in the public consultation from residents of properties fronting Newport Pagnell Rd. and backing...
onto the site requesting development be moved further away from the ends of their properties. Options for how this might be done have been considered, but from a masterplanning perspective the solution of ensuring that new properties have gardens that back onto these properties is the most sensible solution. CP[NBC] agreed that this was the most sensible approach and suggested that it be dealt with through the design and access statement." (Minutes of Pre-Application Meeting 18 July 2012, item 3.2 (CD-122))

“It was agreed that the ‘green buffer’ referred to on the Core Policy Plan should be interpreted not as a solid belt of woodland, but as an opportunity for a positive interface between the development site and its surrounding context.” (Minutes of Wootton SUE Stakeholder Meeting 22 November 2011, item 6.2 (CD-123))

6.5.7. In their consultation response to the application, Northamptonshire Police stated that “Houses should be designed so that back gardens back onto other back gardens.
... Where back gardens are exposed to public open space to the side or rear the rear boundary fence will need supplementing with a trellis topping to make climbing over more difficult. The new housing should abut the rear gardens of exiting dwellings with no gaps in between.” (CD-123)

6.5.8. A screen / buffer between existing and proposed houses was deliberately not proposed for security reasons, as described on page 78 of the DAS (CD-5) under Security and Safer Places:

“All public open space is clearly defined and has been designed to support the development and the layout avoids any ‘left over space’ or buffer strips that does not serve a function and which could become associated with antisocial behaviour.”

6.5.9. The proposed treatment of these western and south western boundaries where Indicative Structural Green Space is illustrated on Figure 5 Inset 11 of the adopted Core Strategy (CD-28) provides an appropriate response to Policy N6 and the context of the site, arrived at and agreed through consultation.

6.5.10. However, if the Inspector / Secretary of State considers it necessary for a physical screen / buffer to be provided between existing and proposed houses where the
Indicative Structural Green Space associated with SUE is shown in Inset 11, alternative treatments to parts of these edges can be agreed through condition. Two potential alternative treatments are shown in Appendix 7 of my proof. My opinion is that these alternative treatments would be less satisfactory and less secure than the solution proposed on the Illustrative Masterplan.

6.6. **Biodiversity**

6.6.1. Biodiversity enhancements will form a central part of the proposed Green Infrastructure within the Appeal site. The following text is agreed in the Principal SoCG (my bold emphasis added):

“Chapter 7 (Ecology) of the ES has identified that the Appeal site comprises arable fields with either no enclosure or enclosure by species-poor hedgerows, scrub, woodland or garden fence boundaries. It is agreed that, in its existing state, the Appeal site has limited ecological value, with the only Valued Ecological Receptors\(^2\) (VERs) within the site being species-poor intact hedgerows (small areas of which will be removed to create access into the Appeal site), a small number of mature and veteran trees (which will be retained unless removal is necessary for safety reasons), dormice within hedgerows on-site, foraging habitat for a badger sett which lies off-site 50m to the north of the site, and habitats which support foraging and commuting bats.” (Paragraph 8.10.)

6.6.2. The agreed Principal SoCG goes on to explain that the outline development “includes 9.23ha of Green Infrastructure”. It also states that the ES explains that “the ecological aims for this multi functional space are to buffer sensitive habitats and encompass corridors of semi natural habitat across the site”, and sets out the range of semi natural habitats to be incorporated. (Paragraph 8.11.)

\(^2\) “VERs are species and habitats present that are of sufficiently high value that certain levels of impact upon them, as a result of the proposed development, could be considered to be significant.”
6.6.3. The Principal SoCG goes on to agree that “The Green Infrastructure details would be designed at the Reserved Matters stage and delivered through detailed agreed specification and Ecological Management Plans”.

6.6.4. The proposed development would provide improved habitats for a wider range of species in the form of the substantial areas of new Green Infrastructure. Once the proposed areas of Green Infrastructure have become established, the proposals would deliver improved habitats and enhanced biodiversity within the Appeal site and improved connections for wildlife through the site and into adjacent areas.

6.6.5. I note that Natural England, in their consultation response dated 14 May 2013 (CD-132) were “generally supportive of the green infrastructure approach described in the Design and Access Statement including features such as green corridors, the use of SUDS to benefit the site landscape and biodiversity and the ‘green spine’ to provide good pedestrian and cycling routes. We would recommend that a more detailed Green Infrastructure Strategy be produced by way of a planning condition to ensure that the principles set out in the design and access strategy are embedded in the detailed design of the development.”

6.6.6. Natural England recognised the value of the juxtaposition of Brackmills Wood. “This adjacent woodland offers a major opportunity to provide a valuable recreational resource for the local community and to allow the site to provide a net benefit to biodiversity (as required by NPPF paragraphs 9, 109), particularly as much of the woodland is in the same land ownership as that of the development site. Natural England strongly supports the aspiration in the Design and Access Statement to integrate and connect the development to Brackmills Wood. Housing within the ‘permeable edge’ zone adjacent to the woodland would be lower density and have a higher tree cover than elsewhere with houses looking out on the habitat corridor and woodland to bring these areas into the public realm. The Masterplan also shows connections from the site to the woodland encouraging residents to utilise it.”

6.6.7. Natural England had an excellent understanding of the aspirations and intentions of the proposals as set out in the DAS and recognised that detail of the Green
Infrastructure would be provided at Reserved Matters stage to ensure that the principles set out in the DAS are embedded in the scheme.

6.7. **Policy N6 – integrated Masterplan for the whole allocation**

6.7.1. The proposed eastern edge provides an appropriate new green edge with the countryside; however, the Masterplan was designed before the SUE was extended to the east. The additional land to the east is being promoted by Martin Grant Homes and Harcourt Developments, and they submitted a representation to the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan with an Indicative Development Framework Plan showing their indicative scheme joining the Appeal scheme. I have included their Indicative Development Framework Plan included with their submission in Appendix 5. In March 2014 the JPU, HCA and Martin Grant Homes prepared a Joint Position Statement on draft Policy N6 stating that:

> “The extension to the SUE can be implemented within the context provided by the master plan set out in the HCA’s planning application. It is recognised that a separate planning application would be required for the extended part of the site, which would be accompanied by the requisite technical supporting documents.”

(CD-45 paragraph 5.9).

6.7.2. I have adapted the application Framework Plans to show how one option on how the HCA’s layout can be modified with limited changes to connect to future development on the additional land to the east, based broadly on Martin Grant’s Indicative Development Framework Plan; these are presented in Appendix 5. These plans demonstrate that the integration of the Martin Grant Homes and Harcourt Developments land to create a coordinated design for the adopted Policy N6 SUE area is achievable with the application of design principles set out in the Appeal scheme. Whilst Martin Grant Homes and Harcourt Developments may wish to pursue a planning application for their land that retains separate independent access from the Appeal site, there is little on the HCA Illustrative Masterplan that would have to be amended to facilitate their development irrespective of how they wanted to access their scheme. The existing lane leading to Great Houghton (The Green) is where the main difference would be depending on how the future applicant wished
to access their development. The option shown on my adapted Framework Plans in Appendix 5 illustrates that, with limited adjustment to vehicular access up to the edge of the Appeal site, the layout can accommodate access and connection requirements to potential development to the east, to provide an integrated scheme for N6.
7.0 **Response to Reason for Refusal 2**

7.1. **Introduction**

7.1.1. The second reason for refusal can be divided into the following issues:

**The existing site**

1) Landscape and visual sensitivity

“The site is identified in the Northampton Landscape [Sensitivity] 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.”

2) Skyline

“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.”

3) Amenity access

“Public Footpath KN6 runs across the site in a south-easterly direction providing amenity access through the rural landscape.”

**The National Planning Policy Framework**

7.1.2. It refers to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

“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.”

**Alleged harm**

7.1.3. It states that the proposal would cause harm as follows:
“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.”

Insufficient information and conclusion

7.1.4. It concludes that:

“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.”

7.1.5. Recalling that this is an outline application, I consider that sufficient information was submitted with the planning application to demonstrate appropriate mitigation, and the Council’s Head of Planning found no deficiencies in the submitted information in drawing her conclusions and recommending approval. At no point prior to publication of the Decision Notice did Northampton Borough Council say that the application contained insufficient information or request Further Environmental Information under Section 22 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 prior to determination of the Application. Members could have deferred the decision to request adequate information.

7.1.6. Further information has been agreed with Northampton Borough Council’s landscape witness IEL through the Landscape SoCG (CD-17). It was agreed that LDA Design would provide the following:

- An updated LVIA based on new guidance (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) (CD-152). This was submitted to NBC and their Landscape Witness IEL on 6 May 2015 and to PINs on 12 May 2015, (CD-134).
- An additional nine representative viewpoints to the eight agreed within the submitted LVIA, giving a total of seventeen for inclusion in the updated LVIA.
Wirelines and photomontages from six of these viewpoints. Photomontages from five of these viewpoints were submitted to NBC and IEL on 27th March 2015 and, at IEL’s request an additional photomontage was produced from a sixth viewpoint and wirelines were produced from all six photomontage viewpoints. These final photomontages and wireframes were submitted to NBC and IEL on 29th April 2015, and are included in Appendix 6 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17) which was submitted to PINs on 12th May 2015.

7.1.7. Paragraph 3.7.3 of the Landscape SoCG states:

“It is agreed that it is appropriate to submit representative viewpoints with photomontages and wireframes of the Proposed Development (noting that they are illustrative because the application is in ‘outline’). It is agreed that photomontages will only be produced from the six viewpoints noted in Table 1 below. These have been prepared by LDA Design and are included in Appendix 6 and a method statement in Appendix 7. The methodology, as appended to this document, is appropriate. It is agreed that the wireframes and photomontages are suitable for use as part of this appeal.”

7.1.8. The wireframes and photomontages have been prepared accurately by using detailed digital terrain data and topographical survey as explained in Appendix 7 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17).

7.1.9. They are accurate and suitable for illustrating the scale and potential appearance of the proposal. They are of particular use in demonstrating potential effects on the skyline when viewed from Northampton and the Nene valley to the north.

7.1.10. I have assessed landscape and visual effects in my updated LVIA (CD-134). I discuss the landscape and visual and design issues and summarise the relevant conclusions of the updated LVIA below, specifically relating to the issues raised in the second reason for refusal (CD-61), matters of disagreement in the Landscape SoCG (CD-17) and NBC’s Statement of Case (CD-21). I also review the conclusions in the context of relevant planning policy in sections 7.6 and 7.7.
7.2. **LVIA method**

7.2.1. The updated LVIA has been undertaken in a robust and structured manner in accordance with the methodology set out in GLVIA. GLVIA states that “*Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and people's views and visual amenity.*” (Paragraph 1.1.)

7.2.2. The methodology of the LVIA (CD-134) has three key stages:

- Baseline – includes the gathering of documented information and a site visit.
- Design – input into the design and mitigation.
- Assessment – includes an assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the scheme.

7.2.3. The assessment stage includes:

- An assessment of the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors to the proposed development.
- An assessment of the magnitude and significance of effects upon the landscape character, designated landscapes and the existing visual environment arising from the proposed development, accounting for any changes in effects as proposed planting matures with time.
- An informed professional judgement as to whether each identified effect is positive, neutral or adverse.

7.2.4. The significance of effects on specific receptors is assessed on the following sliding scale:

- Major;
- Major-Moderate;
- Moderate;
• Slight;
• Minimal.

7.2.5. As noted in the LVIA, “Effects that are Major-Moderate or Major are considered to be significant. Effects of Moderate significance or less are “of lesser concern” (the term “of lesser concern” is from GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 3.35). It should also be noted that whilst an effect may be significant, that does not necessarily mean that such an impact would be unacceptable, or should necessarily be regarded as an “undue consequence” (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 5.40).

**LVIA clarifications**

7.2.6. In preparing my proof I have notices some minor items in the updated LVIA that I would like to clarify.

1) The Figures in Appendix 13 of the LVIA (CD-134) show the Site boundary as being is slightly different to the Site boundary shown on the Framework drawings (CD-135), in the north east corner and along Newport Pagnell Road. The Framework plans show the correct Site boundary which is the Application boundary. This does not change any of the assessed effects in my updated LVIA. Figures 11, 12 and 13 in Appendix 1 to my proof show the Application boundary.

2) The photograph panel of Illustrative Viewpoint I - Newport Pagnell Road East of Pagnell Court in Appendix 15 of my updated LVIA (Volume II, CD-134) (drawing numbers 3943_IP_001_L, 3943_IP_001_C and 3943_IP_001_R) are titled Illustrative Viewpoint II in the lower right corner of the A3 sheets; this should read Illustrative Viewpoint I.

3) Table 2 of my updated LVIA (CD-134, main text) states that effects on Viewpoint 8 – Cliftonville Road, Northampton are of Small to Negligible scale and Neutral during Construction and at Year 1. Although the effects would be so small and seen in the context of prominent foreground development and could be deemed to be Neutral, the effect should be changed to **Adverse**. I record it as Adverse in this proof.
7.2.7. I now address each of the main issues raised in Reason for Refusal 2, and in matters of disagreement within the landscape SoCG and in NBC’s SoC, drawing on the conclusions of the updated LVIA.

7.3. **The existing site – landscape and visual sensitivity**

7.3.1. The skyline and sensitivity issues are interrelated; as discussed in section 3.6 of my proof the Appeal site lies on part of a long ridge that is identified as High landscape and visual sensitivity by the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study for reasons that relate to the visibility on the skyline and the contribution to the setting of Northampton. This ‘ridge’ runs from Hunsbury Hill within the urban area (west), through Hardingstone to Cogenhoe and Whiston (east) which I have illustrated on Figure 12 (Appendix 1). I have described in section 3.6 how I consider that the Appeal site is not of High landscape and visual sensitivity in relation to the Appeal proposals as could be implied from the Study, and that the Study states that it considers strategic issues, rather than detailed issues pertaining to individual sites, and that further work would be required to assess visibility and character issues at the local scale as part of more detailed site-specific assessments.

7.3.2. My LVIA, following GLVIA3, assesses landscape sensitivity in detail. I explain in section 6.2.3 of my LVIA (CD-134), and it is agreed in the Landscape SoCG, that the Appeal site lies within landscape character area (LCA) 12a Wollaston to Irchester which lies partly on this ‘ridge’. I demonstrate how the landscape sensitivity to the type of development proposed varies throughout the character area, with the site being within a lower sensitivity area due to the relatively enclosed, urban context, and parts of the more visually exposed land and land with less urban influence to the north and east of the site being of higher sensitivity.

7.3.3. My LVIA follows the method in GLVIA3 to define landscape sensitivity by combining assessments of susceptibility and landscape value, as explained in section 2.2.1 (CD-152). I conclude in section 6.2.3 of my LVIA that LCA 12a Wollaston to Irchester is of **Medium** sensitivity to the proposed development based on an assessment of **Medium** susceptibility and **Local / District** landscape value.
7.3.4. **Susceptibility** indicates the ability of a landscape character area to accommodate the proposed development “*without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies*” (GLVIA, 3rd version, para 5.40). It is rated on the following scale:

- High – undue consequences are likely to arise from the proposed development.
- Medium – undue consequences may arise from the proposed development.
- Low - undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the proposed development.

7.3.5. Susceptibility of landscape character areas is influenced by their characteristics and is frequently considered (though often recorded as ‘sensitivity’ rather than susceptibility) within documented landscape character assessments and capacity studies.

7.3.6. **Landscape Value** is “*the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society*” (GLVIA, 3rd version, page 157).

7.3.7. I assess the LCA as **Medium** susceptibility to the proposed development for a number of reasons which, in summary are as follows:

- The relationship of the site to the wider character area. The site lies on the south western edge of the LCA and is strongly influenced by roads (including Landimore Road which cuts across the natural topography and river channel alignment), the adjoining urban areas and also by extensive woodland planting in Brackmills Country Park providing enclosure, which are not typical of the wider quiet, managed landscapes with expansive long distance views and wide panoramas across the Nene valley, sparse woodland cover, and communication routes principally limited to direct roads parallel to the course of the main river channel.

- The strong urban influences from the existing adjoining urban areas and roads makes the site less susceptible than more rural and open areas to the east. I have explained how the elevated ridge runs from well within the urban area at Hunsbury Hill (west), to Hardingstone, through the Appeal site and across the
rural landscape to Cogenhoe and Whiston (east), covering a distance of approximately 12km as shown on Figure 12. Landscape sensitivity varies along this elevated land with the most sensitive to the east (away from Northampton) and the least sensitive towards the centre and west (close to and within Northampton including the Appeal site). The Appeal site occupies the least sensitive rural section adjoining the urban area. The landscape within the site is not highly sensitive and has capacity to accommodate carefully designed development, responding to the urban and rural context (which the Appeal proposal does).

- A key characteristic of the Landscape Character Type (LCT) is “expansive long distance views and wide panoramas across the valley to neighbouring landscapes”. Long distance views from within the site are restricted by enclosing development, vegetation and landform as can be seen from 360 degree photograph panoramas within my updated LVIA (Appendices Volume II, Appendix 14, Viewpoints 11, 12 and 13) (CD-134). The land within the site is not clearly visible in expansive, long distance, panoramic views being largely screened by these elements.

- Many views of or towards the site are characterised by existing urban development – housing and other development in Wootton and Hardingstone, large industrial buildings, power lines, roads and other development and infrastructure. This limits the landscape susceptibility to the new development proposed.

- The site is largely enclosed by development to the west and most of the south, rising landform and vegetation (and allocated housing land) to the east, and Brackmills Wood to the north, which provide visual screening / enclosure to views from the wider landscape. Screening provided by Brackmills Wood gives the site capacity to accommodate the proposed development without being visually conspicuous on the skyline when viewed from the north. This limits the visual sensitivity of the site to the proposed development.
7.3.8. I consider that undue consequences may arise from the proposed development so have assessed the LCA as Medium susceptibility (as defined in my updated LVIA method page 4).

7.3.9. I assess the LCA as Local / District value mainly because part of the site and landscape to the east is covered by saved Policy E7 of the Northampton Local Plan which indicates it as being more valued than the surrounding area. This gives it a higher value than some of the surrounding areas.

7.3.10. As I discuss in section 3.6, The two key issues relating to the Appeal proposal arising from the Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study are:

1) effects on views of the undeveloped skyline as seen from Northampton; and

2) how development on the “distinctive landform” would affect the setting of the town.

I discuss this further with reference to the reasons for refusal and matters of disagreement below.

7.4. Alleged harm

7.4.1. The alleged harms referred to in Reason for Refusal 2, are that the proposals would:

- Have an urbanising effect and be of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area.
- Result in the loss of land of significant amenity value. In the SoCG this relates to public footpath KN6 where it runs through the Appeal site.

7.4.2. In addition the Council’s landscape witness added the following point to the landscape SoCG:

- The impact of the proposed development upon the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley.

7.4.3. I address each of these issues in turn, referring to my updated LVIA and other documents where relevant.
7.4.4. It is agreed in the Landscape SoCG (CD-17 paragraph 2.1.4) that there would be significant effects on:

- views along the public footpath (KN6) which crosses diagonally through the site; and
- the landscape character of the appeal site.

No other significant effects are agreed in the Landscape SoCG.

7.4.5. It is also agreed in the Landscape SoCG (at paragraph 3.7.5) that:

"Users of the following visual receptors have potential to be affected by the Proposed Development:

- Settlements – people in publicly accessible areas within Northampton close to the Appeal site.
- Public Rights of Way – users of KN6 where it crosses the Appeal site and the Nene Valley Way to the north and north east of the site.
- Publicly accessible land - users of Brackmills Country Park to the north of the Appeal site
- Roads - users of roads within the Appeal site and adjoining the Appeal site boundary (Landimore Road, Newport Pagnell Road and The Green).

The proposed development would be visible from other visual receptors but effects on them would not have the potential to be significant." (My bold emphasis added.)

7.4.6. This narrows down the visual receptors on which it is agreed could potentially experience significant effects. It is important to note that no visual receptors in the Nene valley and Northampton to the north of the Appeal site, beyond Brackmills Country Park, have potential to be significantly affected by the proposed development. This includes visual receptors referred to in Policy E7 of the Local Plan whose views of the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley to the north are given special importance in the context of the impact of proposed development. This policy and these receptors are also referred to
in the second reason for refusal. I discuss my assessed effects on these views further below.

7.4.7. I explain in my LVIA how the extensive new Green Infrastructure, and public open space and planting, will help to integrate the development into the urban and rural context. This will have some beneficial effects on landscape and townscape character and views. However, given that the landscape character areas that the proposals would affect are predominantly rural and that the direction of guidance towards landscape character is to conserve, restore or enhance character, and that changing views of arable fields to development would generally cause adverse effects to views, effects are judged to be, on balance, Adverse where they occur.

The impact of the proposed development upon the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley

7.4.8. As noted above this alleged impact has only been stated by NBC in the Landscape SoCG – it has not been stated previously in relation to the Appeal proposals or indeed with regards to allocation N6. I have not been able to find any record of it having been stated in any previous minutes, correspondence or reports relating to either the allocation or the Appeal proposal.

7.4.9. NBC’s Statement of Case (CD-21) also does not say that the proposed development will have an impact upon the skyline as seen from the Nene Valley, only that the proposal will have an impact on the characteristics associated with the principal ridgeline.

7.4.10. The 2nd draft Landscape SoCG received from the Council’s planning witness on 13 April 2015 was the first time that the “impact of the proposed development upon the important skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley” was mentioned by NBC under Matters of Disagreement – and it is included in the final Landscape SoCG at paragraph 4.1.1 (CD-17).

7.4.11. I have described how the Masterplan addresses the skyline issue in section 6.2. I conclude in my updated LVIA (CD-134) that effects on views of the skyline from the north would be limited, informed by analysis of a detailed Zone of Theoretical Visibility study (Figure 3 in my LVIA Appendices Volume II Appendix 13 (CD-134)),

wireframes and photomontages (Landscape SoCG Appendix 6 Viewpoints 8, 9 and 10 (CD-134)) and site assessment.

7.4.12. Before summarising effects on views of the skyline seen from the Nene Valley and Northampton I discuss Brackmills Wood and Country Park which will play an important part in screening the proposed development in these views.

Brackmills Wood and Country Park

7.4.13. Brackmills Wood is also known as Brackmills Country Park. It lies to the north and north-east of the Appeal site, wrapping around the west, south and east sides of Brackmills Industrial Estate as shown on Figures 6 and 7 of my LVIA (CD-134, Volume II Appendix 13). It was delivered by The Commission for New Towns (part of English Partnerships) and comprises approximately 120ha of Country Park and woodlands created in response to a planning requirement to provide visual amelioration and amenity for the development of Brackmills Industrial Estate, responding to Policy E7 Skyline Development of the Northampton Local Plan 1997. Planting began circa 1998 and completed in early 2000 and delivered woodlands on the slopes and along the ridgeline as well as contoured parkland and footpaths linking residential areas in Northampton and the local villages with Brackmills Industrial Estate and beyond.

7.4.14. The tree planting is therefore about 15 years old and is yet to reach maturity. The trees comprise a mixture of evergreen and deciduous species native to Great Britain including oak, ash, Scots pine, silver birch and wild cherry. The trees are approximately 8-10m tall as agreed in the Landscape SoCG paragraph 3.6.4 (CD-17). The species mix has potential to grow up to approximately 25 – 30m high in time, further screening the proposed development.

7.4.15. Brackmills Country Park is owned by the Appellant and, to the best of my knowledge, NBC as shown on Figure 13 in Appendix 8. The HCA maintain their areas using a landscape contractor undertaking maintenance operations to a specification, including grass cutting, and tree and woodland management to ensure the long term survival and development of the woodland areas. NBC is responsible for the maintenance of their areas. All areas are subject to a S106 Landscape
Agreement which was a condition of planning permission for the extension of Brackmills Industrial Estate (Schedule 1 page 9), which I also include in Appendix 8. Schedule 20 of the Landscape Agreement sets out the obligations for the creation, management and maintenance of the “Landscape Area” (now Brackmills Country Park) shown on the A1 plan (drawing number 0525/6/ dated June 95) in Appendix 8. The obligations include maintaining a continuous tree cover on the Woodland Planted Areas and not carrying out clear felling (8.1), carrying out good husbandry operations in relation to trees (8.3), annual inspections of trees and production of report by a professionally competent person (8.5), and any necessary remedial tree surgery (8.9), all in accordance with a Management Plan (7). The future existence and management of Brackmills Wood (and long-term screening of the Appeal proposals by the Wood from the north) is therefore secured by a legal S106 agreement. Additionally, the largest part of the wood north of the Appeal site is owned and managed by the Appellant. If it is deemed necessary, further agreement of the woodland’s retention, management and enhancement can be secured though a S106 agreement as part of the Appeal proposal.

Effects on views from the Nene Valley and Northampton to the north

7.4.16. Five representative viewpoints from within the Nene Valley and Northampton to the north were agreed in the landscape SoCG and I assess the scale of effect from these viewpoints in Table 2 (page 61) of the main text of my LVIA (CD-134) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint</th>
<th>Distance, direction from Appeal site</th>
<th>Scale of effect</th>
<th>Adverse, Neutral, Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 - Delapré Abbey Parkland</td>
<td>1.8km, north west</td>
<td>Negligible, Neutral</td>
<td>Negligible, Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - Mimosa Close, Northampton</td>
<td>3.2km, north</td>
<td>Negligible, Neutral</td>
<td>Negligible, Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint</th>
<th>Distance, direction from Appeal site</th>
<th>Scale of effect Adverse, Neutral, Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - Cliftonville Road, Northampton</td>
<td>2.6km, north</td>
<td>Small to Negligible, Adverse*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – Nene Way, Barnes Meadow, Northampton</td>
<td>2.0km, north</td>
<td>Negligible, Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – Nene Way, Northampton Washlands</td>
<td>3.2km, north east</td>
<td>Small, Adverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – Public Footpath HW26 Delapre Golf Centre</td>
<td>1.2km, north west</td>
<td>Negligible, Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Changed from Neutral as discussed in paragraph 7.2.6.

#### 7.4.17

Effects at these viewpoints, which represent the ‘worst case’ typical views of the proposal from the Nene Valley and Northampton to the north, are all of Small or Negligible scale, and all reduce to Negligible scale by 15 years from completion of the development, once existing trees in Brackmills Country Park and proposed planting within the site matures. Small and Negligible scale are defined in section 2.2.1 (page 6) of my LVIA as:

- **Small** – Minor alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be largely unchanged despite discernible differences.

- **Negligible** – Very minor alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally unchanged with barely perceptible differences.

#### 7.4.18

It is agreed in the Landscape SoCG that I would produce wireframes and photomontages from three of these viewpoints (8, 9 and 10 in Appendix 6 of the Landscape SoCG (CD-17 paragraph 3.7.4)). The photography for these was taken in winter when deciduous trees were not in leaf, at the time of year when they would
have least screening effect. From these it can be seen that the proposed development would be largely screened and, where parts are visible, they would form a minor distant element in the view seen in the context of more prominent existing development in the foreground, including large buildings within Brackmills Industrial Estate, and would not be higher than existing woodland on the skyline. The proposed development would appear as a continuation of the existing treed development that is visible on the skyline within Hardingstone to the west and would not affect the “distinctive landform” of the “Limestone ridge to the south-east between Whiston and Hunsbury” seen from Northampton noted in the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (CD-94) and Core Strategy (CD-28) that I have discussed in section 3.6.

7.4.19. As I state in section 3.4 under Policy E7 Skyline Development, my assessed effects on all visual receptors within the Nene Valley and Northampton to the north of the valley would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance during construction and operation, the predominantly treed character of the skyline as seen from these areas would be preserved, and the proposed development complies with Policy E7 of the Local Plan.

7.4.20. When the Local Plan incorporating the skyline policy E7 was prepared and adopted (in 1997) Brackmills Wood did not exist and did not, therefore, provide screening of the open fields on the skyline when viewed from Northampton and the Nene Valley to the north. The land is likely to have appeared more exposed and potentially ‘visually sensitive’ to development. Site visits for the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (CD-101) were undertaken between April and June 2008 and trees in Brackmills Wood will have grown taller in the intervening six years, further reducing visual sensitivity of this part of the ridge to the south-east of the town. Brackmills Wood now provides substantial screening of the land on the skyline, lessening the visual sensitivity to, and increasing the capacity for, the proposed development.

7.4.21. The Appeal site is not of high visual sensitivity and the proposed development is acceptable and can be accommodated as described in the application documents.
7.4.22. It is also important to note that the Landscape Character Area (LCA) that occupies the main part of the Nene valley north of the Appeal site (outside areas defined by the Current Landscape Character Assessment (CD-101) as ‘Urban’) is 18c The Nene – Duston Mill to Billing Wharf LCA which forms part of the Broad River Floodplain Landscape Character Type (LCT), and that the character description does not refer to the importance or sensitivity of views of the skyline on higher land either side of the valley, and notably does not refer to views of the skyline southwards towards the site (see top of page 56 of my updated LVIA (CD-134)). Many urban and development influences are noted:

“… a number of major roads are present. In general, these are associated with larger settlements and provide connecting routes between development within the county and beyond. Although major roads also provide direct access across the river, they principally follow the course of the river and are located along the edge of the floodplain marking the boundary, in contrast to the minor roads that often cross the river at right angles. Sections of railways also occupying the valley floodplain landscape are, and include both dismantled sections and lines in current use. Along with the development of road and rail networks impacting upon the character of the river valleys, the presence of sewage treatment works are now a frequent occurrence within this landscape. Despite a number of areas within the Broad River Valley Floodplains retaining a rural character, large proportions have been affected by communications and infrastructure development, in particular in the Nene Valley around Northampton.”

“Located to the south of Northamptonshire, the Duston Mill to Billing Wharf Character Area is heavily influenced by the close proximity of significant areas of urban development. Dominating the area are large man made lakes occupying the valley floodplain, which have been created following the restoration of gravel extraction areas. The River Nene, railway, lines of high voltage pylons and a section of the Grand Union Canal to the west, all combine to provide a character influenced by the use of the floodplain as a communications corridor ...” (LVIA pages 54 and 55 (CD-134), taken from the Current Landscape Character Assessment (CD-101))
7.4.23. The proposed development, when seen from within the Nene valley to the north, would be a minor new element in views where existing development is frequently a prominent or dominant element.

**Whether and if so to what extent the proposed layout is of a scale and density that results in an urbanising effect and is of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area**

**Scale and density**

7.4.24. NBC’s second reason for refusal for the Appeal proposal states “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”. This wording appears to be taken from Policy H7 of the Local Plan (which the second reason for refusal stated that the proposal was contrary to) that states:

“Outside the preliminary residential areas identified on the Proposals Map, planning permission for residential development will only be granted where: …

B) The development would not be at a scale and density which would be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area or would result in an over intensive development of the site” (bold emphasis added)

7.4.25. Policy H7 has been replaced by Policy H1 of the Core Strategy and is therefore not relevant to this Appeal.

7.4.26. The Appeal proposal complies with the up to date and adopted Policy H1.

7.4.27. Policy H1 states that development within the sustainable urban extensions will be expected to achieve minimum average densities of 35 dwellings per hectare. The proposed dwelling density is equal to the minimum density of dwellings stipulated by Policy H1 of the Core Strategy (CD-28).

7.4.28. At the stakeholder meeting on 22 November 2011 minute item 5.1 records:

“FO[LDA Design] explained the overall approach to density that the masterplan is likely to propose with higher density of development in the vicinity of the local centre and the western side of the site and a lower density settlement in the eastern
The stakeholders accepted the rationale for this approach. CS [JPU] confirmed that the Core Strategy sets a minimum density of 35 dwellings per Ha but that there was flexibility on how this was achieved across the whole site." (CD-123) (my bold emphasis added)

7.4.29. The proposed development responds sensitively to the location and setting of the site and the existing character and density of the local area, and adopts a design led approach to determine densities in accordance with Policy H1, as presented in the DAS (CD-5) and agreed with stakeholders and NBC’s Planning Officer. The proposal achieves an average density of between 31-35 dwellings per hectare, delivering 1,000 dwellings proposed within the pre-submission Core Strategy. The allocation N6 is now for 1,300 dwellings to allow for 300 dwellings on the additional land to the east.

7.4.30. This part of NBC’s second reason for refusal is therefore contradictory to the density stated in their own adopted Policy H1.

- On the one hand the Council’s adopted Core Strategy Policy H1 (which they have not objected to) requires a minimum density (that reflects the density of the Appeal proposal) and requires in the region of 1,300 dwellings at N6 (that also reflects the Appeal proposal), and

- on the other hand (and conversely) they state that the scale and density proposed would have an urbanising effect and be of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area (which implies they would like a lower density than proposed).

The Council have not made their position on this matter clear, or demonstrated why the scale and density proposed is unacceptable, or how they consider a masterplan could be delivered that meets the requirements of Policies H1 and N6 that is of an acceptable scale and density.

7.4.31. NBC’s Planning Officer was consulted on the approach to building storeys and supported increasing heights within areas of the masterplan from 2 storeys to 2-3 storeys (see email correspondence in Appendix 9), indicating that he was happy with this aspect of scale.
7.4.32. It is notable that South Northamptonshire Council, in their response to the Application dated 2 December 2013 (CD-56), stated:

“Consideration being given to and increase in the density of the development.

South Northamptonshire Council queries whether the most efficient use of the land is being achieved by this development and would recommend that there may be potential to increase the numbers of dwellings on the site.”

South Northamptonshire Council therefore consider that the density might not be high enough and, even though their district adjoins the Appeal site along The Green, they expressed no concern that either the Appeal proposals, or an increase in density above that proposed, “would have an urbanising effect and be of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area”.

Effects on rural character

7.4.33. Housing development on any greenfield site is likely to have some adverse effects on landscape character and views; the approach should be to design a scheme to respond sensitively to its context to minimise harm and provide benefits. Greenfield developments can lead to positive landscape and visual effects, such as effects of new planting, or improvement in the character of an urban edge, but the effects of introducing housing, roads and other built structures into fields are in almost all situations likely to be, on balance, adverse, given that the direction of guidance towards landscape character of rural land is to conserve, enhance or restore character.

7.4.34. The proposed development on the Appeal site is no exception to this and it would have some adverse effects. It has, however, been designed to respond sensitively to its context and provide some beneficial effects, and create a new neighbourhood with its own diversity and character, with adverse effects minimised to an acceptable level and is, in my professional opinion, a good scheme deserving of the grant of planning permission.

7.4.35. The proposals have taken into account and responded to skyline views and the urban and rural context by a number of measures that I have explained in section
6.0. I have assessed landscape and townscape effects in section 6.0 of my updated LVIA (CD-134) and summarise the key findings below.

Effects on Landscape and Townscape Character

7.4.36. Effects on landscape and townscape character would be localised to within close proximity of the site. The effects would consist of an urban extension within an area of arable land which is already influenced by urban development, and it would be integrated within the urban context of Wootton and Hardingstone. Areas with potential visibility of the proposed development would frequently view the proposal in the context of the existing built development of Wootton, Hardingstone, Brackmills and the wider town of Northampton. The proposed development would be relatively well screened by existing development, trees and landform from the wider landscape and, over time as existing trees in Brackmills Country Park and proposed planting with the site matures, the development would become less visible and better integrated with the existing landscape and settlement.

7.4.37. During operation the character of the landscape within the site would change from arable farmland strongly influenced by the existing urban settlement of Northampton, to a new residential and mixed use development designed to respond positively to the character of the site and its context. The new development would provide a more positive and green interface between Northampton and its landscape setting than currently exists along the edges of Hardingstone and Wootton, and allow for further extension to the east and south-east into the remainder of the SUE.

7.4.38. It is agreed within the Landscape SoCG (CD-17 paragraph 3.3.8) that the only published local landscape character areas that have potential to be affected by the proposed development are:

- 12a Wollaston to Irchester (within the Limestone Valley Slopes landscape character type)
- 6b Hackleton Claylands (within the Undulating Claylands landscape character type)
• 18c The Nene, Duston Mill to Billing Wharf (within the Broad River Valley Floodplain landscape character type)

7.4.39. The locations of these in relation to the Appeal site can be seen on Figure 8 of my updated LVIA (CD-134 Volume II Appendix 13).

7.4.40. There would be some localised significant effects during construction and operation on landscape character within the site and up to the existing urban edge to the west and south, up to and within small areas within Brackmills Country Park to the north and part way across the arable field to the east, affecting part Northamptonshire’s 12a Wollaston to Irchester landscape character area during construction and operation. These effects would occur to an area already influenced by existing urban and infrastructure development. Effects on most of Northamptonshire’s 12a Wollaston to Irchester landscape character area and overall effects on the character would not be significant. Effects on all other character areas would not be significant.

7.4.41. The Appeal site plays a limited role in the setting of townscape character areas, largely due to the fact that houses back on to the site and create a barrier and a negative edge between the townscape and landscape along The Warren and much of Newport Pagnell Road and Pagnell Court. Wootton itself is separated from the Appeal site by Newport Pagnell Road and planting along the road, and houses face south away from the site. Effects on townscape character areas including those adjoining the site would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance during construction and operation.

Conclusion

7.4.42. The site forms part of allocated site under Policy N6 of the adopted Core Strategy that was found sound by the Inspector. The proposals are compliant with Policies H1 and N6, and are of a scale and density required by the Policies. NBC had not expressed any concern on the scale and density of the proposals until it was determined to refuse the planning application; indeed the Planning Officer supported increasing heights within areas of the masterplan from 2 storeys to 2-3 storeys. Since the decision notice NBC has not stated why they are concerned about
the scale and density and I am unable to determine what the issue is, particularly since it meets the requirements of their own adopted planning policy in this regard.

7.4.43. I have demonstrated that the proposed development responds to its urban and landscape context to provide a well designed extension to Northampton that will, by the very nature of the requirement for housing under Policy, have an urbanising effect on the site. I have demonstrated that the significant effects on landscape will be localised to the site and its immediate context and that, due to the enclosed and urban context and the proposed design and landscape framework, effects will be contained and, in my opinion, acceptable.

Result in the loss of land of significant amenity value

7.4.44. This relates to the proposed treatment and context of public footpath KN6 where it runs through the Appeal site (Landscape SoCG (CD-17) paragraph 4.1.r, fourth bullet). The route of the existing PRoW on an air photo of the Appeal site is shown on Figure 10 of my LVIA Appendices Volume II Appendix 13 (CD-134).

7.4.45. This PRoW currently provides the only amenity access to the Appeal site and, as I have explained in section 6.3, it would be retained and incorporated into the development within a ‘green spine’ that structures the development and from which other pedestrian linkages and public open spaces emanate from. Retention of this PRoW within an attractive setting and creation of substantial new public open space, cycleways, footpaths and accessible Green Infrastructure will be provided on land which the public currently has no right of access to. The PRoW runs for approximately 860m within the Appeal site either side of Landimore Road. Approximately 0.26ha of the Appeal site is currently publicly accessible, based on an estimated PRoW width of 3m. The masterplan proposes 9.98ha of public open space as stated on page 71 of the DAS (CD-5) (including incorporation of the existing PRoW). This is an increase in approximately 3,560% in area. While the character of the existing PRoW will change, there will be a significant increase in amenity and recreational opportunities within the extensive and diverse range of public open spaces within the Appeal site, and new links to the significant area of existing open
space at Brackmills Country Park to the north. Amenity value of the land will be significantly increased.

7.4.46. The retention and treatment of PRoW KN6 complies with the requirements of Policy N6 of the Core Strategy and its treatment is appropriate in the context of the allocation for residential development.

7.4.47. In my LVIA I conclude that existing views from the PRoW across arable fields to existing development, woodland and more distant land would change to views of the proposed broad green spine enclosed by housing and other development providing an appropriate setting to the PRoW within its new urban context. Illustrative views of the green spine along which the PRoW would pass are shown on in Appendix 6 which illustrate that an attractive and characterful setting to the PRoW is proposed, which would be secured by development of a Design Code and detailed design at the Reserved Matters stage.

7.4.48. There are no wide panoramic views of the Nene Valley to the north or Wootton Brook valley to the south from this PRoW. Views are generally of a foreground of arable fields within the site enclosed by development, trees and landform with only narrow and limited more distant views across the Nene Valley to the north between woodland, and to high land south of the valley of Wootton Brook to the south above houses and between road light columns as can be seen on the 360 degree panoramic photograph panel views at Viewpoints 11, 12 and 13 in my LVIA Appendices Volume II Appendix 13 (CD-134). The rising topography within the allocated land to the east of the site curtails more distant views eastwards.

7.4.49. Effects on users of PRoW KN6 would be significant during construction and operation. The proposed development would result in some beneficial effects, creating a diverse urban landscape incorporating the green corridor and proposed buildings and open spaces. On completion the proposed planting would be immature; as planting matures over time it would increasingly help to soften the built elements and provide a stronger landscape framework for the development. However, during operation changing the existing views to more enclosed views of the proposed development would be, on balance, Adverse.
7.4.50. The proposal would change the character of views from the PRoW but it would not, in my opinion, lead to the loss of land of significant amenity value and would provide substantial areas of new land of significant amenity value.

7.4.51. This assessment needs to be considered in the context of the allocation of the site for development as proposed which already accepts that the character of the existing PRoW will be significantly changed, within a development of in the region of 1,300 dwellings.

7.5. **Other landscape and visual impacts**

7.5.1. My updated LVIA demonstrates that the only significant landscape and visual impacts arising from the development would occur to the following receptors within or very close to the Appeal site:

1) Part of landscape character area 12a Wollaston to Irchester within and close to the site;

2) Local roads outside the urban area within approximately 0.5km of the site (Newport Pagnell Road, The Green and Landimore Road); and

3) Public Right of Way KN6 which runs through the site.

7.5.2. I have discussed the 1) and 3) above and will now summarise the other impacts assessed in my LVIA including effects on local roads.

7.5.3. As noted in the introduction to section 8.4, effects would be both positive and negative but they are judged to be, on balance, Adverse where they occur.

**Visual Effects**

**Settlements**

7.5.4. Parts of Northampton adjoining the site boundary within the neighbourhoods of Wootton and Hardingstone would have the clearest views of the proposed development; however, these would be from limited areas on roads and these effects would not be significant. The proposed development would be visible from small
areas from other parts of Northampton but it would be a minor element in views seen in the context of existing more prominent development.

7.5.5. In my LVIA I assess effects on the neighbourhoods of Wootton and Hardingstone before assessing the effects on the remainder of Northampton, and reaching a conclusion on the overall visual effects on the town (CD-134 main text section 6.4.2). I conclude that effects on Wotton (which lies south of Newport Pagnell Road south of the site) would be of Medium magnitude and Moderate significance from parts of Newport Pagnell Road itself, and Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance from the remainder of the neighbourhood. I conclude that effects on Hardingstone (which includes the houses north of Newport Pagnell Road including Pagnell Court) would be of Medium magnitude and Moderate significance from parts of Newport Pagnell Road, and Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance from the remainder of the neighbourhood. These effects would occur at all stages of the project.

7.5.6. The Appeal site plays a limited role in the setting of Northampton where it adjoins the site because of the nature of the interface between the urban and rural area in this location. Houses on Newport Pagnell Road (south) and The Warren (west) back on to the fields within the Appeal site, with back garden boundaries and backs of houses creating a negative barrier between the town and the landscape. The nature of existing urban edge of the town at the Appeal site can be seen on my photograph panels from PRoW KN6 within the site (Figures 9.11 and 9.12 in LVIA Appendices Volume II Appendix 14 (CD-134)), where houses back onto fields. Wootton to the south is physically separated from the Appeal site by Newport Pagnell Road and planting south of the road, and the neighbourhood faces south away from the site. The Appeal site is most clearly seen from sections of Newport Pagnell Road that runs along the edge of Northampton adjacent to the Appeal site. The Appeal site is almost completely screened from Northampton within and beyond the Nene valley to the north by Brackmills Wood and the proposed development would have limited effects on these views, as I have demonstrated in section 7.4, and would not affect the “distinctive landform” of the “Limestone ridge to the south-east between Whiston
and Hunsbury" seen from Northampton noted in the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (CD-94) and Core Strategy (CD-28).

7.5.7. I have prepared a photomontage from Representative viewpoint 15 which lies approximately 0.4km to the east of the site on The Green (see Landscape SoCG Appendix 6 (CD-17)). This illustrates how the proposed development sits within an area enclosed by Northampton, Brackmills Wood and landform, creating a good and well designed urban extension that fits well into its urban / rural context, limiting effects on the setting of the town.

7.5.8. The proposed development would create an improved interface between the urban and rural areas by the more integrated and positive design on the eastern and south eastern edges than currently exists at this part of Northampton.

7.5.9. Effects on Northampton as a whole would be of up to Medium magnitude and Moderate from small areas on Newport Pagnell Road and Brackmills Country Park adjoining the site, and Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance from the majority of the town. Overall effects on Northampton would be of Low to Negligible magnitude and Slight to Minimal significance at all stages of the project.

7.5.10. Effects on all villages within the study area would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance during construction and operation.

Roads and Rail

7.5.11. Roads and rail routes assessed in my LVIA are shown on Figures 6 and 7 of my LVIA (CD-134 Appendices Volume II Appendix 13). Effects on all rail, ‘A’ roads and the M1 motorway which pass through the study area would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance during construction and operation.

7.5.12. Users of local roads outside the urban area within 0.5km of the site comprising Newport Pagnell Road, Landimore Road and The Green would have views of the proposed development. Effects would be up to High magnitude and Major-Moderate significance from parts of these roads during construction and operation. Overall effects the group as a whole would be of High-Medium magnitude and Major-
Moderate significance at all stages of the project. Views from local roads beyond 0.5km would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance.

Recreational Routes

7.5.13. Long distance walking routes, national cycle routes and Public Rights of Way are shown on Figures 6 and 7 of my updated LVIA (LVIA Appendices Volume II Appendix 13 (CD-134)).

7.5.14. Effects on users of long distance walking routes within the study area would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance at all stages of the project, including the Nene Way which runs along side the River Nene to the north of the Appeal site.

7.5.15. Effects on boaters on the River Nene would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance at all stages of the project.

7.5.16. Effects on users of national cycle routes within the study area would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance.

7.5.17. Effects on users of all PRoW within the study area except for KN6 and KM1 would be of Negligible magnitude and Minimal significance. PRoW KN6 runs through the site and is discussed above from paragraph 7.44. PRoW KM1 runs across fields to within approximately 0.3km south east of the site and users of its western end (approximately 210m) would experience effects of Medium magnitude and Moderate significance during construction and operation, but there would be no effects on the remaining approximate 590m of the path and overall effects of the route would be of Low magnitude and Slight significance.

Accessible and Recreational Landscapes

7.5.18. The only recreational and accessible landscape likely to experience effects greater than Negligible scale and Minimal significance is Brackmills Country Park which lies on the top and north facing slopes of the River Nene valley immediately north of the site as shown on Figures 6 and 7 of my updated LVIA (LVIA Appendices Volume II Appendix 13 (CD-134)). Views and vistas from within the Country Park are generally focussed northwards across the Nene Valley with limited views south into
the site. Effects would be up to Medium magnitude and Moderate significance from small areas. Overall effects on Brackmills Country Park would be of Low magnitude and Slight significance during construction and the first few years of operation, reducing Low to Negligible magnitude and Slight to Minimal significance as existing trees within the woodland and proposed planting within the proposed green corridor on the northern edge of the development vegetation matures.

**Designated Landscapes**

7.5.19. There are no designated landscapes within the study area and no designated landscapes would be affected by the proposed development. This is agreed in the Landscape SoCG (CD-17 paragraph 3.5.1).

**Residential Properties**

7.5.20. Residential properties that have the greatest potential to be affected by views of the proposed development are properties backing onto the site on The Warren, Newport Pagnell Road and Pagnell Court. Some dwellings in the development under construction at Wootton Fields could also have views of the proposed development. It is normal and acceptable for residential properties to have views of residential development from houses and gardens. This is the case for the proposed development where public open space, allotments or gardens of two storey housing (Scale Framework plan 3238_204_Rev A (CD-2)) is proposed adjoining existing properties on the edge of Northampton. The detail of the interface can be agreed through a Design Code and detailed design at Reserved Matters stage.

7.5.21. In section 6.5 I have explained how the proposed treatment of the western and south western boundaries where proposed rear gardens and houses are shown backing onto existing rear gardens and houses, where Indicative Structural Green Space is illustrated on Figure 5 Inset 11 of the adopted Core Strategy, provides an appropriate response to Policy N6 and the context of the site, arrived at and agreed through consultation.
Views from the east

7.5.22. The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Pre-Submission version February 2011 (CD-26) proposed allocation of the Appeal site for 1,000 dwellings and other uses under draft Policy N6 but did not include the land to the east and south east that is included in the final allocation for 1,300 dwellings under final Policy N6 (CD-28). The Pre-Submission version stated:

“The potential for development within the SUE to impact on the skyline when viewed from the north must be taken into account and addressed within the master plan for the site.” (Paragraph 12.47.)

7.5.23. A further 300 dwellings were added to the allocation and the area of N6 extended to include land outside the Appeal site to the east and south east in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Proposed Main Modifications version January 2014 and the final adopted Core Strategy December 2014 (CD-28). The sentence above was revised so that it now reads:

“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 master plan for the site.” (CD-28, Paragraph 12.46.) (Underlining shows the added text.)

7.5.24. It is likely that these three words were added to address views from the east arising from the extension of the allocated area to the east, onto higher land, and not because of concerns of the allocation on the Appeal site. If the allocated land to the east of the Appeal site was developed it is unlikely that the proposed development would be visible from most visual receptors to the east, except for road users on The Green which runs on the south east boundary of the site.

7.5.25. My detailed ZTVs (Figures 3 and 4 of the LVIA (CD-134 Volume II Appendix 13)) indicate that potential visibility from the east would be limited to two parcels of land adjoining the site (within the allocated SUE) and small areas up to approximately 1 – 1.5km before the land falls away into the valley of Wootton Brook from where the development would not be visible. Further east small areas of
potential visibility occur from higher land beyond the Brook at approximately 2.5 – 3km from the Appeal site. Three representative viewpoints were agreed in the Landscape SoCG from land east of the development, and wireframes and photomontages have been produced from each of these. My assessment of scale of effects at each of these viewpoints in Table 2 of my LVIA (CD-134, page 62) is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint</th>
<th>Distance, direction</th>
<th>Scale of effect</th>
<th>Adverse, Neutral, Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 - Minor Road east of site (unnamed)</td>
<td>0.8m, east</td>
<td>Small, Adverse</td>
<td>Small, Adverse, Adverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - Public Footpath KV8 north of Hackleton</td>
<td>3.0km, east</td>
<td>Negligible, Adverse</td>
<td>Negligible, Adverse, Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – The Green west of Hardingstone Lodge</td>
<td>0.4km, east</td>
<td>Medium, Adverse</td>
<td>Medium, Adverse, Adverse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5.26. Photomontages (CD-17 Appendix 6) of the proposed development produced from two viewpoints agreed in the Landscape SoCG show how some proposed housing is likely to be visible from more distant views (Viewpoints 3 and 6), but as a minor distant element in views, and that visibility would reduce in time as vegetation matures. The proposed development would have very limited effects on views from the east, except for from sections of The Green adjacent to the site boundary and up to approximately 0.6km east of the Appeal site where houses would be more visible as illustrated at Viewpoint 15. This viewpoint looks down on the Appeal site and houses would not rise above other higher elements of the skyline and would be seen in a location where development in Wootton and Hardingstone is currently visible beyond, enclosed by development, woodland and landform. The proposed development would have very limited effects on the skyline viewed from the east.

7.5.27. Development on the allocated land within the SUE to the east of the Appeal site and substantial tree planting illustrated on an Indicative Development Framework plan prepared by Pegasus on behalf of Martin Grant Homes would entirely screen the
proposed development within the Appeal site from the east, except from locations adjacent to the site boundary. I have included Pegasus’ Indicative Development Framework plan which was submitted with a representation to the draft Joint Core Strategy in Appendix 5. This plan also shows the proposed development on the Appeal site and the housing development which is under construction south of Newport Pagnell Road. If the land to the east and south east of the site that is also allocated as part of Policy N6 was developed, some of the adverse landscape and visual effects of the Appeal proposals assessed in my LVIA would reduce, and the proposal would have no or very limited effects on views from the east, or the rural landscape to the east and south beyond the allocation.

7.5.28. Illustrative viewpoint I in my LVIA (Appendices Volume II Appendix 15 (CD-134)) shows how woodland to the north and rising landform and vegetation to the east of the Appeal site (within the land allocated as part of Policy N6) provides enclosure to the site. This can also be appreciated by viewing the detailed topography plan Figure 2 (CD-134 Appendices Volume II Appendix 13) and the existing view and photomontages from Viewpoint 15 (CD-17 Appendix 6) where it can be seen that the land east of the site is higher than the site itself. This limits effects of the proposed development on views from the east, and limits visibility of the proposed development on the skyline. Views from the east have been taken into account and addressed within the master plan for the site and the proposal complies with this aspect of supporting text to Policy N6.

**Long distance views from the important ridgeline**

7.5.29. Paragraph 3.13 of the Council’s SoC (CD-21) states that “the proposed layout would result in and an adverse impact on the local landscape character, including the openness of the large scale fields and long distance views across the valley from the important ridgeline.”

7.5.30. In section 7.4 I have demonstrated that long distance views from the public footpath within the Appeal site are limited due to the enclosed nature of the site, and any narrow long distance views are strongly influenced by woodland and development in the foreground.
7.5.31. I have carried out further analysis of views of the Nene valley from the wider ridge line to demonstrate their nature and character. Figure 12 in Appendix 1 shows Representative and Illustrative Viewpoint locations on the elevated ‘ridge’ where the nature of views towards the Nene Valley can be seen. The photograph panels that illustrate these views are as follows:

**Photograph panels presented in the updated LVIA (Appendices Volume II, Appendix 14 and 15) (CD-134)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint</th>
<th>Description of view of the Nene Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representative viewpoints 11, 12 and 13 on PRoW within the Appeal site</td>
<td>Views of Nene valley largely obscured by Brackmills Wood, with narrow views in gaps between trees or, at 11, trees and a building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative viewpoint 14 within Brackmills Country Park immediately north of the site</td>
<td>Views of Nene valley obscured by woodland within Brackmills Country Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative viewpoint II within Brackmills Country Park north of the Appeal site</td>
<td>View of the Nene valley between woodland, along an open space within Brackmills Country Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Photograph panels presented in proof Appendix 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint</th>
<th>Description of view of the Nene Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative viewpoint III on PRoW KU15 east 0.8km east of Appeal site</td>
<td>Views of Nene valley largely obscured by Brackmills wood and farm buildings – narrow view between woodland and buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative viewpoint IV on The Green 1.6km north east of Appeal site</td>
<td>Views of Nene valley largely obscured but visible between trees in Brackmills wood and Great Houghton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative viewpoint V on Lodge Road 3km north east of Appeal site</td>
<td>More open views of Nene valley, with some screening by woodland and trees, and buildings in Little Houghton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative viewpoint VI on a bridleway 4.5km north east of Appeal site</td>
<td>Open views where landform falls away into valley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5.32. From these views it can be seen that from the section of the ridge where it runs south of or within the southern edge Brackmills Country Park (Representative viewpoints 11, 12, 13 and 14, and Illustrative viewpoints II and III), Brackmills Wood provides substantial screening of views of the Nene valley, including from within the Appeal site, and is a dominant feature in views. From east of Brackmills Wood (Illustrative viewpoints IV, V and VI) views towards the valley become more open and change in character, being of an agricultural landscape with clipped hedges, open fields, trees clustered within and around villages and small woodlands; there are generally greater opportunities for wider views of the Nene valley from this part of the ridge line.

7.5.33. The Appeal proposals would not obscure "expansive long distance views and wide panoramas across the valley to neighbouring landscapes" which is a key characteristic of the Landscape Character Type that the Appeal site lies within (see my LVIA section 6.2.3 bottom of page 43 (CD-134)) because none are possible from within the site.

7.6. **Compliance with the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1)**

**Policy N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills SUE**

7.6.1. The proposed development makes provision for items a) to i) required by Policy N6, as explained in the DAS (CD-5) and in relation to items e) structural green space and wildlife corridors, f) a landscape buffer and h) open space and leisure provision, discussed in my proof.

**Phasing**

7.6.2. Policy N6 states that necessary infrastructure is required to be phased alongside the delivery of the development. Phasing will be agreed at the Reserved Matters stage and I have prepared a draft strategy to demonstrate how the Appeal scheme and infrastructure could be phased (see Appendix 10).
Deliverability of N6 allocation in relation to the Appeal proposals

7.6.3. The Illustrative Masterplan and Framework Plans submitted with the application (CDs 4 and 2) were designed before the N6 allocation was extended to the east and increased from 1,000 to in the region of 1,300 dwellings and I have demonstrated how the proposed layout can be modified with limited changes to connect to future development on the additional land to the east to create a coordinated design for the adopted Policy N6 SUE area (see section 6.7). This was agreed in a joint position statement between the JPU, HCA and Martin Grant Homes which states that “The extension to the SUE can be implemented within the context provided by the master plan set out in the HCA’s planning application.” (CD-45 paragraph 5.9).

Structural greenspace and wildlife corridors, and the creation of a landscape buffer to the south west of the site as indicated on the policies map (Figure 5)

7.6.4. Figure 5 and Figure 5 Inset 11 (Northampton South of Brackmills SUE (Policy N6)) of the Core Strategy CD-28) shows Indicative Structural Green Space along the south west, west and north boundaries of the Appeal site and the east boundary of the SUE. In section 6.0 I have described how the proposed treatment of these edges of the Appeal site provides an appropriate response to Policy N6 and the context of the site, arrived at and agreed through consultation.

7.6.5. I have, however, also explained in section 6.5 that if the Inspector / Secretary of State consider it necessary for a physical screen / buffer to be provided between existing and proposed houses where the Indicative Structural Green Space associated with SUE is shown in Inset 11, alternative treatments to parts of these edges can be agreed through condition. My opinion is that these alternative treatments would be less satisfactory and less secure than the solution proposed on the Illustrative Masterplan.

Policy S10 – Sustainable Development Principles

7.6.6. The protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment are central to the design of the appeal proposals. The inevitable effects of development that would be caused by the allocation have been considered in the iterative assessment and design process. As previously explained, the Appeal
proposal has been designed to respond sensitively to the natural and built environment to provide an urban extension appropriate to this location, to minimise harm and provide benefits including substantial new Green Infrastructure and public access and amenity and new planting.

**Policy H1 – Housing Density and Mix and Type of Dwellings**

7.6.7. I have demonstrated in section 7.4 that:

- The approach to scale and density responds sensitively to the location and setting of the site and the existing character and density of the local area. It adopts a design led approach to determine densities as required by Policy H1.
- The proposed development is of a density required for SUEs by Policy H1 of the Core Strategy.
- The approach to building storey height was agreed with NBC’s Planning Officer before the application was submitted.

7.6.8. The impact on the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties has been considered and is acceptable, and the design approach to the masterplan adjoining them agreed with NBC, as I have demonstrated. Detail of the interface can be agreed through a Design Code and detailed design at Reserved Matters stage.

**Policy BN1 – Green Infrastructure Connections**

7.6.9. I have described how the proposed Illustrative Masterplan provides extensive new Green Infrastructure provision, and provides new connections to existing Green Infrastructure in section 6.3. The quality of the design and delivery of the new Green Infrastructure will be secured through the Design Code, detailed design, implementation and ongoing management stages of the project. These connections could connect through to future development on the allocated land to the east.

**Policy BN5 – the Historic Environment and Landscape**

7.6.10. As I have previously described, the proposal responds sensitively and appropriately to the skyline and landscape setting of Northampton, and these are central to the design proposal. The Illustrative Masterplan has been designed to contribute to and
create a sense of place by responding to and building on the character and attributes of the site and its context as described in the DAS.

7.6.11. The level of impact on Hardingstone Conservation Area, listed buildings and any other known heritage assets is agreed with NBC in paragraph 8.4 of the Principal SoCG (CD-18) as being nil detriment.

Conclusion

7.6.12. The Appeal proposals are compliant with relevant policies of the Core Strategy where they relate to landscape, visual and design matters.

7.7. Compliance with the Northampton Local Plan 1993-2006, Adopted 1997

Policy E7 Skyline Development

7.7.1. Mr Tulley demonstrates in his evidence that Policy E7 should be given limited weight. Nevertheless, the Appeal proposal complies with Policy E7 as I have described.

Policy E9 Locally Important Landscape Areas

7.7.2. The Appeal proposals will not affect any Locally Important Landscape Areas as I have described in section 3.4.

Conclusion

7.7.3. The Appeal proposals are compliant with relevant policies of the Local Plan where they relate to landscape, visual and design matters.
8.0 **Consultation Representations and Matters Raised by Third Parties**

8.1.1. I have read the consultation representations and matters raised by third parties. Relevant issues raised in objection are addressed in my proof, with further detail in relation to Northamptonshire Campaign to Protect Rural England, Hardingstone Parish Council and Hardingstone Action Group discussed below.

8.2. **Northamptonshire Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)**

8.2.1. Northamptonshire CPRE objected to the proposal as noted in paragraph 6.17 of the Officer’s Report (CD-57). Objection reasons relevant to my proof refer to Policies E1 and H7 of the Local Plan (CD-24) which have been replaced and are no longer relevant. I discuss policies that replace these (BN2, BN5 and H1 of the Core Strategy (CD-28)) in my proof. CPRE also state that the proposal would be contrary to Policies E7 and E9 of the Local Plan. At section 7.6 and 7.7 of my proof I demonstrate that the Appeal proposals are compliant with these policies of the Local Plan and Core Strategy where they relate to landscape, visual and design matters.

8.3. **Hardingstone Parish Council**

8.3.1. Hardingstone Parish Council also objected to the proposal and, in their letter dated 16 October 2013, stated that Hardingstone should be awarded ‘village status’ within the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. This did not occur and the Core Strategy states that Hardingstone is a neighbourhood of Northampton (CD-28 paragraph 12.44) and this is agreed in the Principal SoCG (CD-18 paragraph 4.1). Hardingstone is not a village but is part of the urban area of Northampton.

8.3.2. Hardingstone Parish Council commissioned Lockhart Garratt Ltd to appraise the submitted LVIA\(^1\) (hereafter referred to as the ‘Critical Appraisal’). The Critical

\(^1\) Land to South of Brackmills, Northampton. Planning Application Critical Landscape Appraisal 4 January 2014 prepared by Lockhart Garratt Ltd for Hardingstone Parish Council
Appraisal as undertaken on the application documents including the DAS (CD-5) and submitted LVIA (CD-6). Most issues raised in the Critical Appraisal are addressed in my updated LVIA (CD-134) and proof.

8.3.3. The Critical Review was undertaken by Ian Dudley who is not a qualified Landscape Architect but is an Affiliate Member of the Landscape Institute which is “For anyone working in landscape-related professions or areas of practice, who are not themselves landscape professionals”\(^4\).

8.3.4. All relevant matters raised in the Critical Review are addressed in my proof or updated LVIA (CD-134), or are matters of detail that would be addressed through a Design Code and Reserved Matters post-determination. The report concludes that the issues identified “are not sufficiently significant to alter the conclusions of the documents” (paragraph 4.1.1).

8.3.5. The reviewer agrees with the following:

1) At paragraph 3.2.3 the reviewer considers that the submitted LVIA (which was undertaken following Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Second Edition which was in place at the time) is complaint with the new LVIA guidance (GLVIA Third Edition) (CD-152).

2) At paragraphs 3.2.13 and 3.2.14 the reviewer agrees with the assessments of effects on Landscape Character Areas 6b and 18c which were assessed as Negligible Magnitude and Minimal significance. This accords with my assessment of overall effects on these landscape character areas in my updated LVIA (CD-134 pages 52 – 56).

\(^4\) http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/membership/index.php
8.4. **Hardingstone Action Group**

8.4.1. Hardingstone Action Group asserts and claims its village status. From the perspective of urban form and landscape it is part of the urban area of Northampton and a neighbourhood of the town, as I have previously discussed, and as stated in the Core Strategy (CD-28). The Hardingstone Conservation Area Appraisal (CD-95) Map 2 on page 22 illustrates that important views from the Conservation Area are directed away from the Appeal site, and mostly across the Nene Valley to the north; no views are indicated towards the Appeal site. I have demonstrated how the houses on The Warren (and also on the southern end of The Green) back onto the Appeal site creating a barrier and negative edge between Hardingstone and the arable fields with in the site, and that the site plays a limited role in the setting of the neighbourhood.

8.5. **Other matters raised by third parties**

8.5.1. I have addressed other matters raised by third parties in my proof.
9.0 Conclusion

9.1 Absence of sufficient information

9.1.1 Reason for Refusal 2 is not an objection in principle, but states that the proposals are contrary to Policy “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 Reason for Refusal does not state that the application is contrary to Policy or should be refused because of the harm that it would cause.

9.1.2 Prior to the publication of the Decision notice Northampton Borough Council had not stated that there was insufficient information with regards to demonstrating adequate mitigation for these potential impacts, and they did not ask for further information despite their specific powers to do so under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. The first time that they requested any specific further information on these matters was in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (CD-17) in April 2015.

9.1.3 I consider that sufficient information was submitted with the planning application to demonstrate appropriate mitigation and the Council’s Head of Planning found no deficiencies in the submitted information in drawing her conclusions and recommending approval.

9.2 Acceptability of development on the Appeal site

9.2.1 The Planning Inspector of the Core Strategy Examination concluded that the Appeal site and land to the east should be allocated for development comprising in the region of 1,300 dwellings.

9.2.2 The Council supported the proposed allocation of the Appeal site until it was proposed to extend it to the east, outside the Appeal site, and increase housing numbers from 1,000 (as the Appeal scheme) to in the region of 1,300, at which point they registered an objection. Their objection was based on transport grounds – not on landscape or visual grounds. Their real and primary concerns therefore related to
the increase in the allocation outside of the Appeal site, and these concerns did not fundamentally relate to landscape or visual issues.

9.2.3. The Head of Planning supported the planning application for the Appeal scheme and the first time the Council did not support it was when the members voted to refuse it.

9.2.4. Concerns expressed in Council reports and minutes in relation to both the allocation and application focus on traffic issues with very limited discussion on landscape or visual matters.

9.2.5. The planning application is in outline with all matters reserved apart from access, and the character, appearance, scale, density and other relevant detail would be guided through a Design Code working jointly with Northampton Borough Council, and the detailed design would be determined at Reserved Matters stage. As agreed by the Head of Planning, any outstanding issues can be addressed post-determination.

9.3. **Issues**

9.3.1. Reason for Refusal 2 and matters of disagreement agreed in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground raise three issues which have their basis in design and landscape and visual impacts:

1) It would have an urbanising effect and be of a scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area / the degree of effect on local landscape character.

2) It would result in the loss of land of significant amenity value / the proposed treatment and context of public footpath KN6 where it runs through the Appeal site.

3) The impact of the proposed development upon the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley.

9.3.2. My evidence addresses each of the above and confirms the acceptability of the proposals.
9.4. **Design**

9.4.1. The Application proposal has been designed sensitively and through an extensive process of consultation, and iterative assessment and design, to respond to its urban and rural context and complies with relevant policies including Policy E7 of the Local Plan (CD-24) (to the extent relevant) and N6 of the Core Strategy (CD-28).

**Context and character, scale and density**

9.4.2. Northampton Borough Council considers that the proposed development would be of a “scale and density detrimental to the existing rural character of the surrounding area”. However,

- the appeal site and land to the east is allocated for in the region of 1,300 dwellings;
- the Appeal proposals are at a density that is equal to the minimum density required by Policy H1 of the Core Strategy (CD-28);
- stakeholders accepted the rationale for the approach to density; and
- Northampton Borough Council’s own Planning Officer was consulted on and agreed with the approach to building storey heights.

9.4.3. The proposed development responds sensitively to the location and setting of the site, and the existing character and density of the local area, and adopts a design led approach to determine density and scale in accordance with Policy H1 of the Core Strategy.

**Connectivity and Green Infrastructure**

9.4.4. Responding to good design principles, local guidance, and Policies BN1 and N6 of the Core Strategy (CD-28), and also the report of the Inspector at the Core Strategy Examination (CD-44), the Illustrative Masterplan has been structured around swathes of public open space, routes and Green Infrastructure which will provide access on land not currently accessible to the public, increasing the amenity value of the land. Proposals include:

- a Green Infrastructure spine incorporating PRoW KN6;
a green corridor around the interface with the northern, eastern and part of the southern boundaries of the site providing Indicative Structural Green Space associated with SUE adjoining Brackmills Country Park shown on Figure 5 Inset 11 of the Core Strategy (CD-28); and

other Green Infrastructure links and public open spaces connecting to these areas and the wider communities and landscape.

9.4.5. These areas will also provide opportunities for increasing biodiversity on the Appeal site which currently has limited ecological value.

**Other matters relating to Policy N6 and design**

9.4.6. The proposed treatment of the western and south western boundaries of the Appeal site, where Indicative Structural Green Space is also illustrated on Figure 5 Inset 11 of the Core Strategy, provides an appropriate response to Policy N6 and the context of the site, arrived at and agreed through consultation.

9.4.7. I have prepared revised Framework Plans in Appendix 5 which illustrate that, with little adjustment, the layout shown on the submitted Framework Plans (CD-2) can accommodate access and connection requirements to potential development to the east, to provide an integrated scheme for the whole N6 allocation.

9.5. **Impacts and Benefits**

9.5.1. As noted in my updated LVIA (CD-134) effects that are Major-Moderate or Major are considered to be significant, and that effects of Moderate significance or less are “of lesser concern”. (Quote from Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition para 3.35. (CD-152)). It should also be noted that whilst an effect may be significant, that does not necessarily mean that such an impact would be unacceptable.

9.5.2. My LVIA identifies that the only significant and adverse effects arising from the appeal scheme would be local to the site as follows:

- Part of landscape character area 12a Wollaston to Irchester within and close to the site;
• Public Right of Way KN6 which runs through the site; and
• Local roads outside the urban area within approximately 0.5km of the site (Newport Pagnell Road, The Green and Landimore Road).

9.5.3. The Appeal scheme would not cause significant effects on the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone as seen from the Nene Valley, as I discuss below.

9.5.4. The changes in character and significance of effects have been assessed against the site in its existing condition as arable farmland. However, effects as described are inevitable effects in accordance with Policy N6 of the adopted Core Strategy.

9.5.5. The key effects that relate to disputed matters are as follows.

1) Effects on landscape character

9.5.6. The proposed development responds to its urban and landscape context to provide a well designed extension to Northampton that will, by the very nature of the allocation for housing under Policy N6, have an urbanising effect on the character Appeal site. The significant effects on landscape will be localised to the Appeal site and its immediate context and, due to the enclosed and urban context and the proposed design and landscape framework, effects will be contained and, in my opinion, acceptable.

2) Effects on Public Right of Way KN6

9.5.7. Public footpath KN6 is the only existing amenity access within the site and it will be retained and incorporated into the development within a new green spine, providing an attractive and appropriate setting to the footpath in the context of the site’s allocation for development as proposed. Effects will be significant but, again, this is inevitable in the context of the site’s allocation. My visualisations of the proposed treatment of the route in Appendix 6 illustrate that an attractive and characterful green corridor is proposed including green space and access routes that are well overlooked by houses, with variety of treatments along the public footpath. This will have beneficial effects. However, due to the loss of longer and more open views across fields effects are considered to be, on balance, adverse.
3) Effects on the skyline seen from the Nene Valley and Northampton to the North

9.5.8. The proposed design addresses the skyline Policy E7 of the Local Plan and supporting text to Policy N6 of the Core Strategy (CD-28). Effects of the proposed development on views of the skyline from the north would be limited and acceptable. The proposal will continue the existing treed appearance of the developed ‘ridge’ of high land which runs through neighbourhoods in Northampton to the west, and through the site where it adjoins Hardingstone, seen above the large scale buildings within Brackmills Industrial Estate, as illustrated by my photomontages from Viewpoints 8, 9 and 10 in Appendix 6 of the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CD-17).

9.5.9. Supporting text to Policy N6 of the Core Strategy (CD-28) also refers to potential impact on views of the skyline when viewed from the east. These effects of the proposed development would also be limited and acceptable, as illustrated by my photomontages from Viewpoints 3, 6 and 15 in Appendix 6 of the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CD-17). If the land to the east and south east of the site that is also allocated as part of Policy N6 was developed, it is likely to screen the proposed development from the east beyond a short distance from the Appeal site boundary.

4) Effects on the Landscape Setting of Northampton

9.5.10. The role that the skyline between Great Houghton and Hardingstone (as seen from the Northampton and the Nene Valley to the north) plays in the setting to Northampton will not be harmed.

9.5.11. The Appeal site plays a limited role in the setting of Northampton where it adjoins the site at the neighbourhoods of Hardingstone and Wootton, because of the nature of the interface between the urban and rural area where houses back onto the site, and the Appeal proposals will create an improved and more positive rural / urban edge to Northampton than currently exists.

9.5.12. The effects on the landscape setting of Northampton will be, in my opinion, acceptable.
5) Benefits

9.5.13. Set against localised significant adverse effects would be significant benefits arising from the scheme. These include the provision of new housing to meet local demand, habitat enhancements and other matters which are summarised in Mr Tulley’s evidence. Landscape-related benefits arising from the scheme would include:

- new public open space and Green Infrastructure;
- new pedestrian routes and connections to Brackmills Country Park for the existing and new communities;
- substantial increase in the amenity value of the land; and
- an improved and more positive rural / urban edge to Northampton than currently exists on this edge to Northampton.

Policy N6 allocation

9.5.14. If the land to the east and south east of the site that is also allocated as part of Policy N6 was developed, some of the adverse landscape and visual effects of the Appeal proposals assessed in my LVIA would reduce, and the proposal would have no or very limited effects views or on character of the rural landscape to the east and south beyond the allocation boundary. The effects of this future development would be material to a separate and future decision on that development.

9.6. Conclusion

9.6.1. I am firmly of the opinion that, in landscape and visual terms, the site is a good location for the proposed development, being able to accommodate the proposals, creating an appropriate extension to Northampton. The proposal would be successfully integrated into the landscape and townscape framework. The site is allocated for development as proposed and was recommended for approval by the Council’s Head of Planning, based upon a thorough analysis of the material submitted.

9.6.2. Consequently, in my view, there is no reason within the scope of my evidence why planning permission should be refused.