

## **Arthur Amos Consulting**

Landscape architecture, environmental planning, landscape and visual impact assessment,  
water environment and sustainable drainage, arboriculture



# **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Land Adjacent A4103,  
Withington,  
Herefordshire

Prepared on behalf of:  
**David Wilson Homes**

DRAFT REV B 14.04.2015



**DAVID WILSON HOMES**  
WHERE QUALITY LIVES

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Arthur Amos Consultants, a registered company of the Landscape Institute, has been appointed by David Wilson Homes to produce this landscape and visual impact statement to accompany its planning application to build housing in an area on the southern boundary of Withington, Hereford. The statement, produced by Michael Podmore, a chartered member of the Landscape Institute, assesses the landscape and visual impact of potential residential development on the site. This report describes the methodology of the assessment, evaluates the landscape character, describes the extent of views from the surrounding area into the site, assesses the potential effects of residential development upon the landscape resources and visual receptors, identifies appropriate mitigation strategies and assesses any residual effects.

## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1 Assessment methodology**

- 2.1.1 This assessment was based on an analysis of information gathered during desk study and field survey, as recommended by the Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, 2013) and the Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage (Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002). The principals referred to in these documents form the basis of the methodology for this assessment.
- 2.1.2 In order to assess the significance of any impact as a result of development, criteria have been developed for landscape and visual effects. The criteria relate both to the relative values of the landscape and the potential effects development would have on identified landscape and visual receptors.
- 2.1.3 Landscape impact relates to the effects of the development on the proposed site on the physical characteristics and elements or features, which together form the character of the landscape.
- 2.1.4 Visual effects relate to the intrusion into or changes to existing views arising from the construction or operation of proposed development. The visual assessment is intrinsically linked with the landscape assessment: qualitative changes to landscape, whether or not they are deemed significant in their own right, would affect to some extent the amenity that people derive from their visual environment.
- 2.1.5 The baseline study for the proposed development was carried out during December 2014. The existing landscape situation was identified through desk study and field survey and established the landscape character, condition, quality and sensitivity of the study area.
- 2.1.6 A photographic record of the study area was undertaken in early winter conditions (23.12.2014, leaves having fallen from the majority of deciduous trees) to illustrate the landscape character of the Site (refer to **Appendix 8**) and second survey carried out (2.2.15) to identify a selection of representative receptor viewpoints from where the proposed development would be visible (refer to **Appendix 13**).
- 2.1.7 The assessment of landscape and visual effects was based on the potential development design as shown on the development feasibility drawing submitted alongside this report (**Appendix 3**). A worst case scenario was considered where ridge height of development may reach up to 10m. This report was then updated to reflect

an updated proposed development layout (David Wilson Homes drawing ref H6888 rev 101 dated 09/03/15) which includes additional landscape features and constraints.

### **Landscape Impact**

- 2.1.8 The components of the landscape likely to be affected by development proposals are referred to as 'landscape receptors', which include not only individual elements or features in the landscape, but also aesthetic and perceptual aspects, including scale, complexity, openness and tranquillity.
- 2.1.9 The significance of the landscape effects can be described as a product of the value and sensitivity of landscape or landscape receptors, and the magnitude of the effects of change that the development would have on that landscape or landscape receptors.
- 2.1.10 Landscape value is a subjective assessment. The criteria used in this assessment to quantify the value of the existing landscape or landscape receptors are described in Table 1.

**Table 1 Table of landscape value**

<b>Value</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
High Value	High importance and rarity. International, National, Regional and Local scale e.g. AONB, National Park. No or limited potential for substitution. Strong landscape structure, characteristics, patterns and balanced combination of landform and land cover. Distinct features worthy of conservation. Strong sense of place. No detracting features. Appropriate management for land use and land cover. Good condition or quality.
Medium Value	Medium importance and rarity. Regional and Local scale. Undesignated but with recognised value. Limited potential for substitution. Recognisable landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combination of landform and land cover still evident. Scope to improve management for land use and land cover. Some features worthy of conservation. Sense of place. Some detracting features. Moderate condition or quality.
Low Value	Low importance and rarity. Local scale. Weak landscape structure, characteristic patterns of landform and land cover masked by land use. Lack of management resulting in degradation. Frequent/extensive detracting features. Poor condition or quality.

### **Landscape receptor sensitivity**

- 2.1.11 Landscape sensitivity relates to the degree of change which a landscape is able to accommodate without adverse effects on its character. The criteria described in Table 2 have been used in this assessment to quantify the sensitivity of the existing landscape:

**Table 2      Table of landscape sensitivity**

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
High Sensitivity	Key features and characteristics of landscape of distinctive character tolerant of relatively small changes.
Medium Sensitivity	Moderately significant features and characteristics in a distinctive landscape or a landscape of moderately distinctive character reasonably tolerant of changes.
Low Sensitivity	Unimportant features or characteristics or indistinct landscape character types potentially tolerant of substantial change.

### **Landscape effect magnitude**

- 2.1.12 The magnitude of effect upon landscape receptors or characteristics that contribute to the quality and character of the landscape has been considered in the context of the size and scale of change in the landscape, the geographical extent of the area influenced, and the duration of the effect.
- 2.1.13 The area of influence may be at a number of scales, ranging from site level, through immediate setting to landscape type or character area.
- 2.1.14 Landscape effects may be permanent or temporary. The duration of landscape effects may be short term (less than 5 years), medium term (5 to 10 years), or long term (10 to 25 years).
- 2.1.15 The magnitude of landscape effects has been assessed according to the criteria described in Table 3:

**Table 3 Table of magnitude of landscape effect**

<b>Magnitude</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
High Adverse	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. pre-development landscape and or introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.
Medium Adverse	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. pre-development landscape and or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.
Low Adverse	Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. pre-development landscape and or introduction of elements that may be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.
Negligible / No Change	Very minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. pre-development landscape and or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape- approximating the "no-change" situation.
Low Beneficial	Minor introduction of one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. introduction of valued elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.
Medium Beneficial	Moderate introduction of one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. introduction of valued elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.
High Beneficial	Substantial introduction of one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. introduction of valued elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding area.

### **Landscape effect significance**

2.1.16 The two main criteria determining significance are the magnitude of effect of the development on the landscape and the environmental sensitivity of the location or landscape receptor. The levels of significance are described in Table 4:

**Table 4 Table of significance of landscape effect**

	<b>High Magnitude</b>	<b>Medium Magnitude</b>	<b>Low Magnitude</b>	<b>Negligible / No Change</b>
<b>High Sensitivity</b>	High	High	Medium	Not Significant
<b>Medium Sensitivity</b>	High	Medium	Low	Not Significant
<b>Low Sensitivity</b>	Medium	Low	Low	Not Significant

2.1.17 The definitions for landscape effect significance are described in Table 5:

**Table 5 Definitions of levels of significance of landscape effect**

<b>Significance</b>	<b>Definition</b>
High Adverse	The proposed scheme would result in effects that : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cannot be fully mitigated and may cumulatively amount to a severe adverse effect;</li><li>• Are at a considerable variance to the landscape degrading the integrity of the landscape; and</li><li>• Would be substantially damaging to a high quality landscape.</li></ul>
Medium Adverse	The proposed scheme would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be out of scale with the landscape or at odds with the local pattern and landform;</li><li>• Would leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality.</li></ul>
Low Adverse	The proposed scheme would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not quite fit into the landform and scale of the landscape;</li><li>• Affect an area of recognised landscape character.</li></ul>
Not Significant	The proposed scheme would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape;</li><li>• Maintain existing landscape quality.</li></ul>
Low Beneficial	The proposed scheme would have the potential to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve landscape quality and character;</li><li>• Fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape;</li><li>• Enable the restoration of the valued characteristic features partially lost through other land uses.</li></ul>
Medium Beneficial	The proposed scheme would have the potential to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fit very well with the landscape character;</li><li>• Improve the quality of the landscape through removal /damage caused by existing land uses.</li></ul>

## **Visual impact**

2.1.18 In this assessment a number of viewpoints proportional to the scale and nature of the development have been identified within the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) and selected to represent the range of visual receptors necessary to identify the likely effects of the development on visual amenity.

2.1.19 The viewpoints are described and included as photographs within this assessment, and may be categorised as follows:

- Representative viewpoints - to represent the experience of different types of visual receptor, where it is not practical to include large numbers of individual viewpoints and where the significant effects are likely to be similar.

- Specific viewpoints – key viewpoints such as viewpoints in areas of noteworthy visual and/or recreational amenity and visitor attractions.
- Illustrative viewpoints – to demonstrate a particular visual effect.
- Sequential views – along key routes and transport corridors.

2.1.20 The prediction of effects is based upon likely effects during winter conditions and represents a robust and worst case scenario.

2.1.21 The significance of the visual effects can be described as a product of the sensitivity of the visual receptor and magnitude of the changes in the view resulting from development.

### **Visual receptor sensitivity**

2.1.22 The sensitivity of a visual receptor and views would be subject to the location and context of the viewpoint, the expectations or activity of the receptor, and the importance of the view. Sensitivity has been defined in this assessment as described in Table 6:

**Table 6 Categories of visual receptor sensitivity**

<b>Sensitivity of Visual Receptors</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
High Sensitivity	Locations where the viewer has an established interest in the view. Typical examples would include private properties and established public viewpoints from which attention or interest may be focused on the landscape.
Medium Sensitivity	Locations where the viewer would have a moderate interest in the visual amenity but this would not be from a fixed viewpoint. Typical examples would include public rights of way without direct focus on the landscape. Residential properties in the vicinity of a site but without direct views of it that would provide ongoing visual influence may be considered to be of Medium Sensitivity e.g. upper windows from rooms only used at night, gardens enclosed by fencing hedges etc. with no direct sight of the development.
Low Sensitivity	Locations where the viewer would have only a passing interest in the view, for example when travelling through the landscape, at their place of work or involved in sport/recreation activity.

### Visual Effect Magnitude

2.1.23 The magnitude of the change to the view resulting from the development is a product of its size or scale in the view. The geographical extent of the visual effect would be subject to the angle of view of the visual receptor, distance of the viewpoint and the extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

2.1.24 Magnitude of visual effect is assessed according to criteria described in Table 7:

**Table 7 Table of magnitude of visual effect**

<b>Magnitude</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
High	Significant loss or addition of features in the view / changes to the composition of the view / proportion of view occupied by the proposed development.
Medium	Partial loss or addition of features in the view / change to the composition of the view / proportion of view occupied by the proposed development. Change not a key feature in the view and possibly viewed at an oblique angle from the main direction of the view.
Low	Minor loss or addition of features in the view / changes to the composition of the view / proportion of view occupied by the proposed development.
Negligible / No Change	Very minor or imperceptible loss or addition of features in the view / changes to the composition of the view / proportion of view occupied by the proposed development which equates to a "no-change" situation.

### Visual effect significance

2.1.25 The two main criteria determining significance are the magnitude of effect of the development on visual amenity and the sensitivity of the viewpoint or visual receptor. The levels of significance are described in Table 8:

**Table 8 Table of significance of effects on visual receptor**

	<b>High Magnitude</b>	<b>Medium Magnitude</b>	<b>Low Magnitude</b>	<b>Negligible / No Change</b>
<b>High Sensitivity Receptor</b>	High	High	Medium	Not Significant
<b>Medium Sensitivity Receptor</b>	High	Medium	Low	Not Significant
<b>Low Sensitivity Receptor</b>	Medium	Low	Low	Not Significant



2.1.26 The definitions for visual effect significance are described in Table 9:

**Table 9 Definitions of levels of visual significance and nature of effect**

<b>Significance</b>	<b>Definition</b>
High Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration in the existing view
Medium Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view
Low Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible deterioration in the existing view
Not Significant	No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view
Low Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible improvement in the existing view
Medium Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable improvement in the existing view
High Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a significant improvement in the existing view

## **2.2 Scope of assessment**

2.2.1 The geographical scope for the study area was defined by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (**Appendix 11**) which illustrates the extent to which the proposed development is *potentially* visible based upon the estimated maximum height of the proposed development and Ordnance Survey landform height information. Following the foot survey of the site many of the potential receptors were discounted due to intervening features; due to existing development; areas of trees / vegetation and smaller scale landscape features not obvious on the OS map; and as such are not affected and would experience no visual effect.

2.2.2 The duration of landscape and visual effects have been considered by assessing the effects on landscape and visual receptors at three stages of the development:

- Construction Phase;
- Year 1 after completion; and
- Year 15 after completion.

2.2.4 A worst case scenario (i.e. winter landscape condition) was assumed for assessment during and after construction. Residual effects, after landscape mitigation, were assessed as a best case after scenario 15 years assuming a significant growth of planting.

## **2.3 Data collection**

2.3.1 The desktop study was undertaken with reference to data sources including:

- National and local archive and administrative data in the public domain (e.g. <http://www.magic.gov.uk/> )
- European, national, regional and local government policies; including landscape quality and planning status designations.
- Natural England / Countryside Agency's countryside character assessments <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>)
- Herefordshire Council Landscape Character Assessment ([www.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk))
- Site surveys by chartered landscape architects and arboriculturalists.
- Ordnance Survey and bespoke measured topographical site survey.
- Site development feasibility proposals.
- Site and aerial photography (Google Earth).
- Digital topography and GIS (Global Information System) analysis of visual envelope by Troopers Hill Ltd.

2.3.2 The study area was based on the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, with particular emphasis on the effects on sensitive receptors, including residential, commercial, recreational, and designated areas and buildings of historic or environmental importance.

2.3.3 A photographic record of the study area was undertaken and a selection of key viewpoints is described in Representative Viewpoints of principle receptors in **Appendix 13**.

2.3.4 The assessment took account of the effects on people with views of the temporary and permanent works within the visual envelope of the proposed development.

## **2.4 Assessment objectives**

2.4.1 The objectives of the assessment of landscape effects resulting from the proposed development were to:

- Evaluate the sensitivity to change of the landscape character.
- Define levels of magnitude of landscape change including the nature, scale, duration and visibility of any physical changes resulting from development.
- Consider whether changes to character areas are judged to be beneficial, neutral or detrimental to landscape quality.
- Define levels of magnitude change to landscape designations.
- Consider whether changes to the settings of listed buildings and landscape designations are judged to be beneficial or detrimental.
- Identify necessary design changes and/or mitigation.

2.4.2 The objectives of the assessment of impacts on visual amenity were to:

- Evaluate the sensitivity of receptors/viewers in relation to the importance of the view and nature and type of the viewer e.g. public views, views from residences.
- Define the levels of magnitude of change, which include the appearance or loss of elements in views of proposed development.
- Identify necessary design changes and/or mitigation measures.

## **2.5 Cumulative Effects**

2.5.1 No other housing developments in the area are known at the time of writing. Consequently no cumulative effects have been evaluated.

### **3.0 Landscape planning policy context**

#### **3.1 National planning policy**

- 3.1.1 The European Landscape Convention places obligations on the Government in dealing with landscape matters. In response the Government set out a policy framework whose preamble states 'All England's diverse landscapes are valued and well looked after, providing a sense of place and identity relevant to people's lives, and that their complex ecosystems function well. All landscapes would be more effectively planned, well designed and sensitively managed with people in mind'.
- 3.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect in April 2012 and sets out planning policy framework for local and neighbourhood plans.
- 3.1.3 The NPPF includes 12 core planning principles, of which the following are relevant to this proposed development:
- *not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;*
  - *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;*
  - *Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in the framework.*
  - *Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;*
  - *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 wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production).*

Other relevant paragraphs of the NPPF include:

Para 156.

Local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This should include strategic policies to deliver:

- *climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.*

Para 170.

- *Where appropriate, landscape character assessments should also be prepared, integrated with assessment of historic landscape character and for areas where there are major expansion options, assessments of landscape sensitivity.*

### **3.2 Regional planning policy**

- 3.2.1 Herefordshire Council is preparing a Local Plan to guide development in the county over the next 20 years. The Local Plan will be made up of a number of documents including the Core Strategy which will set the overall strategic planning framework for the county up to 2031. It will not allocate sites, but will propose broad strategic directions for growth. Site allocations and more detailed policies will follow in the Hereford Area Plan, and Neighbourhood Development Plan produced by Parish Councils. Other development documents on natural resources (minerals, waste and energy) and Travellers will also be part of the Local Plan. Details of the timescales for these can found in the Local Development Scheme.
- 3.2.2 The Core Strategy was submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 23 September 2014. This marks the beginning of the examination into the Core Strategy.
- 3.2.3 Until the Local Plan – Core Strategy is adopted the 'Unitary Development Plan' will guide development within the county.

#### **Unitary Development Plan**

- 3.2.4 The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted on 23 March 2007 and guides development within the county until the adoption of the Local Plan - Core Strategy. The UDP ensures consistency with Government Planning Statements, the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Community Strategy for Herefordshire.
- 3.2.5 The UDP has the status of a Development Plan Document. It is operative as part of the Local Development Framework and most of its policies have now been 'saved' until they are superseded by other emerging Development Plan Documents in the Local Plan.
- 3.2.6 The notice of adoption was published on 4 April 2007.

The Direction of the Secretary of State to save the policies of the UDP was issued on 24 February 2010. The Direction lists all the saved policies which will remain in effect.

3.2.7 These include (relating to landscape):

**S1 Sustainable development**

3.2.8 The Plan will promote development land use and change which in terms of its level, location, form and design contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. This means avoiding or minimising adverse impacts on the environment whilst providing necessary dwellings and employment together with appropriate infrastructure, services, transport and amenities.

3.2.9 Sustainable development will be promoted by:

1. protecting and enhancing the natural environment and historic heritage, especially irreplaceable assets;
2. respecting patterns of local distinctiveness and landscape character in both town and country, and safeguarding landscape quality and visual amenity;
12. supporting more sustainable approaches to land use and land management in rural areas;
15. avoiding or minimising adverse impacts of human activities, land uses and development on the physical environment.

**S2 Development requirements**

3.2.10 The contribution that developments can make to a sustainable pattern of land use and development which respects the County's environmental resources will be secured by:

1. ensuring that new development achieves a high standard of design and layout which respects the townscape, landscape, ecological and historic character of the area; is sustainable in terms of its construction materials and methods, use of energy, water and other resources; and includes positive environmental benefits including landscaping schemes and provision of wildlife habitats;
2. promoting land use patterns and developments which favour mixed uses subject to amenity considerations, which respect the development potential of adjoining land, and which wherever possible secure the reclamation and beneficial use of degraded or contaminated land, environmental improvements and the reduction or removal of environmental conflicts;
7. ensuring that development which would result in significant negative effects is avoided, but where environmental impact is unavoidable, requiring mitigation or compensation measures which provide benefits at least equal to any environmental loss;

**S7 Natural and historic heritage**

3.2.11 The following assets comprising the County's historic and natural heritage will be protected, restored or enhanced:

1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
2. sites and features of international, national and local nature conservation interest, species of biodiversity interest and areas of geodiversity;
3. the historic heritage including archaeology, buildings and areas of historic or architectural importance, and natural landscapes; and
4. landscape features that contribute.

#### **DR1 Design**

3.2.12 Where relevant to the proposal, all development will be required to:

1. promote or reinforce the distinctive character and appearance of the locality in terms of layout, density, means of access and enclosure, scale, mass, height, design and materials;
2. retain and where possible incorporate existing site features contributing to the quality of the local environment, including landscape, historic and natural elements such as wildlife habitats and species;
3. respect the context of the site, taking into account townscape and landscape character and topography, including the impact of the proposal on urban vistas, longer distance views and ridgelines.

3.2.13 Development which does not adequately address design principles or is of poor design, including schemes which are out of scale or character with their surroundings, will not be permitted.

#### **DR4 Environment**

3.2.14 Where relevant to the proposal, all schemes will be required to:

5. contribute to local open space provision and safeguard and where appropriate protect, restore and enhance biodiversity, features of geological interest and landscape character; and
6. maximise opportunities to enhance the local environment, to include the appropriate provision of public art, external lighting, and hard and soft landscaping.

#### **DR11 Soil quality**

3.2.15 Development which requires the excavation or disturbance of soils and sub-soils on a significant scale must provide for their separate stripping and storage, and wherever possible for their reuse and re-spreading within the site in an acceptable manner. The use of surplus soil mounds to form landscaping or noise barriers will only be permitted where such mounds are both necessary and appropriate to the townscape and landscape character of the locality.



### **H13 Sustainable residential design**

- 3.2.16 Proposals for residential development at all scales should maximise their contribution to sustainable residential design and high quality living environments. In particular proposals will be expected to:
1. take an integrated and comprehensive approach to design, layout and landscape which respects the townscape and landscape context of the site and the distinctive character and appearance of the locality;
  2. provide for interesting and attractive environments through the imaginative layout of buildings, landscaping and open spaces, making full use of existing site features;
  3. create environments which are safe and secure for all members of the community;
  4. design for movement and traffic management in ways that give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and, where appropriate, public transport, above the movement and parking of motor vehicles, in accordance with the transport user hierarchy;
  8. make provision for sustainable drainage measures for both surface and foul water;
  9. include landscaping and open space proposals in accordance with other Plan policies as an integral element of the scheme;
  10. avoid building on open space with recreational and amenity value; and within the scheme and in respect of nearby properties.
  11. provide for acceptable levels of residential amenity including privacy both within the scheme and in respect of nearby properties.

### **H19 Open space requirements**

- 3.2.17 Residential development will be required to incorporate outdoor playing space and public open space in accordance with the minimum standards set out in policy RST3.
- 3.2.18 Open space should be well related to the development it is intended to serve and be useful, safe and secure, and accessible to all. Open space requirements should normally be provided on site.

### **E15 Protection of greenfield land**

- 3.2.19 Development of greenfield land, including the best and most versatile agricultural land (ALC grades 1, 2 and 3a) will not be permitted unless:
1. there is a lack of suitable development opportunities within the boundaries of existing urban areas or on previously developed sites; or
  2. where there is an established need for the development of agricultural land and there is a choice between land of different grades, poorer quality land is used in preference to that of higher quality except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.



### **LA2 Landscape character**

- 3.2.20 Proposals for new development that would adversely affect either the overall character of the landscape, as defined by the Landscape Character Assessment and the Historic Landscape Characterisation or its key attributes or features, will not be permitted.

### **LA3 Setting of settlements**

- 3.2.21 Important visual approaches into settlements, views of key buildings, open areas into development, green corridors, ridgelines and surrounding valued open countryside will be particularly protected and, where necessary, enhanced.
- 3.2.22 In appropriate new developments around existing settlements the creation of open space, urban parks, green wedges, and tree lines will be promoted where they complement and enhance landscape character and townscape.

### **LA5 Protection of trees, woodlands and hedgerows**

- 3.2.23 The enhancement and protection of individual trees, tree groups, woodlands and hedgerows will be secured by:
1. placing Tree Preservation Orders where necessary on trees, groups of trees and woodlands of amenity value, and making use of hedgerow protection legislation;
  2. resisting proposals that would cause loss or damage to trees (including veteran trees), hedgerows, mature traditional orchards or woodlands which are worthy of retention;
  3. requiring development proposals to include an acceptable landscaping scheme submitted in accordance with policy LA6;
  4. where appropriate taking into account as a material consideration the Woodland Management Guidelines produced for the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs and the Government's England Forestry Strategy together with Forestry Commission guidance on Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodlands.

### **LA6 Landscaping schemes**

- 3.2.24 Landscaping schemes will be required to be submitted as an integral part of any development proposals that will affect the visual amenity or character of the location.

### **NC1 Biodiversity and development**

- 3.2.25 In determining all development proposals, the effects upon biodiversity and features of geological interest will be taken fully into consideration.

### **NC8 Habitat creation, restoration and enhancement**

- 3.2.26 The design of new development and the restoration and reclamation of derelict and degraded sites and landscapes, should wherever possible, enhance existing wildlife habitats and provide new habitats for wildlife as opportunities arise.

**NC9 Management of features of the landscape important for fauna and flora**

- 3.2.27 Development proposals which provide for the creation, restoration, enhancement or protection of biodiversity features including those provided as compensation for unavoidable loss in accordance with policy NC7, will also be required to provide for the management and monitoring of those features concerned.

**HBA9 Protection of open areas and green spaces**

- 3.2.28 Proposals which would result in the loss of important open areas or green spaces which contribute to the distinctive spatial character, form and pattern of a settlement or neighbourhood will not be permitted. In particular the following such elements are worthy of protection. Land/open areas which:

1. provide relief within an otherwise built up frontage or within developments;
2. create and maintain a well defined edge to the settlement;
3. provide a buffer between incompatible uses;
4. provide important views into or out of settlements and of attractive buildings and their settings, or of attractive landscapes;
5. provide an important amenity of value to the local community;
6. represent a familiar or distinctive element within an attractive street scene;
7. represent an historic element within the origins or development of the settlement or area; or
8. provide wildlife corridors or stepping stones within built up areas. Where the importance of such land has already been established within Hereford, the market towns or main villages, the area concerned is shown on the proposals maps. Elsewhere and where appropriate, the Council will apply the above criteria to any other land which may become the subject of applications for development, where it is considered that the open nature of the site is of such importance to warrant protection.

### **3.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance**

- 3.3.1 In addition to the core strategy the County has published supplementary planning guidance which can be accessed at

[www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/unitary-development-plan/udp-supplementary-planning-guidance](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/unitary-development-plan/udp-supplementary-planning-guidance)

and is summarised below with respect to landscape issues.

#### **Design and development recommendations Local Context – Site Appraisal**

- 3.3.2 A checklist for use in the appraisal of the site and its surroundings based on policy requirements is provided.

#### **Design and Development Requirements SPG – July 2004 6 - Streetscape/townscape**

- 3.3.3 A checklist for use in the appraisal of the site and its surroundings based on policy requirements is provided.

#### **SPG Green Infrastructure guidance / strategy**

- 3.3.4 The strategy detailed in the guidance provides both an evidence base for where and how development should take place and brings to the fore the need to incorporate the highest standards of protection for existing assets and the design of new.

#### **Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment**

- 3.3.5 The details of the Herefordshire Character Assessment are covered in the following section of this report.

## **4.0 Site and landscape context appraisal**

### **4.1 Landscape character**

- 4.1.1 The landscape and visual baseline information was compiled by means of site visits and desk top study including reference to ordnance survey maps, Natural England's *National Character Area profile, Area 100, Herefordshire Lowlands* and the Herefordshire Council Landscape Character Assessment. A photographic record of the study area was undertaken and a selection of important viewpoints identified. These are provided on Photograph Viewpoint Sheets (**Appendix 8**).

### **4.2 Natural England National Character Area Profile 100: Herefordshire Lowlands**

- 4.2.1 The Herefordshire Lowlands National Character Area (NCA) lies almost entirely within Herefordshire, with small areas to the north and east in Shropshire and Worcestershire and to the south-east in Gloucestershire. It is largely tranquil and rural in character but does include the larger settlements of Hereford and Leominster. There are small dispersed settlements of hamlets and villages, many of which contain older buildings with the local vernacular of black-and white timber-framed buildings. Restored cider barns with characteristic double doors and historic farmsteads are also common.
- 4.2.2 The landscape is gently undulating with steep-sided cornstone hills in the central area dominated by ancient woodland of ash and field maple or oak and bracken. Woodland within the area is a significant landscape feature, typically on the hill tops and valley sides. Many of these woodlands are actively managed (commercially) to produce quality timber, for example Garnons Estate. The NCA is an important area for commercial agricultural supported by the fertile and high-grade agricultural soils; the farming is mixed arable and livestock. Traditional orchards are still to be found, though suffering decline, with new orchards and dwarf varieties of trees also common. The area is also important for commercial production of soft fruit under polytunnels.
- 4.2.3 The relevant key characteristics of the Herefordshire Lowlands Character Area are as follows:
- Gently undulating landscape with localised steep-sided hills in the centre and wide agricultural flood plains.
  - Much of the area is underlain by Old Red Sandstone, with localised deposits of alluvium and glacial drift. There is also a small area of Silurian limestone and

siltstone at Shucknall Hill. Fertile soils support intensive mixed agriculture, especially on the better drained glacial river terraces.

- Wide, meandering river valleys drain the area, including the Wye, a major ecological and recreational asset, and the Lugg, and the valleys of the rivers Frome and Arrow also offer rich habitats.
- Pasture with occasional wet meadows and permanent grassland along the rivers. Low hedgerows with sparse tree cover. Arable cultivation on lower-lying land.
- Localised traditional and bush orchards and occasional hop fields planted with windbreaks.
- Several historic parklands include Humphry Repton landscape improvements at Garnons and Hampton Court, Capability Brown landscape at Berrington Hall, Uvedale Price at Foxley and numerous medieval parks, many with important ancient and veteran trees.
- Timber-framed (black-and-white) buildings are characteristic with stone and red brick also used frequently as building materials.
- Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout with scattered villages, hamlets, farmsteads and clustered settlements around commons. Historic market towns of Hereford and Leominster are the principal settlements.
- Tranquil and relatively undisturbed by major infrastructure aside from a few crossing 'A roads' between Hereford, Hay-on-Wye and Leominster.

#### **4.3 Herefordshire Council Landscape Character Assessment (Supplementary Planning Guidance 2004) (Refer also to Appendix 6)**

- 4.3.1 The County landscape character assessment subdivides the county into smaller more specifically defined character areas than described in the National Character Area profile produced by Natural England. Withington falls into the classification of 'Principal settled farmlands'. The assessment describes the area as follows:

"The rolling, lowland area of Central Herefordshire is dominated by this Landscape Type. These are settled agricultural landscapes of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets. The mixed farming land use reflects the good soils on which they are typically found.

- 4.3.2 Networks of small winding lanes nestling within a matrix of hedged fields are characteristic. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees,

groups of trees around dwellings and trees along stream sides and other watercourses. The composition of the hedgerow tree cover differs from that of Timbered Farmlands in its lower density and lack of oak dominance. This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses. Hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields, together make up the rich patchwork which is typical of Principal Settled Farmlands".

4.3.3 Key characteristics of the area are:

- Hedgerows used for field boundaries
- Mixed farming land use

#### **4.4 Geology and soils**

4.4.1 The Upper Silurian Raglan Mudstone Formation, the lowest of the Old Red Sandstone rocks, underpins the low-lying land. It is composed of red and greenish-grey silts and mudstone with some sandstone and calcrete limestone bands. The hills are underlain by Lower Devonian St Maughans Formation strata consisting of alternating beds of siltstone and sandstone containing nodular calcrete limestones formally known as 'cornstones'. The Old Red Sandstone gives rise to the fertile cultivated land with rich red soils that characterise the area.

4.4.2 The oldest rocks in the NCA are found on Shucknall Hill where Silurian limestones and siltstones have been up-folded into an anticline adjacent to a long-distance fault line, the Neath Valley Disturbance which follows the line of the Frome Valley adjacent to Shucknall Hill. These rocks were formed in warm seas. The rocks of most of the area are Old Red Sandstone, the oldest of which are Upper Silurian in age and the later Devonian, laid down on a large landmass formed when two tectonic plates of the Earth's crust collided and pushed up the Welsh mountains. Softer mudstone rocks with some sandstone bands (Silurian Raglan Mudstone Formation, Upper Silurian in age) underlie the major river valleys. The Raglan Mudstone Formation formed on a coastal plain occasionally flooded by the sea. Fine sediment formed mudstones with some sandstones, which now underlie the lowland of central Herefordshire.

4.4.3 Soilscape (England) describes the soil of the application site as 'slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, draining to stream network.

## **4.5 Topography**

Refer to **Appendix 12** for Topography Plan.

- 4.5.1 In the wider context, the application site is situated within the low lands towards the confluence of the Rivers Lugg and Frome which in turn flow into the River Wye. The area is 'punctuated by steep, often wooded hills. Flat topped, steep-sided hills, locally broken by narrow combs rise above the lowlands. The landscape is predominantly lowland in character with a few isolated flat-topped hills and a plateau area of rolling landform in the north-east. The higher areas were, once part of a continuous plateau but the hard cap has been eroded in many places. (Source: Herefordshire Lowlands Countryside Character Area Description, Central Herefordshire Natural Area Profile).
- 4.5.2 The application site lies at approximately 71m (aod) to the south of the main village and north of the A4103 some 20m above the level of the nearby rivers (2.5 / 3km away). The land rises gradually from the southern boundary by around 2m.
- 4.5.3 East of the site the land rises steadily towards Shucknall Hill and Westhide Wood.

## **4.6 Settlement and transport routes**

- 4.6.1 The site sits at the southern extents of the village of Withington and immediately north of the settlement of Whitestone. Withington is characteristic of the area being one of a scattering of numerous small villages and settlements such as nearby Lugwardine, Hagley and Shucknall. Withington is located on the A 4103 highway approximately 5km north east of Hereford.
- 4.6.2 Withington is served by a number of Public footpaths however the nearest to the site is the 'Three Choirs Footpath, a long distance footpath, some 0.6km to the West.

## **4.6 Landscape heritage**

### **Landscape designations**

- 4.6.1 'Withington Conservation Area' lies 0.3km to the north of the site, separated from the site by existing development.
- 4.6.2 There are no Tree Preservation Orders recorded for trees on or in the vicinity of the application site.
- 4.6.3 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within or adjoining the application site or directly affected by the proposed development.

4.6.4 The wider area with the application site is covered by non-statutory designations:

- Catchment sensitive farming capital grant scheme target area
- Catchment sensitive farming delivery initiative 2011-2016

### **Listed Buildings**

4.6.5 There are no listed buildings within the site however there are a number immediately adjacent to and within the near vicinity of the site. A plan showing the location of the listed buildings can be found in **Appendix 14**

<b>Mile Stone</b> About 250 Yards east-north-east of the White Stone	Grade II listed English Heritage ID : 154152 OS grid: 356117, 242838	<b>Mile stone.</b> Probably early C19. Sandstone with segmental head and cast iron plate let in. Raised lettering on the plate: "TO/ HEREFORD/ 4/ MILES"	0.35km from site, west along the A4103
<b>Baptist Chapel</b>	Grade II listed English Heritage ID: 154168 OS grid: 356388, 242783	Chapel. Early C19. Coursed sandstone, hipped slate roof. Rectangular plan at right angles to road. One storey, 2 + 2 x 1 windows.	50m to the west of the site. Note there is development between and no views through to site.
<b>The white Stone</b>	Grade II Listed English Heritage ID : 154169 OS grid: 356444, 242753	<b>Inscribed shaft</b> with base. Said to be dated 1700 but hard to date as inscription is damaged, nevertheless the lettering does appear at least that old. Sandstone. Roughly square, about 10 inches in section and about 3 feet high. Inscriptions barely decipherable. On south face "HERE/FORD". Base fragment heavily eroded.	30m from eastern boundary to the west of the site.



<b>Barn about 15 yards west of Weston Farmhouse</b>	Grade II Listed  English Heritage ID : 154167  OS grid: 357136, 242600	<b>Barn.</b> Probably C18. Sandstone rubble base and weather-boarded timber-framing with corrugated iron roof. Five bays aligned north/south.	500m to East of site along A4103
<b>The Green</b>	Grade II Listed  English Heritage ID : 154165  OS grid: 356506, 242470	<b>Cottage.</b> Probably early C18 with c1900 additions. Timber-frame, plaster infill and plain tiled roofs. Two bays aligned east/west. One storey and attic	250m to the south of the site.

### Scheduled Monuments

- 4.6.6 There are no Scheduled Monuments (SM) within or adjoining the site or directly affected by the Proposed Development.

### Heritage Assets

- 4.6.7 There are no known heritage assets on or adjoining the site or directly affected by the Proposed Development.

## 4.7 Local Character Setting

- 4.7.1 The application site is within land described in the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment as 'Principal settled farmland' Landscape Type.
- 4.7.2 Primary key characteristics of the Principal settled farmland Landscape Character Type include:
- Hedgerows used for field boundaries
  - Mixed farming land use
- 4.7.3 Relevant key characteristics of the wider 'Natural England National Character Area Profile 100: Herefordshire Lowlands' applicable to the site include:
- Gently undulating landscape with localised steep-sided hills in the centre and wide agricultural flood plains.

- A small area of Silurian limestone and siltstone at Shucknall Hill. Fertile soils support intensive mixed agriculture, especially on the better drained glacial river terraces.
- Pasture with occasional wet meadows and permanent grassland along the rivers. Low hedgerows with sparse tree cover. Arable cultivation on lower-lying land.
- Localised traditional and bush orchards and occasional hop fields planted with windbreaks.
- Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout with scattered villages, hamlets, farmsteads and clustered settlements around commons.
- Tranquil and relatively undisturbed by major infrastructure ...

4.7.4 It is stated in the existing development plan that Supplementary Planning guidance should be taken into consideration when evaluating development proposals. A key SPG document is the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment. This document suggests that development should seek to **conserve** and **enhance**...

"...the unity of small to medium scale hedged fields. Opportunities for new tree planting should be concentrated along watercourses where the linear tree cover pattern could be strengthened. Additional tree planting in the vicinity of settlement would also be appropriate and would assist in emphasising the domestic quality of the landscape. New woodland should not be introduced as it is out of place and would compromise the landscape character. The mixed farming land use is becoming increasingly arable and the small permanent pastures are gradually declining. These are often species rich and initiatives to safeguard them should be strongly promoted. New development should remain at a low density with most housing associated with existing hamlets and villages."

## **4.8 Character of the site**

Refer to **Appendix 8** Site Character Photographs

- 4.8.1 **Arable land** (Photos B, C, D and E): The site, apart from its boundary treatment is a field used for arable crop production and is characteristic of the area and neighbouring land to the east. The site lies on the edge of the Withington settlement with a residential area to the north and west and highway and individual houses to the south. Consequently it is characteristic of the wider landscape but not of its local context to three aspects.
- 4.8.2 **Gently undulating landform** (Photos A and B): The site and Withington sits within gently undulating landform characteristic of the wider Landscape Character type. From the site the landform rises gradually towards Shucknall Hill to the east but more steeply to

the north providing a close horizon in this aspect. To the south the land is undulating eventually falling to the river valley floors of the Rivers Lugg and Frome beyond which the land climbs steeply towards Marcle Hill and Common Hill.

- 4.8.3 **Hedgerows** (Photos A, B, C, D, E and F): The site is bounded to the west and east by managed hedgerows. The hedge to the west, flailed to 1.5m high by 1.5m wide is predominantly Hawthorn but also contains various other species indicating it is of moderate age. The hedge to the east, flailed to 2m high on the site side but left to grow unmanaged on the other side is almost entirely Hawthorn indicating that it is a relatively late addition to the landscape. To the south of the site there is hedgerow of around 30 years old which appears to be contemporary with highway widening works. It is predominantly Hawthorn but with some additional tree species allowed to develop within the hedgerow. This hedge has been laid at least once. To the north of the site there are areas of hedge elements but these are unmanaged and inconsistent. Generally the hedgerows are consistent with and reinforce the wider landscape character described in the Herefordshire Council Character Assessment, i.e. "Low hedgerows with sparse tree cover. Arable cultivation on lower-lying land".
- 4.8.4 **Site Trees** (Photos C,D and FI): There are no trees in the centre of the site however there are occasional trees allowed to develop within the hedgerow along the southern boundary and a row of mature / over-mature fastigate Poplars planted as screen planting contemporary with the Southbank residential development. The trees within the hedgerow are not specifically characteristic of the wider landscape character but are not without precedent and assimilate with the more local character associated with the edge of settlement. However the row of Poplars is contrary to the local and wider landscape character as it is not in character to see significantly tall trees planted close together in a row in this part of the country.
- 4.8.5 **Residential Properties** (Photos C, D and G): The South East corner of the site bounds the gardens of a row of 1930's houses. These are not particularly characteristic of the area but are typical of housing stock built by councils across the country in the 1930's. To the west of the site a number of individual properties have been built along the lane, circa late 1960's / early 1980's. There is no uniform period or style apparent: there is an older cottage property, several contemporary houses in a variety of styles large, brick built residential home. To the north of the site is the Southbank housing estate. The earlier houses are of the 'Cornish House' style with the later builds being of a contemporary brick built style. The estate was mostly built between the late 1960's and 1970's with more recent additions. The styles are urban in character and therefore not historically typical of a rural setting however they are characteristic of

the mass house building programmes of the 1960/70s and are not untypical of rural village extensions of that period.

- 4.8.6 **Commercial Estates** (No Photo): Approximately 140m to the south east of the site, across the A 4103 there is a large area of commercial trading estate. Although not visible at ground level from the site its presence interrupts the general conformance of the local area to the wider typical landscape character.
- 4.8.7 **Highway** (Photos F, G and H): The site is bounded to the west by a small lane connecting the A 4103 to the older parts of Withington to the north. To the west of this lane are a number of individual small residential properties and a larger residential home. The character is typical of edge of settlement with various boundary treatments including coniferous evergreen hedges and timber close board and panelled fences. The A4103 runs along the south boundary of the site. This is a major, busy road linking the cities of Hereford with Worcester and is inconsistent with the character assessments description of an area "Tranquil and relatively undisturbed by major infrastructure"
- 4.8.8 **Summary of site character:** Generally the site consists of an arable field enclosed by hedges to three sides and hedge elements and trees to the fourth. When viewed as part of the adjacent rural landscape it closely conforms to the character of 'Principal settled farmland' as described in the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment. However, the residential properties to the north, west and to some extent the south are more urban in character contrasting strongly with the wider rural setting and the site itself.

#### **4.9 Adjacent landscape character**

- 4.9.1 The spread of the village of Withington has already exceeded the character assessment description of 'Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout with scattered villages, hamlets, farmsteads and clustered settlements around commons. The majority of houses throughout the village are contemporary in style and contribute little to the area character type.
- 4.9.2 The nearby business park consists mainly of large sheds / warehouses which contrast dramatically with the area landscape character assessment typology.
- 4.9.3 Moving away from Withington the landscape character reverts to type as described in the landscape character assessment with perhaps the railway line some 0.5km south of the site.

#### 4.10 Vegetation, trees and Habitat

Refer to tree and Vegetation Survey plan, (**Appendix 9**), Aerial photograph (**Appendix 2**) and Habitats (**Appendix 7**).

##### Scope

- 4.10.1 Ecological aspects of site vegetation are described in detail in the Betts Ecology *Extended Phase I Habitat and Preliminary Protected Species Assessment* report for the site. The arboricultural and other vegetational aspects are described below.
- 4.10.2 The principal feature of the site is an arable field between the Southbank residential estate and the A4103 highway bounded by hedges to three sides and hedge elements and trees to the fourth. A number of trees have developed within the hedgerow.
- 4.10.3 **Site boundary features** (Refer to Appendix 9 for locations)
- 4.10.4 **Hedgerow H1** – Mostly composed of regularly pollarded crack willow with some Ash and Hawthorn typically managed at 2.2m high
- 4.10.5 **Hedgerow H2**: C19th Hawthorn field enclosure hedge containing sporadic Dog Rose, Hops and a Hazel and Goat Willow. The hedge is cut to 2m high on the site side and has been left to grow to 3.5m on the other side.
- 4.10.6 **Hedgerow H3**: A short length of hedge providing screening at the bottom of a residential garden plot. The hedge is managed at 2.2m high and approximately 900mm wide.
- 4.10.7 **Hedgerow H4**: 3m wide, 6-7m high Leylandii hedge providing the boundary feature of residential property.
- 4.10.8 **Hedgerow H5**: A hedgerow consisting of mainly Hawthorn with some bramble and goat Willow. Probably around 30 years old and associated with highway improvement / widening works at that time.
- 4.10.9 **Hedgerow H6: A closely managed hedgerow** with more species diversity. The hedge has been flailed to 1.5m high by 1.5m wide
- 4.10.10 **Hedgerow H7** is a continuation of H6 to the north of the field gate access.
- 4.10.11 **Trees T1, T2 and T3** : A small group of trees on the south west corner of the site growing against hedgerow H6.
- 4.10.12 **Trees T4 and T5**: Trees growing within the context of the southern boundary hedge.
- 4.10.13 **T6**: is a large White Willow pollard.

4.10.14 **T9:** A large Oak in poor condition just outside of the site ownership.

4.10.15 **T10 – 21 and G 18-20:** A line of trees planted about 25 – 30 years old, probably planted as a screen, It is dominated by fastigiated White Poplar and Crack Willow many of which are in decline

#### 4.10.16 **Foreseeable impacts of housing development on site vegetation**

4.10.17 This is dealt with in the AAC Arboricultural Report which accompanies this application. Housing and road layout will avoid direct conflicts with site trees although desirable arboricultural management works may affect site tree cover in the short term (e.g. pollarding).

### 4.11 **Sensitivity**

4.11.1 **Landscape Value:-** Using the criteria outlined in Table 1 as a guide, the application site is not within a designated protected landscape and is considered to be of local scale value.

4.11.2 The site is predominantly arable land which together with the hedgerows are common structural landscape elements identified as characteristic in the local landscape character area and therefore of low individual importance and rarity.

4.11.3 The adjacent modern residential and nearby commercial development could be considered to detract from the rural landscape character of the site.

4.11.4 To the south, the A4103 highway creates a division between the site and the wider landscape thereby limiting future attempts to link green infrastructure between the site and the wider landscape in this direction.

4.11.5 The Village of Withington within the context that the site sits, is larger than and developed more than most of the small settlements described as characteristic of the Landscape Character type. The site provides a rural edge to the village which would be largely unaffected by development within the site providing the hedgerows are retained.

4.11.6 Taking the above into consideration, overall the site landscape value is assessed to be of **medium value. I.e. typical of the wider area, providing a boundary for Withington but not in itself 'special' and with some significant detractors:**

- Unsympathetic residential development
- Nearby commercial development
- A4103 traffic.

- 4.11.7 Using the criteria outlined in Table 2 as a guide, the landscape features of the Site are considered to be moderately significant in the distinctive local landscape character although not of individual significance or importance.
- 4.11.8 In developing the site for residential use the loss of arable land would be a permanent change which cannot be entirely mitigated, however there is potential for retention and enhancement of the trees and hedgerows associated with the site which are primary key characteristics of the Principal Settled Farmlands Landscape Type.
- 4.11.9 Whilst development of the site would be irreversible and no longer representative of the rural landscape character to the east and the wider context, it would become representative of the urban character of Withington to the immediate north and west. Most of the characteristic rural, vegetational features of the site boundary would be retained whilst introducing urban features into the center of the site. Consequently the site is capable of accommodating change which would complement both character types against which it abuts i.e. Principal Settled Farmland and the urban form.
- 4.11.10 The overall Site is therefore assessed to be of **medium sensitivity** and reasonably tolerant of change.



## **5.0 Proposed development and outline landscape scheme design**

Refer to **Appendix 3** for the Site Plan Layout available when this report was prepared and David Wilson Homes drawing H6888 REV 101 for updated layout (available separately).

- 5.1 The design, scale, density, and layout of the proposed residential development would be typical of contemporary developments and visually similar to the existing residential areas to the north of the site and with other residential areas within the wider Withington conurbation.
- 5.2 The proposed development occupies the entire site and includes a broad green infrastructure area of 'Public open space' along the southern (A4103) boundary. A further landscape buffer strip extends alongside the retained hedgerow, between the development and the lane to the west providing space between the new and established development with opportunity to plant trees to filter views in and out of the site. Alongside the proposed public open space an informal SuDS attenuation pond and a drainage swale, links the areas of open space, with British native and ornamental species tree and shrub planting softening the transition from rural to urban edge of the village. Main vehicular access to the development is via a break in the west boundary with pedestrian and cycle links at the north-west, south west and southern corners. Paths are proposed adjacent to the west and southern boundaries running within the public open space and providing off road access to bus stops and transport routes. Facing the eastern boundary, properties are set back behind front gardens, driveways and secondary access roads. These are further distanced from the curtilage by a broad, informal landscaped border with a drainage swale deciduous tree planting and the existing retained boundary hedge. Residences and gardens have been orientated along the remaining boundaries to accommodate the root protection areas enabling the retention of existing hedgerows and trees. Additional tree planting within gardens long the northern boundary will soften boundaries with neighbouring properties.
- 5.3 The layout would not require any significant removal of existing landscape features.
- 5.4 The proposals include tree planting along boundaries – with space for feature trees to grow to stature at maturity. Further tree planting within front circulation routes and rear garden spaces provides opportunity to provide green infrastructure connectivity through the site, reinforced by garden areas and retained existing hedges and trees.



- 5.5 The proposed SuDS attenuation pond would be positioned between the south of the development and the flood risk area to the north of the brook which in addition to its contribution to a sustainable drainage system would increase the ecological habitat provision on the site. Proposed SuDS drainage swales will run adjacent to the eastern, southern and lower part of the western boundary hedges and further extend the variety of informal planting and wildlife habitat
- 5.6 Boundary hedgerows will be predominantly retained except for short lengths removed to widen the site entrance and provide footpath access.

## **6.0 Proposed Mitigation measures**

**6.0.1** The following mitigation measures have been proposed to address planning policies, and other relevant guidance and published landscape assessments, to reduce the impact of the proposed development on the Principal Settled Farmlands Landscape Area, existing Withington residents and general visual receptors and views from nearby properties overlooking the site.

### **6.1 Proposed construction period mitigation**

- 6.1.1 Tree and hedgerow protection measures will be put in place in accordance with the approved Tree Protection Plan to BS5837:2012, prior to commencement of clearance works and remain in place during the construction period to safeguard trees and hedgerows identified for retention.
- 6.1.2 The programme for clearance works will be timed to ensure that sections of hedgerows identified for removal, and arboricultural works to trees will not be carried out during the bird nesting season (March to September inclusive).
- 6.1.3 Neighbouring properties adjacent to the boundaries of the site should be shielded by construction site hoardings erected along the margins of the construction area.

### **6.2 Operational development mitigation**

- 6.2.1 Landscape design mitigation is proposed to reduce adverse impacts on the local landscape character and visual receptors.
- 6.2.2 Tree planting will soften and break up views of the built form of the proposed development from adjacent and distant viewpoints and integrate the development into the rural edge setting.
- 6.2.3 Further tree planting within proposed rear gardens and along circulation routes will filter views of the development from the existing residential development, reducing the visual impact on these close distance visual receptors. The trees close to rear garden boundaries along the northern edge will maintain the line of the original field boundaries further integrating the development into the rural edge.
- 6.2.5 The removal of sections of hedgerow necessitated by the expanded site access will be offset and mitigated by new hedgerow planting outside of the vis-splay.

- 6.2.6 An area of community amenity value will be provided towards the south west of the site which will create a site of distinctive and individual character consistent with its semi-rural setting.
- 6.2.7 Native species of trees and shrubs are proposed to maximise ecological benefits to local wildlife, and to integrate the landscaping with the existing local landscape context of native vegetation.
- 6.2.8 The development will provide many opportunities to add to and improve the native tree and shrub cover of the site, as well as providing a new generation of trees within the landscape.

## **7.0 Impact identification and significance: Landscape character impacts**

7.0.1 The impact of the proposed development on landscape receptors has been assessed at the construction phase, prior to landscape design mitigation, and following practical completion, during the operation of the development after implementation of the landscape design mitigation.

7.0.2 Characteristic landscape elements comprising the Site landscape include:

### **7.1 Agricultural land**

7.1.1 The Principal Settled Farmlands Landscape Type is a largely agricultural landscape and the Application Site is on agricultural land.

7.1.2 The loss of agricultural land to built development would be a permanent effect and therefore the Residual Magnitude effect is judged to be **High Adverse**.

### **7.2 Trees**

7.2.1 The majority of existing trees of value within or immediately adjacent to the Site will be retained. Significant new tree planting is proposed within the development and alongside boundary hedgerows and existing trees. This will integrate the residential development and new circulation carriageway with the wider rural landscape.

7.2.2 The effect Magnitude without landscape mitigation is judged to be **Neutral**.

7.2.3 In Year 15 following completion, the new tree planting within the proposed development is expected to have matured sufficiently to enhance the character of the local landscape and increase filtering of views of the proposed development. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect at a local scale in the Principal Settled Farmlands Landscape Type would be **Low Beneficial**.

### **7.3 Hedgerows**

7.3.1 The existing hedgerows on the site boundaries will be retained with the exception of short sections along the west and south boundaries which will be removed to improve site access. These hedgerows are proposed to be incorporated within a green landscaped open space, all to be managed to increase bio-diversity and increase green infrastructure alongside the proposed built form.

7.3.2 The effect Magnitude without landscape mitigation is judged to be **negligible change**.

7.3.3 In Year 15 following completion, the hedgerow and tree planting can be expected to have matured sufficiently to reinforce and integrate with the landscape structure of

the local landscape and quality of wildlife habitat. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Medium Beneficial**.

#### **7.4 Aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the Site landscape character**

##### **7.5.1 Sense of openness**

- 7.5.2 The Application Site is largely open arable land and therefore the site has a sense of openness.
- 7.5.3 On a site basis the proposed development would reduce the sense of openness as residential properties and new tree planting increase the sense of enclosure within the site boundary. However, considering the wider landscape the local landscape character acknowledges the presence of "Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout with scattered villages, hamlets ..." The infill nature of the development would not detract from the sense of openness across the wider landscape and would assimilate with existing development. Therefore the loss of openness and increase of enclosure and filtered views on the Site would not be considered out of keeping with the local landscape character.
- 7.5.4 The increase of enclosure and filtered views, and reduction of the sense of openness would result from the proposed development buildings, with new tree planting having minimal impact. The effect Magnitude on landscape character when judged against areas to the east without mitigation is judged to be **High Adverse**
- 7.5.5 In Year 15 following completion, new tree planting can be expected to have matured sufficiently to improve the integration of the development into the rural landscape through the increase of filtered views of the development. It is considered that the **residual magnitude** of the effect on the local landscape character would be **Medium Adverse**.

##### **7.6 Sense of enclosure**

- 7.6.1 The site currently has a sense of enclosure due to the hedgerows bounding it on all sides, the highway to the South and residential development to the north reinforce the sense of enclosure. This sense of enclosure would be maintained due to retention of these landscape features.
- 7.6.2 The effect Magnitude on the enclosed landscape character of the site without mitigation is judged to be **Not Significant**.

- 7.6.3 In Year 15 following completion, the new hedgerow to the north of the site can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase the sense of enclosure within the site. Tree planting within the new hedgerow and within the proposed residential development would enhance the effect of enclosure. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect on the local landscape character in respect of 'enclosure' would be **Negligible**.

## **7.7 Sense of tranquillity**

- 7.7.1 The arable land and its boundary with residential properties is predominantly tranquil due to its use. However the landscape setting of the adjacent highway, residential area and industrial estate introduces some sounds which bring about some audible interruption in the otherwise tranquil setting, therefore the Site would not be considered a highly tranquil setting.
- 7.7.2 The sense of tranquillity for local residents will be most threatened during the construction phase by the use of heavy plant and the need for vehicular deliveries.
- 7.7.3 Landscape buffer zones and rear gardens will be positioned adjacent to existing residential properties which when established, maintain the existing level of tranquillity for existing residents.
- 7.7.4 The introduction of additional residential development and the associated activities adjacent to the arable land to the east will change its tranquillity. The Magnitude of effect on the tranquillity is judged to be **Medium Adverse**. However when considered in the context of the existing residential areas to which the site abuts, the effect Magnitude on the local landscape tranquillity due to the introduction of additional activity generated by the proposed development is judged to be **Negligible to low adverse**.
- 7.7.5 In Year 15 following completion, the development will have matured and all construction ceased. Maturing tree planting can be expected to screen or filter views into the site along with some sounds and therefore it is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Negligible**.

## **7.8 Scale of the development**

- 7.8.1 The existing settlement to the north and west of the proposed development forms part of the wider Withington settlement and therefore the moderate size of the proposed development would be viewed as a small to medium scale extension to the existing settlement and would not be out of keeping with the village character.
- 7.8.2 The effect Magnitude of the development without mitigation on the local rural landscape which is characterised by inclusion of small settlements and villages would be **Low Adverse**.
- 7.8.2 The effect Magnitude of the development without mitigation on the adjacent urban development would be **Not Significant**
- 7.8.3 In Year 15 following completion, the tree planting can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase filtering of views and reducing the visual scale of the development, integrating it into the settlement edge landscape setting. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Low Adverse**.

## **7.9 Lighting**

- 7.9.1 The lighting likely to be emitted from the proposed development is expected to be similar to the current light emissions from the existing settlement edge.
- 7.9.2 The effect Magnitude on the landscape of an increase in settlement lighting is judged to be **Low Adverse**.
- 7.9.3 In Year 15 following completion, the tree planting can be expected to have matured sufficiently to provide a degree of increased filtering of light emissions from the Site. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Low Adverse**.

## **7.10 Settlement pattern**

- 7.10.1 The site sits between two characters of settlement pattern. To the north, west and south urban and to the east rural. The local rural landscape is characterised by "Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout with scattered villages, hamlets, farmsteads and clustered settlements ... The proposed development will increase the area of development but is unlikely to change the character of the village itself as it will only be adding 'more of the same'. It would therefore not adversely affect the dispersed settlement pattern of the wider landscape.
- 7.10.2 The effect Magnitude of the proposed development upon settlement pattern is judged to be **Neutral**.

7.10.3 The **Residual Magnitude** effect is therefore judged to be **Neutral**.

## **7.11 Southbank**

7.11.1 The local rural landscape is characterised by a 'Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout with scattered villages, hamlets, farmsteads and clustered settlements ...' Southbank, which abuts the application site is part of one of the typical scattered villages which conforms to the character description.

7.11.2 The proposed site design seeks to create a landscape buffer by creating gardens between Southbank and the new development thereby creating a green infrastructure corridor between them, ensuring their physical independence and maintaining a level of amenity value. Furthermore the proposed development would be serviced by its own access road and would not rely on Southbank for vehicular or pedestrian access.

7.11.3 The effect Magnitude of the Proposed Development upon Southbank is judged to be Low Adverse.

7.11.4 The Residual Magnitude effect is therefore judged to be **Low Adverse**.



## **8.0 Impact identification and significance: Visual amenity**

- 8.0.1 The assessment of the likely visual effect of the proposed development will be covered in this section.
- 8.0.2 The impact of the proposed development on visual receptors has been assessed at the construction phase, prior to landscape design mitigation, and following practical completion, during the operation of the development after implementation of the landscape design mitigation.

### **(Demolition, construction and operational phases)**

#### **8.1 Extent of visual impact**

- 8.1.1 Due to the location of the proposed development within an undulating landscape views of the site are greatly restricted from the north and west, limited to only those properties immediately adjacent to the site (Southbank residential estate and individual properties along the lane to the west of the site and properties either side of the A4103 immediately adjacent to the site).
- 8.1.2 The zone of visual analysis would suggest that potential receptors to the south of the site would have clear or partial views into the site. However, in reality, general vegetation, vegetation associated with existing developments and the existing developments themselves along with minor landscape features not evident from Ordinance Survey mapping conspire to screen the application site from view.
- 8.1.3 To the west the ground rises gradually for 0.8km towards Shucknall Hill and Westhide Wood / Withington Coppice from the edge of the wood which is also a public footpath there are clear views of the site. Further views of the site from the east are obscured by Staples Hole Coppice and the topography.
- 8.1.4 From higher ground to the south east and beyond (4km away and farther) there are some views to Withington including the application site, however, from this distance the roofs of proposed housing would assimilate with those of the existing residential and commercial properties.
- 8.1.5 Some properties to the south east of the site along the A4103 potentially have oblique views of the site from upper storey windows however these views appear to be filtered or obscured by adjacent vegetation or vegetation and properties closer to the site.

## **8.2 Visual envelope**

8.2.1 The visual envelope describes the area of land from which there is a potential view of any part of the development. It is governed by the topography and proposed development's location, height and extent. Refer to Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) in **Appendix 11**. The visual envelope has been determined by GIS analysis of topographical information within approximately 5km radius of the Proposed Development. Not all the areas within the visual envelope would be able to see the development as the intervening affect of buildings, landform and vegetation have screening effects. A foot survey determined the actual effective Zone of Visual Impact (ZVI) i.e. area where the site would actually be visible. Receptors identified as experiencing potential visual effect but which are not actually affected are indicated in **Appendix 12**.

## **8.3 Zone of visual impact**

8.3.1 The principle receptors identified as experiencing some potential visual effect due to development of the site (within Zone of visual impact), verified by the foot survey, are identified in **Appendix 12**. View point locations and photographs showing representative views from those locations are included in **Appendix 13**.

### **8.3.2 Visual receptor 1. Orchard House Residential Care Home**

8.3.3 This receptor, represents views experienced by the residents of the care home. The south west aspect of the property has a communal area, with a large first floor window with oblique views of the site from which the residents might enjoy the view of open countryside. In addition there are a number of smaller windows facing the same aspect and on the South East façade which also have views over the site. Consequently this receptor could be considered to be of **high sensitivity**. A high proportion of the property's windows do not have views over the site and at ground level views are obscured by the property's own close board fence and evergreen hedge therefore overall the effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Medium**.

8.3.4 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: Views of the proposed development construction works would be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected on the boundaries of the Site, which would in itself be an intrusion into the view. However, the existing hedgerows already screen views from the east, west and south and the hoardings will predominantly be set inside the hedge-line. There would be open views of construction works from the upper windows but, due to the slightly elevated

position of the property, the longer views beyond the development would be maintained. A small proportion of the residents have views over the site although most of which are oblique. Therefore the effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Medium**.

- Year 1 following completion: The effect of the proposed development boundary's new landscape area would provide some low level visual filtering of the proposed development and would soften the development edge. New garden planting associated with new residencies would as yet have minimal effect. Longer views beyond the site would be unaffected. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Medium**.
- Year 15 following completion: The boundary planting and garden vegetation associated with the new residences can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase filtering of views of the proposed development and to contribute to an aesthetically appropriate and pleasing visual context to the development. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be Low.
- **Overall the visual effect significance would be High to Medium adverse.**

#### **8.3.5 Visual Receptor 2, 3 and 4. Residents of the Southbank residential estate with views facing the site**

8.3.6 These receptors represent an area of high density housing where many have open or partial views of the site and the countryside beyond. Receptor areas designated 2 and 3 are on ground elevated above the site level. At ground level their views would be intercepted by the new development but from upper levels they would maintain views over the development to the more distant landscape beyond. Receptor area 4 is at site level. Consequently, where there are windows facing the site, distant views would be lost. Currently, existing views are screened and filtered by the row of Poplars planted along the boundary between the site and Southbank estate and by garden fencing. In winter this has only marginal effect but will mostly screen out views into the site when leaves are on the trees. Many of the houses are positioned perpendicular to the site boundary therefore many of the views are oblique. Properties closest to the boundary are contained by 1.8m fence panels and do not have views of the site from gardens or ground floor windows. Therefore visual receptor sensitivity would be considered to be of **medium sensitivity**. Generally, the views into the site which will be affected are from first floor level and of passing interest only. Consequently the effect magnitude would be considered to be **medium / low**.

8.3.7 At night, the existing residential properties with views towards the site look out onto a dark field with only lighting emitted from cars travelling along the A4103. The Proposed Development would result in creating lighting conditions similar to that currently experienced around the estate.

8.3.8 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: Views of the proposed development construction works would be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected on the boundaries of the site, which would in itself be an intrusion into the view. There would be open views of construction works from first floor windows. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **medium**.
- Year 1 following completion. The boundary treatment and new garden planting associated with new built form would as yet have minimal effect. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Medium / low**.
- Year 15 following completion: The boundary treatment and garden vegetation associated with the new built form can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase filtering of views of the proposed development. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Low**.
- **Overall the visual effect significance would be Low Adverse.**

#### **8.3.9 Visual Receptor 5. The White Stone (Listed building)**

8.3.10 This receptor, representing visitors to the White Stone's view of the site which have partial and/or oblique views of the proposed development, is considered to be of **Low Sensitivity**.

8.3.11 Views of the proposed residential development would be heavily screened by the existing trees and boundary hedges. Therefore any views of the proposed development are likely to be only partial views, and possibly viewed at an angle.

8.3.12 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: In addition to the existing hedge and tree canopies, views of the proposed development construction works would be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected on the boundaries of the Site. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Low**.

- Year 1 following completion: Public space is planned for the southern part of the development. Consequently there would be no changes to the current views. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Negligible**.
- Year 15 following completion: Existing views would be substantially unchanged therefore it is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Negligible**.
- **Overall the visual effect significance would be not significant.**

#### **8.3.13 Visual Receptor 6. Holly Tree Cottage / White Stone House**

- 8.3.14 This receptor represents views experienced by residents of two adjoined houses situated opposite and to the South of the site on the A4103. It is considered to be of **High Sensitivity**.
- 8.3.15 The residences do not have windows with views across the road to the site and have tall hedges and fences around their boundary. Consequently this receptor will experience a transient visual effect, due to the proposed development, when arriving and leaving the properties. The views that may be experienced will be filtered and screened by the existing hedgerow and trees as well as any new trees planted as part of the development landscape scheme. Therefore the effect magnitude would be considered to be **Negligible**.
- 8.3.16 The effect Magnitude during development would be:
- Construction Phase: Views of the proposed development construction works would be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected on the boundaries of the Site. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Low**.
  - Year 1 following completion: The effect of the proposed development boundary planting and tree planting would begin to increase visual screening of the proposed development. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Low / Negligible**.
  - Year 15 following completion: The tree and garden planting can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase filtering of views of the proposed residential development. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Negligible**.
  - **Overall the visual effect significance would be not significant.**

### **8.3.17 Visual Receptor 7. Ramblers Cottage**

8.3.18 This receptor represents views experienced by residents of a cottage situated opposite and to the South of the site on the A4103. It is considered to be of **High Sensitivity**.

8.3.19 The residence does not have windows with direct views across the road to the site and has tall hedges and fences around its boundary.

8.3.20 This receptor will only experience a transient visual effect due to the proposed development when arriving and leaving the property. The views that may be experienced will be filtered and screened by the existing hedgerow and trees as well as any new trees planted as part of the development landscape scheme. Therefore the effect magnitude would be considered to be **Negligible**.

8.3.21 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: Views of the proposed development construction works would be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected on the boundaries of the Site. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Low**.
- Year 1 following completion: The effect of the proposed development boundary planting and tree planting would begin to increase visual screening of the proposed development. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Low / Negligible**.
- Year 15 following completion: The tree and garden planting can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase filtering of views of the proposed residential development. It is considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect is **Negligible**.
- **Overall the visual effect significance would be not significant.**

### **8.3.22 Visual Receptor 8. Residences backing on to the south east corner of the site.**

8.3.23 This receptor represents views experienced by the residents of the properties accessed from the A4103 but with rear gardens bounding the South West corner of the site. The houses are slightly elevated relative to the site level. As this receptor has clear views of the site it is considered to be of **High Sensitivity**.

8.3.24 Views of the proposed residential development would change the visual amenity currently enjoyed from within the houses and from their gardens. Currently they enjoy an open view across the site towards Withington which is screened and filtered by the row of trees to the South of Southbank and the hedgerows around the site.

8.3.25 At night, light emitted by the proposed development would be seen in the context of existing light emissions from Southbank estate's settlement edge. The proposed

development would result in creating lighting conditions similar to the existing residential developments.

8.3.26 The proposed site has been configured to position the new houses away from the boundary and to allow gardens to develop between the boundary and the new buildings.

8.3.27 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: Although the works would be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected on the boundaries of the Site this receptor would have clear views over the hoarding into the site. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **High**.
- Year 1 following completion: Boundary treatments and tree planting associated with new gardens can be expected to have been installed but would have only marginal impact on the views. Mostly the view from the gardens would be of rear gardens, rear of houses and a parking area. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **High**.
- Year 15 following completion: The landscape scheme can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase filtering of views of the proposed development. It is therefore considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect is likely to be **Medium**.
- Overall the visual effect significance is likely to be **Medium adverse**.

**8.3.28 Visual Receptor 9. Residences facing the site along the lane to the west of the site (Goldendale Bungalow, House south of Goldendale and White House)**

8.3.29 This receptor represents views experienced by residents of a group of residences along the lane to the west of the site. These receptors, all have some windows facing the site and would therefore be considered to be of **high sensitivity**. However at ground level, views are significantly obscured by tall fences and taller evergreen / conifer hedges. The bungalow, 'Goldendale' has no views over the hedge but has oblique views of the site through the access road. The house to the south of the bungalow has only small windows at first floor level but these will enjoy good views across open countryside. Further south, 'White House' has no windows in the upper storey with views over the site and ground floor windows are wholly or partially screened by their own boundary hedge planting. Consequently the effect magnitude would be considered to be **Low**.



8.3.30 At ground level the views currently experienced by these properties, where not intercepted by their own boundary treatment, are intercepted by the site boundary hedge. However, there are still some limited views Eastward towards Shucknall Hill which would be intercepted.

8.3.31 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: Views of the proposed development works would be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected behind the boundary of the Site (hoarding partially obscured by the existing boundary hedge. However views of the works over the top of the hoarding may be possible. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Medium**.
- Year 1 following completion: Boundary treatments and tree planting associated with the proposed development can be expected to have been installed but would have only marginal impact on the views of the development. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Medium**.
- Year 15 following completion: The landscape scheme and garden planting can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase screening and filtering of views of the proposed development. It is therefore considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect would be **Low**.
- Overall the visual effect significance would be Medium to low adverse.

**8.3.32 Visual Receptor 10 and 11. Barnamore House and large stone built house to the West of Barnamore House**

8.3.33 These receptors represent views experienced by residents of two dwellings along the A4103 some 0.25km from the site to the east. These receptors, have some windows facing the site or with oblique views and would therefore be considered to be of **high sensitivity**. In the case of the large stone house at ground and first storey level, views are significantly obscured by tall evergreen trees. It is possible that residents might have glimpses of the site through the trees from the second storey level. Barnamore House is built perpendicular to the road and is behind a tall stone wall. There are no clear views to the site from ground level although there may be limited oblique views from the upper floor windows. Consequently the effect magnitude for both of these receptors is considered to be **Low**.

8.3.34 The effect Magnitude during development would be:



- Construction Phase: Only very limited views of construction work will be possible from upper windows therefore the effect Magnitude is considered to be **low**.
- Year 1 following completion: Only very limited views of the development will be possible from upper windows therefore the effect Magnitude is considered to be **low**.
- Year 15 following completion: Only very limited views of the development will be possible from upper windows therefore the effect Magnitude is considered to be **low**.
- **Overall the visual effect significance would be negligible.**

#### **8.3.35 Visual Receptor 12. Residence on the southern edge of Withington Coppice**

8.3.36 This receptor represents views experienced by residents of a single house positioned on high ground to the east, on the edge of Withington Coppice. The site forms part of an extensive view of the wider landscape. Windows and gardens are orientated towards the view therefore this receptor is considered to be of **High Sensitivity**.

8.3.37 Views currently are across pasture and arable fields towards the site. From this position the built form of the edge of Withington is clearly visible and the new development would be in front of this. However, due to the low angle of view towards the site, the depth of the development would be greatly foreshortened. It is likely that visually the new development would be assimilated into the urban form of the existing village.

8.3.38 It is proposed to plant trees along the eastern boundary of the site which will further filter views of the development.

8.3.39 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: At this distance although the site will be in view it would have little impact on the landscape scene as a whole. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **Low**.
- Year 1 following completion: Boundary treatments and tree planting associated with the proposed development can be expected to have been installed but would have only marginal impact on the views. At this distance, although the site will be in view, it would have little impact on the landscape scene as a whole. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Low**.
- Year 15 following completion: The tree planting along the eastern boundary can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase screening and filtering of

views of the proposed development and to have assimilated it into its setting. It is therefore considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect is **negligible**.

- **Overall the visual effect significance would be Not Significant.**

#### **8.3.40 Visual Receptor 13. Public foot path between Withington Coppice and A4103 highway**

8.3.41 This receptor represents views experienced by walkers using this public footpath. The view of the site will be transient, however the view forms part of the amenity of the path. Therefore this receptor is considered to be of **Medium Sensitivity**.

8.3.42 Views currently experienced are across pasture and arable fields towards the site. From this position the built form of the edge of Withington is clearly visible and the new development would be in front of this. However due to the low angle of view towards the site the depth of the development would be greatly foreshortened. It is likely that visually the new development would be assimilated into the urban form of the existing village.

8.3.43 It is proposed to plant trees along the Eastern boundary of the site which will further filter views of the development.

8.3.44 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- **Construction Phase:** At this distance although the site will be in view it would have little impact on the landscape scene as a whole. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Low**.
- **Year 1 following completion:** Boundary treatments and tree planting associated with the proposed development can be expected to have been installed but would have only marginal impact on the views. At this distance, although the site will be in view it would have little impact on the landscape scene as a whole. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Low**.
- **Year 15 following completion:** The tree planting along the eastern boundary can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase screening and filtering of views of the proposed development and to have assimilated it into its setting. It is therefore considered that the **Residual Magnitude** of the effect is **negligible**.
- **Overall the visual effect significance would be Not Significant.**

**8.3.45 Visual Receptor 14. Motorists traveling west and east along the A4103 Highway**

8.3.46 This receptor represents views experienced by people traveling along the A4103. The traveller is likely only to have momentary glimpses into the site and the amenity value of the view would not normally be the focus of their attention. This receptor is therefore considered to be of **Low Sensitivity**.

8.3.47 Much of the view will be screened from the travellers view by the southern boundary hedgerow. Additionally the development is intended to be set back from the southern boundary beyond a 'public open space' which will further reduce the travellers view of the development.

8.3.48 The effect Magnitude during development would be:

- Construction Phase: Views of proposed development works will be visually screened at ground level by construction hoarding erected behind the boundary hedge. However it is likely that the traveller will experience occasional views of construction over the top of the hoarding. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Low adverse**.
- Year 1 following completion: Boundary treatments and tree planting associated with the proposed development can be expected to have been installed but would have only marginal impact on the views. The effect Magnitude is considered to be **Low adverse**.
- Year 15 following completion: The landscape scheme can be expected to have matured sufficiently to increase screening and filtering of views of the proposed development. The effect Magnitude would be considered to be **negligible**.
- **Overall the visual effect significance would be Not Significant.**

## 9.0 Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

9.1 The residual magnitude of effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape receptors and representative visual receptors are summarised in Table 10 and Table 11. The assessed sensitivity of the receptors and the residual magnitude of effect of the development after design mitigation, have been used to assess the significance of effect of the proposed development.

**Table 10. Significance of effects on landscape**

<b>Landscape Effects</b>			
<b>Potential Landscape Effect</b>	<b>Sensitivity of Existing Landscape Character</b>	<b>Residual Effect Magnitude with Mitigation</b>	<b>Significance &amp; Quality of Effects</b>
Agricultural Land	High	High adverse	High adverse
Trees	Low	Neutral	Not significant
Hedgerows	Medium	Negligible	Not significant
Sense of openness	High	Medium adverse	Medium adverse
Sense of enclosure	Low	Negligible	Not significant
Sense of tranquillity	Medium	Negligible	Low adverse
Scale of the Development	Medium	Low adverse	Low adverse
Lighting	Medium	Low adverse	Low adverse
Settlement pattern	Medium	Neutral	Not significant
Southbank	Medium	Low adverse	Low adverse

## 9.2 Significance of Effects on Visual Receptors Summary

**Table 11. Summary of Likely Significant Effects on Receptors after Mitigation**

<b>Representative Visual Receptor</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Residual Effect Magnitude with Mitigation 15 years after completion</b>	<b>Significance &amp; Quality of Effects</b>
<b>Orchard House Residential Care Home</b>	High	Low	High / medium Adverse
<b>Residents of the Southbank residential Estate with views facing the site</b>	Medium	Low	Low adverse
<b>The White Stone (Listed building)</b>	Low	Negligible	Not significant
<b>Holly Tree Cottage / White Stone House</b>	High	Negligible	Not significant
<b>Ramblers Cottage</b>	High	Negligible	Not significant
<b>Residencies backing on to the South East corner of the site.</b>	High	Medium / High	High adverse
<b>Residencies facing the site along the lane to the West of the site (Goldendale (Bungalow), House south of Goldendale and White House)</b>	High	Low	Medium / Low adverse

	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Residual Effect Magnitude with Mitigation 15 years after completion</b>	<b>Significance &amp; Quality of Effects</b>
<b>Residence on the southern edge of Withington Coppice</b>	High	Negligible	Not significant
<b>Public foot path between Withington Coppice and A4103 highway</b>	Medium	Negligible	Not Significant
<b>Motorists traveling West and East along the A4103 Highway</b>	Low	Negligible	Not Significant

## **10.0 SUMMARY OF EFFECTS**

### **10.1 Landscape Effects**

- 10.1.1 The Proposed Development on a green field site will result in adverse landscape effects; the loss of arable land resource and associated characteristics such as openness.
- 10.1.2 Although there would be a loss of the sense of 'openness' resulting from the proposed development, the development will assimilate into the urban character to which it adjoins. The scale of development is not at odds with the 'village' character of Withington and is therefore consistent with the general area character type.
- 10.1.3 The proposed development offers the opportunity to maintain those elements of the landscape which most closely align with the general landscape character type in which it sits, i.e. the hedgerows and the pattern of the field boundary alignment.
- 10.1.4 The proposed development offers opportunities to form new landscape features and significant biodiversity gains through the inclusion of water attenuation features, public open space amenity provision, residential gardens and general tree planting.
- 10.1.5 The proposed development will become integrated with the existing residential and industrial developments, supplementing the urban edge without adversely affecting the dispersed settlement pattern of the local landscape.
- 10.1.6 It is considered that the proposed scheme would complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, whilst maintaining much of the existing landscape quality, overall the proposed development would result in a '**Low adverse to not significant**' significance of effect on the local landscape.

### **10.2 Visual Effects**

- 10.2.1 To the north and east the site is predominantly visually contained by the topography, hedges and trees, the exception being some of the Southbank residencies to the north. To the south where the topography contains the site less, in the near distance potential receptors are positioned with minimal views of the site and in the far distance the existing landscape features will act to screen, filter or minimise the visual impact. To the east the site is clearly visible as the land rises, however views of the site only extend to one main receptor.

- 10.2.2 Significant adverse visual impacts on visual receptors are therefore limited to a number of private properties located at the south east corner of the site.
- 10.2.3 From the only public rights of way which overlooks the site there are only distant views of the site. The visual impact on visual receptors in the rural landscape generally is therefore **not significant**.
- 10.2.4 A public open space and green landscape buffer is proposed along the southern and western boundaries. This will have the effect of setting the development back from the highways thereby lessening its visual effect from the A4103 highway and the adjoining B road.
- 10.2.5 There are some viewpoints which are inevitably impacted by the proposed development, mitigation measures would be implemented to minimise the visual impact of the built development. These would include tree and soft landscape planting to filter views, visually break up the built form and assimilate it into the landscape.



## **11.0 CONCLUSION**

- 11.0.1 The Proposed Development has been laid out to minimise the impact on the wider rural landscape character when viewed from the south and east. The landscape scheme would conserve boundary hedgerows thus conforming to a primary key characteristics of the local landscape character type described in the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment.
- 11.0.2 Further landscape enhancement would be provided in the form of new habitats associated with the public open space.
- 11.0.3 The introduction of new trees, water attenuation features and associated planting, combined with retention of existing landscape features will enhance the sites habitat and biodiversity.
- 11.0.4 The new trees and open space in the landscape scheme for the proposed development would provide filtered views of the proposed development and contribute to breaking up the built form from the long view. Consequently, the new landscape would combine with the existing to minimise adverse impacts on visual receptors, both in the immediate vicinity and those viewed from a distance.
- 11.0.5 The visual impact on the majority of local residents not directly facing the site would not be significant. Positioning of the proposed development in the location immediately between the existing residential and business estates would allow full integration with the existing Withington settlement edge, minimising the effect on the local settlement pattern and surrounding open rural landscape.

## References

*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition*; The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment 2013

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National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

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*Countryside Character Volume 5, West Midlands*; Countryside Agency 1999

Natural England's *National Character Area profile, Area 100, Herefordshire Lowlands* and the Herefordshire Council Landscape Character Assessment.

Listed buildings online website: <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk>

Magic website: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>