

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL RESOURCES

6.1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

6.1.1 A comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. for the proposed Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) located west of Leicester. This Chapter evaluates the proposal for a high quality mixed use development comprising up to 4,250 dwellings and related land uses, described within **Chapter 2: Development Proposals** of this **Environmental Statement**, with respect to the landscape and visual amenity of the site and its surroundings. It sets out the baseline condition, assesses the potential significant impacts and outlines the design and mitigation measures to be incorporated as part of the SUE. A Green Infrastructure (GI) framework has been prepared. This encompasses existing landscaping which will be reinforced and enhanced with new structure planting, extensive areas of public open space and the creation of new habitats throughout. It will also provide connectivity to the site's immediate surroundings and the wider landscape. The GI strategy is described in more detail within Section 6.5 below and at **Parameters Plan D** contained at **Appendix 2A: Figure 2.7**.

6.1.2 This assessment has formed an integral part of the emerging masterplan for the site. **Appendix 6A: Figure 6.1** identifies the application site and its context. The development is here-in referred to as the 'Project'.

Assessment Methodology

6.1.3 The methodology for this assessment combines the collection and analysis of baseline information, desk study and field survey. Potential landscape and visual effects have been identified and assessed. Measures are designed to either avoid or mitigate any significant effects, these may include enhancements to the existing landscape which would then form an integral part of the Project. The resulting overall effect is described whether beneficial or adverse.

6.1.4 Landscape and visual effects have been assessed both at year one and in the longer term, when the structural planting proposed as part of the Project has matured.

6.1.5 The landscape character and visual impact assessment of the Project has been conducted in accordance with current guidance contained in the **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)** published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment Second Edition (2002), and **Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (LCA)** published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage (2002).

6.1.6 In summary, the **GLVIA** states :-

"The baseline information for the assessments, obtained through comprehensive desk and field studies, should include description, classification and analysis of the landscape and visual resource. The assessment process identifies likely landscape and visual effects, establishes their magnitude and the sensitivity of the receptor, and determines the significance of the effects. Mitigation measures – designed to avoid, reduce, remedy or

offset negative or adverse effects – are identified, and their likely effectiveness also assessed”.

In defining landscape and visual impacts, the **GLVIA** states :-

“Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. The landscape baseline, its analysis and the assessment of landscape effects all contribute to the baseline for visual assessment studies. The assessment of the potential effects on the landscape is carried out as an effect on an environmental resource, i.e. the landscape. Visual effects are assessed as one of the interrelated effects on population”. (2.13).

“Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape. The description and analysis of effects on a landscape resource relies on the adoption of certain basic principles about the positive (or beneficial) and negative (or adverse) effects of change in the landscape. Due to the inherently dynamic nature of the landscape, change arising from a development may not necessarily be significant”. (2.14).

“Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people’s responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity”. (2.15).

6.1.7 The sensitivity of landscape character and visual resources depends upon the degree to which they can accommodate change. The following criteria have been assessed in determining landscape and visual sensitivity, as defined in the GLVIA:-

- Existing land use; context and setting of receptors;
- The pattern and scale of the landscape; overall condition;
- Visual enclosure / openness and importance of views;
- The scope for mitigation, or enhancement;
- The value placed on the landscape;
- The activity and expectations of the receptor.

6.1.8 The magnitude of change and consequential significance of potential effects depends upon the scale, nature and quality of the Project, together with the sensitivity of the receptor. It is important to recognise that change can be either adverse or beneficial. The significance of the effect can then be assessed. The outcome will be influenced by the interaction of factors, and could range from major discordant changes affecting a highly sensitive resource to minor barely discernable alterations in a less sensitive context. The assessment threshold criteria for the Project are set out at **Appendix 6B**. A glossary of terms is provided at **Appendix 6C**.

6.1.9 Paul Tebbit, Planning Officer for Blaby District (BDC) has been consulted (refer to **Appendix 6D**) with regard to viewpoint locations for the visual impact assessment. The majority of these locations were agreed with BDC, however further viewpoints have been added subsequently during the course of site survey work as additional receptors were identified.

6.2 PLANNING CONTEXT

6.2.1 The principal documents relevant to this assessment include:-

- Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)
- **East Midlands Regional Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy)**, March 2009
- Blaby District Council **LDF Core Strategy Submission Version**, July 2009

6.2.2 Relevant aspects of each of these can be summarised as follows:-

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS1 places emphasis on the need to deliver homes, jobs and better opportunities for all, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and conserving the countryside and open spaces that are vital resources for everyone.

6.2.3 Paragraph number 13, point (iv) notes that :-

“Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted”.

PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

6.2.4 The Government’s national policy with regard to landscape and the countryside is contained within **PPS7**. Under Government’s objectives relevant to the Planning Policy, point (ii) notes the following:-

“To promote more sustainable patterns of development:-

- focusing most development in, or next to, existing towns and villages;
- preventing urban sprawl;
- discouraging the development of 'greenfield' land, and, where such land must be used, ensuring it is not used wastefully;
- promoting a range of uses to maximise the potential benefits of the countryside fringing urban areas; and
- providing appropriate leisure opportunities to enable urban and rural dwellers to enjoy the wider countryside.”

6.2.5 The following extract is listed at paragraph 1, point (vi):-

“All development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness”.

6.2.6 The Countryside around Urban Areas (paragraph No.26):-

“Planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise a range of beneficial uses of this land, whilst reducing potential conflicts between neighbouring land uses. This should include improvement of public access (e.g. through

support for country parks and community forests) and facilitating the provision of appropriate sport and recreation facilities”

East Midland Regional Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy), March 2009

6.2.7 **Policy 1 – Regional Core Objectives** states that, *“To secure the delivery of sustainable development within the East Midlands, all strategies, plans and programmes having a spatial impact should meet the following core objectives:-*

c) To protect and enhance the environmental quality of urban and rural settlements to make them safe, attractive, clean and crime free places to live, work and invest in, through promoting:-

- *‘green infrastructure’;*
- *enhancement of the ‘urban fringe’....;*
- *high quality design which reflects local distinctiveness.*

g) To protect and enhance the environment through the:-

- *....avoidance of significant harm and securing adequate mitigation or compensation for any unavoidable damage...”.*

6.2.8 **Policy 28 – Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure** states that, *“Local Authorities and those responsible for the planning and delivery of growth and environmental management across the Region should work together to:-*

- *increase access to green space that can be used for formal and informal recreation, educational purposes and to promote healthy lifestyles, without increasing pressures on sensitive sites....”*

6.2.9 **Policy 30 – Regional Priorities for Managing and Increasing Woodland Cover** states that, *“Opportunities should be taken to:-*

- *increase woodland cover as part of new development...and,*
- *to secure sustainable management of all woodland, and to increase public access to high quality multi-functional woodland close to communities as part of the development of Green Infrastructure.”*

Blaby District Council LDF Core Strategy Submission Version, July 2009

6.2.10 **Policy 2 – Design of New Development** outlines key principles for the creation of a high quality environment. It states that, *“all new development should respect the distinctive local character and...Development proposals should demonstrate that they have taken account of local patterns of development, landscape and other features and views....”*

6.2.11 **Policy 13 – Green Infrastructure (GI)** promotes the importance of GI within new development as well as the continued maintenance of existing GI and ensuring connections between the two. It states that, *“the growth proposed as part of a Sustainable Urban Extension west of Leicester provides an opportunity to plan for a green*

infrastructure network, serving the needs of new communities and providing green links (for people and wildlife) from the urban area to the wider countryside.”

- 6.2.12 **Policy 15 - Green Wedges** states that, *“the need to retain Green Wedges will be balanced against the need to provide new development (including housing) in the most sustainable locations.”* It goes on to say that, *“the Council will encourage the active management of land that promotes environmental improvements, recreational facilities and improved access within Green Wedges.”*

6.3 BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 6.3.1 The application site spans Lubbesthorpe and Enderby parishes and lies within the district of Blaby, wholly within open countryside. Part of the southern site area falls within the Sence and Soar Green Wedges; Enderby Parkland and Enderby Fields, this is described in further detail under the Landscape Character and Sensitivity section below. **Appendix 6A: Figure 6.2** details the landscape designations relevant to the context of the site.

6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy Volume 5: Strategic GI Network for the Leicester Principal Urban Area and Sub-Regional Centres, 2010

- 6.3.2 Both the Lubbesthorpe SUE and SES sites fall within the **Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone**. This definition is due to the strategic importance of countryside around Leicester Principal Urban Area for delivery of GI from a sub regional perspective. It states that:-

“Through investment in GI provision, the Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones have the ability or potential to deliver a range of economic, environmental and social benefits related to the following GI themes or functions (as described in Countryside Agency’s vision for the Countryside in and Around Towns, 2005):

- A bridge to the country;
- A gateway to cities and towns;
- A health centre;
- An outdoor classroom;
- A recycling and renewable energy centre;
- A productive landscape;
- A cultural legacy;
- A place for sustainable living;
- An engine for regeneration;
- A nature reserve.”

- 6.3.3 The Strategy goes on to say that:-

“Within the Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones, land is widely used by urban communities as a resource for informal, often unauthorised, recreation leading to conflicts with other land uses.” Also that *“These Zones would benefit from the adoption of a strategic and coordinated approach to managing access for urban communities into the surrounding countryside. It is envisaged that the Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones would encompass a network of interlinked and multifunctional*

greenspaces that connect with city/town centres, public transport nodes, and major employment and residential areas, including new Sustainable Urban Extensions. A careful balance will need to be struck between creation of new GI and the need to safeguard existing natural and cultural features that contribute to the character and value of the wider agricultural landscape.”

“Urban Fringe GI Enhancement Zones have an important role to play in relation to improving linkages and connectivity between Principal Urban Area/Sub-Regional Centres and wider GI network of Sub-Regional and the City-Scale GI corridors. In particular, Sustainable Urban Extensions will need to protect the integrity of the wider GI network, and support existing urban areas, by maintaining and enhancing GI within the Urban Fringe GI Enhancement Zones.”

Stepping Stones Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan, 2008

6.3.4 The Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project (SSCMP) is within the Leicester and Leicestershire part of the New Growth Point. Having been in place since 1992 this project represents a partnership of six local authorities in Central Leicestershire, including BDC. It is intended that the SSCMP forms an integral part of the 6 C’s green infrastructure agenda. Its main function is to deliver green infrastructure for the Central Leicestershire area working in partnership with other organisations of the sub-region and co-ordinating resources to achieve the vision below:-

“The Central Leicestershire area will become a mosaic of woodlands, farmland, open spaces and settlement that contributes to a dynamic and energetic multi-functional landscape for people and wildlife now and for the future.”

6.3.5 It aims to help protect the landscape and character of Green Wedges, and to manage the countryside around urban areas by:-

- Improving access to the countryside for all;
- Enhancing the countryside through management initiatives;
- Improving awareness of the countryside and environmental education;
- Encouraging community action to positively protect the environment.

6.3.6 The application site falls wholly within the SSCMP area, the Plan suggests that:-

“Although generally perceived as ‘green’, much of the landscape suffers from a marked ecological deficit, predominantly as a consequence of intensive agricultural practices resulting in the loss of features such as hedgerows, woodlands and ponds. The area has one of England’s lowest levels of woodland cover at just over 3%. Despite the lack of high quality ecological sites, the Stepping Stones Project area has significant environment assets which provide good opportunities to enhance the natural environment through a planned and managed approach to green infrastructure.....Although only just over 19% of the landscape is built, the area has few habitats of biodiversity priority and is one of the poorest areas for biodiversity in the Country.”

East Midlands Biodiversity Strategy, 2006

- 6.3.7 Part of the regional vision for green infrastructure is that it *“provides and enhances natural corridors and links missing from much of the region and contributes to landscape-scale habitat creation to meet the regional biodiversity targets....**New and enhanced biodiversity assets such as woodlands, parklands, meadows and river corridors can provide access to the natural environment which is known to improve well-being and so should be seen as an essential component in creating healthy new communities.**”*
- 6.3.8 Under the current issues contained within Chapter 8; Sustainable Communities and Green Infrastructure, The Strategy recognises that, *“local delivery of GI is needed through the planning system and housing development schemes.”* It states that, *“GI must be more than just a re-labelling of the established approach to providing green space and natural habitats – an approach which has caused the net loss of much biodiversity, a widespread deficit in good quality open space, and the steady erosion of quality of life in many areas. Neither must GI be taken to mean only the delivery of large-scale, multi million pound projects in well-defined areas such as the National Forest. **To be judged a success, ‘sustainable communities’ must include GI, and GI must attract new resources, and help shape a new approach that truly does integrate biodiversity into the design and function of new development at all scales and in all areas.**”*

Landscape Context

- 6.3.9 Located west of Leicester city centre, south of the Leicester Forest East residential area and motorway service station, the application site encompasses land immediately west of the M1 and to the north and south of the M69. Enderby, a traditional vernacular village, wraps around the south and south-west of the area while industrial and retail developments including Fosse Park, Meridian Business Grove, Grove Park Triangle and Meridian Leisure Park are dominant in the east.
- 6.3.10 Extending across some 394 hectares, the site is separated into two main parcels by the M69 corridor. Current land use is predominantly arable farmland, with some pasture. Approximately 13ha of mixed woodland, encompassing four notable plantations, hedgerows, including ancient hedgerows, mature trees, and occasional veterans occur within the area. A Scheduled Monument (SM) is present close to the eastern boundary, this comprises of the Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) of Lubbesthorpe and part of the adjacent field network at Abbey Farm. An extensive area of parkland historically associated with the grade II listed Enderby Hall, immediately west of the application site, falls within the site south of the M69, and also forms part of Enderby Conservation Area. Lubbesthorpe brook flows south of the SM and extends to the western boundary before continuing north-west. Several Sites of Important Nature Conservation (SINCs) are present within the site, a number of which border the brook corridor. The area is currently served by Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road which bisects the site in an east to north-west direction, linking Watergate Lane in the east with Beggars Lane in the west. A number of public rights of way criss-cross the site and provide connectivity to the wider environment, particularly to the east and south.
- 6.3.11 The Enderby Warren landfill site lies adjacent to the application area, south of the M69. Although outside of the proposed development site, this is a prominent feature within the

localised landscape. A SSSI, designated for its geological importance, is located between the landfill and the application site.

Topography

6.3.12 In broad terms the application site and its context is situated within the upper slopes of the Soar Valley. Typical of the Upper Soar character area, the landform is gently rolling and evenly sloping.

6.3.13 Topographically the site gradually descends from 105 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), in the north-west to 70 metres in the south-east, south of Abbey Farm. Higher ground lies in the west with a notable high point of 120 metres immediately south-west of the application site at Enderby. Leicester city centre lies at c. 60 metres AOD to the north-east.

6.3.14 **Appendix 6A: Figure 6.3** illustrates the topography of the site and surrounding landscape.

Landscape Character and Sensitivity

6.3.15 The landscape character has been evaluated at three levels with reference to the following published assessments:-

- Natural England Countryside Character Volume 6: East of England
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, 2001
- Blaby District Character Assessment, 2008
- The Green Wedge Management Strategy, 2003
- Stepping Stones Draft Landscape Character Assessment, 2006

6.3.16 These are then supplemented by a local character assessment.

National

Natural England Character Area

6.3.17 The application site falls entirely within the Leicestershire Vales National Character Area (NCA 94) as defined by the **Character of England Study**. It covers the landscape stretching from Charnwood in the north to the Northamptonshire Uplands and Vales in the south. Key characteristics of the area are described below:-

- Gentle clay ridges and valleys with little woodland and strong patterns of Tudor and parliamentary enclosure;
- Distinct river valleys of Soar, Welland and Nene with flat floodplains and gravel terraces;
- Large towns of Leicester and Northampton dominate much of the landscape;
- Frequent small towns and large villages, often characterised by red brick buildings;
- Prominent parks and country houses;
- Frequent imposing, spired churches;
- Attractive stone buildings in older village centres and eastern towns and villages;

- Great diversity of landscape and settlement pattern with many sub units, Nene Valley and Welland Valley.

6.3.18 The full description of NCA 94 is provided at **Appendix 6E**.

Regional

East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment, 2010

6.3.19 The application sits wholly within the Village Farmlands Landscape Character Area defined by this assessment and covers the area west and north-west of Leicester stretching to the East Midlands region boundary. It also covers land west of Derby. Key characteristics of the area are outlined below:-

- Gently undulating lowlands, dissected by stream valleys with localised steep slopes and alluvial floodplains;
- Moderately fertile loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage over extensive till deposits on higher ground and gravel terraces bordering main rivers;
- Mixed agricultural regime, with localised variations but with a predominance of either dairy farming on permanent pastures, or arable cropping;
- Small and moderately sized broadleaved woodlands and copses, often on sloping land; extensive new area of planting associated with the National Forest;
- Hedgerows and frequent oak and ash trees along hedgelines and streams contribute to well treed character of landscape;
- Moderately sized well maintained hedged fields across rolling landform create patchwork landscape of contrasting colours and textures;
- Extensive ridge and furrow and small historic villages linked by winding lanes contribute to historic and rural character of the landscape; and
- Localised influence of large estates.

6.3.20 The full description of Village Farmlands is provided at **Appendix 6F**.

6.3.21 Likely or potential forces for change have been identified for the character area, these include:-

- Village expansion, mixed use developments on the fringes of larger settlements;
- Road improvements, including widening and new junctions;
- Agricultural intensification, cultivation of energy crops;
- Opportunity for woodland planting.

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, 2001

6.3.22 The **Landscape and Woodland Strategy** places the application site within the Upper Soar character area. Distinctive features are set out below:-

- Elongated basin;
- Open rolling landscape with distinct high level ridges;
- Large villages with evidence of industrial past;
- Urban influences from larger settlements and Leicester;
- Mixed agriculture – arable emphasis to west, pasture to east;

- Little woodland;
- Local rock outcrops and former quarries;
- River Soar corridor a significant feature through built up area.

6.3.23 Issues particularly associated with this character area are:-

- Lack of woodland management;
- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees;
- Further urban development and increased urban influences;
- Insensitive siting of new built development;
- Road widening.

6.3.24 The principal management objective for the Upper Soar is *'to enhance the appearance of the agricultural, urban and suburban landscapes which comprise the character area'*. Guidelines encourage the following:-

- Enhancement of the existing woodland resource through improved management;
- Increased woodland cover in small to medium sized blocks;
- Strengthened hedgerow network through improved management and new planting;
- Increased tree cover through new planting of scrub and willow fringe to streams;
- Enhanced amenity and ecological value of the River Soar corridor.

6.3.25 This character area combines urban and rural landscapes stretching from Leicester in the north-east to Hinckley in the south-west. The majority of land in between the two settlements is used for agriculture with a dominance of arable farmland in the north. Woodlands are generally small and scattered with remnants of Leicester Forest East and Leicester Forest West being evident in the north. The full description of the Upper Soar is provided at **Appendix 6G**.

Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation, 2010

6.3.26 The **LLRHLC** divides the application site into the following historic landscape character types:-

North of the M69

- **Small Irregular Fields** are *"Areas of small irregular fields not assigned to one of the other historic landscape character types. Includes small meadows and closes not occurring next to settlement boundaries."*
- **Piecemeal Enclosure** is *"...defined as field systems created out of the mediaeval open fields....This process appears to have been underway in Leicestershire around the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Enclosure within this category will be characterised by small irregular or rectilinear fields with at least two boundaries exhibiting an 's-curve' or 'dog-leg' morphology indicating that they are following boundaries of former strip fields."*
- **Planned Enclosure** is described as, *"Either small or large enclosures with a predominantly straight boundary morphology giving a geometric, planned appearance....these patterns are the result of later enclosure during the 18th and 19th centuries."*

- **Other Small Rectilinear Fields** are “...fields not falling into one of the other character types. This group will include small meadows and closes not occurring next to settlement boundaries.”
- **Other Large Rectilinear Fields** are “...fields exhibiting a significant number of sinuous boundaries, which cannot be assigned to one of the other character types.”
- **Plantation Woodland**, “...straight boundary morphology or the woods name will suggest plantation at some point during the 19th or 20th century.”

South of the M69

- **Other Small Rectilinear Fields**
- **Planned Enclosure**
- **Very Large Post-War Fields** are “...over 8.1ha and often significantly larger...In most cases this will be the result of Post-War agricultural improvements intended to meet the requirements of intensive arable cultivation.”
- **Plantation Woodland**

6.3.27 Plans detailing the rural and urban historic landscape characterisation for the Lubbesthorpe area are included at **Appendix 6H**.

Local

Blaby District Character Assessment, 2008

6.3.28 The district landscape character is summarised as, “**gently undulating rural landscape strongly influenced by the expanding Leicester fringe**”...“**Motorways, ‘A’ roads, railways, pylons and telegraph poles have a strong but localised influence on the landscape character**”...and...“**There are a number of industrial and business parks around the fringes of the larger settlements, including Braunstone**...”

“...The greatest woodland cover is in rural areas such as...Lubbesthorpe...This vegetation takes the form of prominent blocks of small woodland...Dense vegetation is often present along rivers and brooks...” also, “Hedgerow boundaries are the main form of field enclosure and are generally well maintained and in good condition. Parkland areas such as Enderby Hall...have a localised influence on landscape character” while “Hedgerow trees are frequent and add to the biodiversity of hedgerows...The trees tend to be a mix of oak and ash although willow becomes characteristic on floodplains.”

Blaby District is traversed by a network of public rights of way running through the countryside...” and “...presents a predominantly agricultural landscape with urban influences present throughout. It has a strong pattern of undulating, medium sized fields, sometimes broken by major infrastructure routes...”

6.3.29 The application site displays ‘a medium regular field pattern’ with ‘frequent blocks of woodland’. This assessment places the site within Landscape Character Type *Agricultural Parkland*, a summary of key characteristics are:-

- Localised pockets of parkland characterised by mature specimen trees within grazing land, estate fencing and wide, often sweeping, driveways;

- Well managed, often low, hedgerows affording long distance views across the area.
- Large country houses and farmsteads;
- Formal landscape appearance due to intensive management of landscape;
- Sharp distinction between low vegetation within fields and mature woodland planting;
- Woodland planting a mix of narrow prominent strips and blocks reflecting existing field pattern providing a perceived wooded appearance;
- Blocks of woodland comprise both native and ornamental planting;
- Variable urban influence although tends to be seen within the background rather than in character area.

6.3.30 This Landscape Character Type is subdivided into three Landscape Character Areas. The site and its immediate context lie wholly within the *Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland* character area. Key characteristics are:-

- Gently undulating topography;
- Significant blocks of woodland which reinforce field pattern;
- Motorway corridors and industry on the urban edge of Leicester are prominent features;
- Visible urban fringes impinge upon rural character of the area;
- Parkland setting of Enderby Hall;
- Pockets of open grazing parkland with mature specimen trees around Narborough Wood House.

6.3.31 Landscape Guidelines include:-

- Continued conservation and good management of the existing woodland resource. Where opportunities arise enhancement of existing woodland or creation of new blocks should be encouraged;
- Conserve and protect the parkland setting surrounding Enderby Hall, and the adjoining SSSI at Enderby Warren;
- Conserve, enhance and restore key viewpoints within the area. Generally views in a westerly direction, rising ground and crests of rolling hills are visually prominent locations;
- Establish new woodland planting replicating the prominent blocks of woodland already present, to reinforce the landscape character of this area and to reduce the impact of urban influences along settlement fringes;
- Protect the sharp contrast between low boundary vegetation within fields and mature woodland vegetation by continued hedgerow management;
- Enhance hedgerow tree planting concentrating them within hedgerows around settlement fringes and farmsteads;
- Enhance parkland characteristics in fields which contain mature trees and around large houses and settlement fringes.

6.3.32 A full description of Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland and associated maps is included at **Appendix 6I**.

6.3.33 Part of the analysis for this assessment was used to inform, in landscape terms, the most suitable location for the Project. The concluding paragraphs state:-

*“Our assessment has identified that the SUE may fall within one of three landscape character areas: Thurlaston Rolling Farmland, Rothley Brook Fringe or **Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland.**”*

“The land within Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland is rural despite its proximity to the western fringes of Leicester. The land has a number of distinctive pockets of woodland and retains a strong landscape character. The land is also locally higher than the edges of Leicester and development could increase the visual prominence within the wider landscape. The settlements bordering the character area have strong urban edges with buildings appearing as a broken roofline. Pockets of parkland are important features to the character area; parkland around Enderby Hall is rural and sensitive to any change which would increase the prominence of development.”

*“In conclusion there is no part of the district which could, in landscape terms, accommodate the development of a SUE without significant effect on the local landscape character....**Lubbesthorpe has a strongly rural character, however, it is partly influenced by the urban edge of Leicester and development within this landscape could potentially be accommodated without settlement coalescence through careful siting.** However, it could dramatically change the characteristics of the character area and would need to be set within a mature landscape framework and carefully designed to protect the integrity of important landscape features such as the parkland at Enderby.”*

The Green Wedge Management Strategy, 2003

6.3.34 The overall intention of this Strategy, commissioned by the Stepping Stones Project, is that it could be adopted by BDC and used to guide future management. Based on existing conditions, it includes a SWOT analysis for each character area which subsequently informs a series of management objectives and recommendations. The application site falls within two character areas; Enderby Parkland and Enderby Fields, these are briefly outlined below:-

Enderby Parkland

Strengths:-

- Definitive landscape character;
- Good accessibility on foot;
- Expansive views to east;
- Strong boundary treatment and high proportion of mature woodland;
- Much of land in single ownership.

Weaknesses:-

- Motorway noise;
- Connectivity of path network is poor;
- Northern boundary weak.

Opportunities:-

- Conserve existing landscape character;
- Increase biodiversity potential;
- Reinforce and extend boundaries, especially to the north;
- Improve connectivity and legibility to increase footpath usage;

- Expand character south and east to neighbouring areas.

Threats:-

- Loss of special landscape characteristics, especially specimen trees;
- Intensification of land use.

Detailed Management Strategy Objectives: -

1. Reinforce and conserve the existing landscape character;
2. Increase the amount of tree planting in the local landscape character area;
3. Increase accessibility of the character area to the public, on foot and by bicycle;
4. Explore the potential for habitat and access improvements to the Enderby Warren landfill site.

Enderby Fields

Strengths:-

- Much of land in single ownership.

Weaknesses:-

- Motorway noise highly intrusive;
- Very low nature conservation value;
- Boundaries weak, especially internally;
- Presence of neighbouring development intrusive;
- Very exposed, open and unappealing;
- Limited extent of tree and shrub cover;
- Accessibility weak.

Opportunities:-

- Promote change of character similar to that of neighbouring Enderby Parkland;
- Increase biodiversity potential;
- Create internal spatial boundaries to establish structure;
- Improve accessibility especially along the Fosse Way;
- Increase proportion of tree and shrub planting.

Threats:-

- Motorway widening;
- Development pressure;
- Intensification and further loss of spatial definition.

Detailed Management Objectives:-

1. Increase the amount of tree planting in the local landscape character area;
2. Enhance the ecological quality and connectivity of existing hedges and increase the amount of hedgerow planting in the local landscape character area;
3. Reduce the scale of intensive arable landuse in order to increase the level of neutral grassland;
4. Reduce the impact of the M1 motorway.

6.3.35 A full description of Enderby Parkland and Enderby Fields and associated maps is included at **Appendix 6J**.

Stepping Stones Draft Landscape Character Assessment, 2006

- 6.3.36 This assessment forms appendix 2 of a feasibility study for the creation of a community forest in the Central Leicestershire area, commissioned by the SSCMP. It places the application site within Leicester Forest East and Narborough Fringe character area, key characteristics are set out below:-
- Flat to gently rolling landscape with a mix of land uses including agriculture and recreation;
 - Transitional landscape between the urban edge and rural countryside;
 - Long distance views over farmland to the urban fringes of Leicester possible form much of the character area;
 - Limited blocks of woodland although a partially wooded horizon is often created by maturing hedgerow boundaries;
 - Pylons are a prominent feature throughout the area due to their numbers and scale; numerous other smaller telegraph poles are also present in the landscape;
 - Evidence of loss of field boundary structure through both an increase in field size and lack of management leading to rough grassland and scrub.
- 6.3.37 The main pressures facing this character area are considered to be:-
- Urbanising influences including roads, new development and overhead lines are in places fragmenting the character of this area. In addition there may be localised impacts resulting from the widening of the M1;
 - New development is encroaching into the landscape. Change of land use in this predominantly recreational and small scale horse paddocks alters the character along the urban edge;
 - Quarrying activities have a distinctive impact upon landform and land use in this predominantly flat to undulating landscape;
 - Increasing field size and reduction in field boundary vegetation is altering the nature of hedgerow boundaries.
- 6.3.38 The landscape has been assessed for its capacity to accommodate additional woodland planting and, *“is characterised by farmland with a strong urban influence. Urban edge of Leicester and overhead lines are prominent features in the landscape. Woodland structure overall is confined to small blocks of woodland planting and mature hedgerow boundaries. There is limited capacity for planting blocks of woodland and linear belts of planting to provide greater screening of busy roads, particularly in the northern and southern parts of the character area where topography becomes generally flat and along river corridors with some small groups on higher topography. This will help to strengthen the rural character which is becoming fragmented particularly close to the urban edge provided long distance views from high ground are retained.”*
- 6.3.39 Capacity for woodland planting is assessed as moderate; this is defined as, *“scope to increase woodland cover beyond the national average, in some places up to 25%.”* Suitable types of woodland include *“small blocks of woodland, buffer planting, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.”*
- 6.3.40 Full details of the Leicester Forest East and Narborough Fringe landscape character area are included at **Appendix 6K**.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

- 6.3.41 The local landscape character is typically rural with urban and suburban influences. Overall the site is predominantly arable farmland with woodland plantation blocks. Existing urban fringes are dominant with large scale residential development in the north, east and south and industry in the east and south-west. The M1 and M69 transport corridors follow the eastern boundary and traverse west through the site respectively.
- 6.3.42 This section assesses the site and its immediate context at a much finer grain. **Appendix 6A: Figure 6.4** illustrates the local landscape character assessment of the application site and its context as detailed below. **Figure 6.7** details the definitive rights of way, also referred to below.

Landscape Character Area 1 – Leicester Forest East

- 6.3.43 An existing residential area immediately north of the application site, comprises a wide mix of housing types ranging in date from 1930s to 1990s. It can be further sub-divided into two distinct housing areas as described below.
- 6.3.44 Area 1A encompasses the majority of the housing development in the centre and west of this landscape unit. It displays wide roads and larger housing plots which contribute to the spacious character of the landscape. Dwellings are mostly detached and predominantly 1980s and 1990s red/yellow/buff coloured brick. Planting is mostly ornamental and well established, occurring along roadsides and within informal open spaces as well as in private gardens. Properties are set reasonably well back from roads by front gardens, pockets of shared green space and generous grass verges. This helps to visually break up the built elements and soften the development overall. Footpath V82 passes north to south through this area, converging with footpaths W6 and W7 in the south-west before continuing south into the application site. Footpath W7 extends eastwards through this area into the application site and towards the M1.
- 6.3.45 In contrast, development within Area 1B in the north-east is mostly a mix of 1930s-1970s detached and semi-detached properties and bungalows in red/buff/pale grey brick. The character is less spacious with narrower roads and verges, and fewer trees both on the street and on-plot. Housing plots are altogether smaller than at area 1A. A public footpath (W3) links the south-eastern edge of this residential area with the A47 in the north and the application site in the south.
- 6.3.46 Views from within the areas are generally restricted by the existing urban fabric. Wider views from the settlement edges are also often limited by existing topography and intervening vegetation. Such views extend only to the plateau in the north of the application site.
- 6.3.47 Local amenities include small shops, public houses, a school, a dentist, a sports club and a children's nursery. Whilst this is an established residential area with many positive 'suburban' elements, overall it is considered to be of **low to medium** sensitivity.

Landscape Character Area 2 – Plateau

- 6.3.48 Agricultural farmland dominates this relatively flat expanse of higher ground within the application site. Extending from Leicester Forest East in the north to just beyond Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road in the west, it also encompasses two farmsteads; Old Warren Farm, within the application site, and Lawn Farm which sits prominently west of Beggars Lane. Lawn Cottages are located at the Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road/Beggars Lane junction. Fields are medium to large scale and are used for both arable and pasture, cattle currently graze in fields immediately north of Old Warren Farm and Lawn Farm. In addition, two small areas of grassland are present along the southern edge of Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road. Well established continuous hedgerow field boundaries with hedgerow trees are a strong landscape feature of the area, traditional red brick buildings at both Old Warren Farm and Lawn Farm also contribute to the overall character. Three public rights of way pass through the area; footpath W6 extends to the west, footpath V82 runs through the centre and footpath W7 extends towards the east.
- 6.3.49 The flat topography and intervening vegetation limits the extent of views within the character area, these are often blighted by low voltage power lines within the landscape and high voltage pylons crossing the south-western corner of the area and in the landscape beyond.
- 6.3.50 Although essentially rural in character, existing housing at Leicester Forest East remains fairly prominent from the northern edge of the area with rooftops visible from Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road. Overall the sensitivity of this area is considered to be **low to medium**. Areas of localised higher sensitivity are associated with the farmsteads, public rights of way and hedgerows.

Landscape Character Area 3 – North-East Slopes

- 6.3.51 This area of open agricultural farmland covers land north of Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road up to Leicester Forest East residential development, and between Old Warren Farm and the M1. The topography is relatively flat north of the ridgeline before gently falling and rising again closer to Leicester Forest East residential fringe. South of the ridgeline, landform descends towards Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road.
- 6.3.52 Two woodland blocks, both designated Sites of Important Nature Conservation (SINCs), are intrinsic landscape features within this open landscape of medium to large scale fields. Land cover is predominantly arable with some grazing in the north close to Old Warren Farm. Fields in the southern tip of the area form part of the wider landscape setting of the Scheduled Monument (Landscape Character Area 5; Abbey Farm). This unit is well served by public rights of way with footpaths W3, W3a, W4 and W7 criss-crossing the area.
- 6.3.53 Existing housing development at Leicester Forest East, immediately to the north, and Thorpe Astley, in the east, is visible, along with industrial development at Meridian Business Park, also in the east. Pylons are visible towards Leicester city in the distance. Although the change from agricultural land to housing would be significant, given its context and proximity to M1, it has the ability to accommodate change and therefore the sensitivity of this character area is considered to be **low to medium**.

Landscape Character Area 4 – Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road

- 6.3.54 This narrow, winding, unlined tarmac lane bisects the application site, linking Watergate Lane in the east with Beggars Lane in the west. Due to its narrow width there are several vehicular passing places located along either side of the road. It is a popular recreational resource, inherent of its rural context and character, and is intersected by two footpaths; V82 in the north-west and W3 at its centre.
- 6.3.55 Large continuous hedgerows align both edges of the lane for the majority of its length affording an enclosed character, though some adjacent fields have no roadside boundary giving quite an open character in places. A distinctive mature oak is located at the intersection with footpath W3, on the northern side of the road. There is also a length of woodland belt along the southern side, west of the existing woodland block. This character area is assessed as **medium** sensitivity due to its high degree of usage and intact landscape features.

Landscape Character Area 5 – Abbey Farm

- 6.3.56 This area covers the Scheduled Monument (SM) site of Lubbesthorpe DMV and associated field system. It encompasses two farmsteads; Hopyard Farm located upon the ridgeline and Abbey Farm adjacent to Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road. Abbey Farm encompasses a particularly attractive collection of farm buildings, with some dating back to the 16th century. Ridge and furrow is clearly evident within fields both north and south of Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road and south and west of Hopyard Farm. The field north of Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road and west of footpath W4 is currently grazed by cattle. Fields are divided by continuous, well managed hedgerows and post and wire fencing contains the fields along the northern edge of Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road and the southern edge between the cattle grid and Abbey Farm. This maintains an open character with views across the SM to the surrounding landscape and character areas. Tree cover within the area is limited to several mature trees, including some ornamental species, within the curtilage of Abbey Farm. The area is bisected north to south by public rights of way; footpath W4 extends northwards from the bridle road and bridleway W118 extends southwards. Pylons are in view towards the south and the sub station is distantly visible from bridleway W118. Owing to its designation and landscape features, this character area has a **high** sensitivity to change.

Landscape Character Area 6 – South-West Slopes

- 6.3.57 The south-west slopes comprise of agricultural landscape extending south and west of Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road to the M69 and Desford Road (A47) respectively. Landform gently rises from the bridle road to the ridgeline at which point it falls towards the Lubbesthorpe Brook corridor before sharply rising again to meet Beggars Lane in the west where it levels out stretching westwards. The topography continues to rise towards the south before descending again as it approaches the M69. New House Farm sits prominently upon the ridgeline, and Abbey Cottages are located at the extreme south-eastern corner of the character area. The majority of farmland is planted with arable crops although some fields are grazed by cattle, this is most evident immediately north-east and south-west of New House Farm, south of Hopyard Farm and at the northern boundary of the M69. Fields are medium to large scale and are delineated by a strong network of hedgerows, some with individual mature hedgerow trees. Two woodland blocks, both

designated Sites of Important Nature Conservation (SINCs) lie within the north-east and north-west of the area. Farmland in the east contributes to the overall landscape context of the Scheduled Monument (Landscape Character Area 5; Abbey Farm). Three public rights of way; footpaths V82 and W3, and bridleway W118 run north to south through the centre and east of the character area, which also falls partly within floodplain in the south.

- 6.3.58 Although this character area is visually separated from the urban influence of neighbouring housing areas; Leicester Forest East in the north and Thorpe Astley in the east, pylons are a dominant feature on the skyline, particularly towards the west from Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road but also in the south close to the M69 where they converge at Enderby sub-station (Landscape Character Area 9). Low voltage power cables are also visible along some field boundaries, within hedgerows. Sensitivity is considered to be **low to medium**.

Landscape Character Area 7 – Lubbesthorpe Brook Corridor

- 6.3.59 Lubbesthorpe Brook is a narrow corridor meandering east to west and north-west, following Beggars Lane for two short stretches. This area is densely vegetated along its length with hedgerows, individual mature hedgerow trees and groups of mature trees affording a strong green character overall, a sizeable pond sits at the northern edge. Part of the character area is a designated SINC (both district level and parish level) and the southern section lies within the floodplain. Due to its ecological and amenity value this landscape is judged to be of **high** sensitivity.

Landscape Character Area 8 – M1/M69 Corridor

- 6.3.60 The M69 is well vegetated along both its northern and southern edges, the central embankment is also planted adding to the green character of this motorway corridor. Further west, the M69 is flanked by commercial development at its southern boundary and Enderby sub-station at its northern boundary. A significant length of the road is in-cutting and therefore benefits from landscaped embankments as well as planting on higher ground. The M1 also displays a green character but to a lesser degree. This motorway is more characterised by development immediately adjacent to the M1; commercial and industrial at Leicester Forest East Services/Meridian Business Park and residential at Thorpe Astley, and further east by Leicester City. Overall this character area has **low** sensitivity to change.

Landscape Character Area 9 – Enderby Sub-Station

- 6.3.61 A secure enclosure bounded by palisade fencing and surrounded by tree belts, this extensive and complex network of high voltage cables and cabins is relatively well contained locally, in visual terms, although it can be glimpsed where boundary vegetation is lower in height. The sub-station is distantly visible from higher points within the east of the application site. A public right of way, footpath V82, is adjacent to the southern boundary. This area is assessed as having **low** sensitivity due to the nature of its character.

Landscape Character Area 10 – Warren Farm

- 6.3.62 This character area is mostly governed by arable farmland, though the field north of Warren Farm, adjacent to Fox Covert is grazed. A single public right of way, W118; a stone bridleway, bisects the area. The main farm complex sits on higher ground west of the bridleway and a second farmhouse is located east of W118. The southern tip of the area falls within the local Green Wedge designation.
- 6.3.63 Topography gently rises from the M69 and M1 to the ridgeline before descending towards Leicester Lane in the south. Two woodland blocks; Freeboard Spinney and Fishpool Spinney lie within the character area. Field boundaries comprise mostly of continuous hedgerows, although post and rail fencing demarcates the south-western boundary. The odd mature hedgerow tree is apparent; however these are generally uncommon in the northern section of the character area and where a low voltage power cable follows a hedgerow east to west towards the existing woodland blocks. Fields are medium to large scale becoming very large in the south where the arable land is located.
- 6.3.64 Broadleaved woodland aligns the eastern boundary/M1 where the motorway is at grade, the planting reduces to a much lower level further south where the road is in-cutting. Odd mature trees, horse chestnut and oak, are dotted within field boundaries, these were possibly associated with the former Enderby Parkland. Views include the M1, in part, and some existing industrial development immediately east of the motorway. Overall the landscape sensitivity is **medium**.

Landscape Character Area 11 – Enderby Hall and Parkland

- 6.3.65 Enderby Hall is set within a mature landscape encompassing ornamental gardens and overlooks the parkland. This character unit is set wholly within Enderby Conservation Area and Green Wedge. A large area of broadleaved woodland lies adjacent to the north-eastern edge of the Hall curtilage and wraps around the north-western character area boundary. The parkland is divided into two compartments by a continuous hedgerow; arable in the west nearest the Hall, and pasture in the east which is bisected by bridleway W118. Individual parkland trees, including occasional veterans, are scattered across the character area. Predominantly an open character, this area affords views to the landscape beyond in the south and east. The topography is relatively flat at the ridgeline, where the majority of the area lies, before sloping down to meet Leicester Lane at the southern boundary. The area is contained to the east by a post and rail fence where it adjoins Landscape Character Area 10: Warren Farm. The bridleway is mostly a loose stone surface though there are concrete and tarmac sections close to the junction with Leicester Lane. This area is assessed as **medium to high** sensitivity. Localised areas of higher sensitivity include Enderby Hall and its immediate surroundings. Although the remainder of the character area does not hold a statutory designation, a medium level of sensitivity is maintained due to its historical connections with the Hall.

Landscape Character Area 12 – Kirk Lane

- 6.3.66 This area, covered by the local Green Wedge designation, is contained to the north and south by an almost continuous hedgerow and comprises of a large wheat field with a central hedgerow along which a low voltage power line runs. A mature belt of vegetation runs alongside the eastern and north-eastern boundaries while a low hedgerow borders

the western edge, beyond this the residential fringe of Enderby is clearly visible. The large scale nature of the field creates a sense of openness as the landform gently descends towards mature trees along Leicester Lane, at the northern boundary, where it abuts the southern edge of Landscape Character Area 11: Enderby Parkland. A public footpath; W25 follows the eastern boundary. The sensitivity of this character area is judged to be **medium**, capable of accepting some degree of change.

Landscape Character Area 13 – Enderby Fringe

- 6.3.67 Enderby fringe, the majority of which falls within Enderby Conservation Area, has a charming traditional character and comprises of residential properties with some retail. It affords an attractive and quaint character overall encompassing numerous period properties displaying the local vernacular, ranging from Victorian to Georgian and into the 20th century, interspersed with later 20th century examples. White rendered properties also feature occasionally within the character area. The core of the town appears to have retained its original street pattern of a small network of short, narrow winding roads. Landform rises relatively steeply from Blaby Road and dwellings are often built up to the pavement edge. Some properties are set back from roads with small front gardens acting as a buffer, however many are not. Soft landscaping is generally within private curtilages; mostly being associated with front gardens, this softens the buildings and low boundary walls. Many of the boundaries are retaining walls due to the steep character of the area. Local amenities include small shops, public houses, including New Inn (a thatched building), a petrol station and a small supermarket. Shop frontages are generally attractive and well presented. This area is an established residential area with an often strong character. It is of **medium to high** sensitivity.

Landscape Character Area 14 – Warren Lane Industrial Estate

- 6.3.68 A small industrial estate with a linear form and layout gives this area a fairly uniform character. Warren Park Way, the main road through the estate, is wide with grass verges, footways and established tree planting. This part of the area has a commercial character with sizable buildings of similar appearance; yellow brick with red brick detailing fronting Warren Park Way. Feldspar Close along the northern edge of the area has more of an industrial character; metal clad sheds and significantly less planting. Landscaping is generally confined to car parks with little occurring along the roadside. This character area is of **low** sensitivity to change.

Landscape Character Area 15 – Enderby Warren Landfill Site

- 6.3.69 Extensive pipework and numerous pressure valves, for leaching the landfill gas, feature prominently across the entire mound which is covered by long grass. Formerly part of Enderby Hall estate, the landfill is partly assimilated into its surroundings by its setting between Fox Covert at its northern edge and a small woodland block at its south-west corner. A low wall with minimal tree planting forms much of the northern boundary. Topographically the landfill is semi-undulating with gently sloping sides and does not have an overly engineered appearance. This part of the character unit lies within the local Green Wedge designation and the south-eastern edge is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its geological value.

- 6.3.70 Adjacent to the landfill site is an unkempt area of wasteland with a fenced enclosure which evidently contains the gas extraction plant. This area is accessed either via Warren Lane Industrial Estate, formerly separated by a barrier which now looks defunct, or a public right of way; W25 adjacent to Fox Covert, which leads to Warren Farm. Overall the sensitivity of the character area is assessed as **low**.

Landscape Character Area 16 – Meridian Business Park

- 6.3.71 This character area is fragmented by a fairly busy road network which connects to the Leicester Ring Road. It combines functional brick built offices with large profiled metal clad units that give a utilitarian appearance. There is a strong evidence of services including a sub station, several manholes and overhead telephone lines. The cold character of industry and commerce is mildly softened by vegetation, with soft landscaping occurring both on plot, mostly within car parks, and within roadside grass verges. Many well established trees are a key feature of the area. The southern half of the character area; Meridian East, Meridian North, West and South offers a fairly uninspiring and rather bland character overall, the southern and south-eastern edge also falls within the floodplain.
- 6.3.72 In contrast the northern half of the area, encompassing Centurion Way and the northern section of Meridian East, adjacent to Wood Close Plantation, affords much more of an established and mature character. Although built units are often of a bigger scale than further south, landscape planting is more abundant and buildings are set within larger plots, roads are also wider and less cluttered. This part of the area has a warmer, less sterile character than the southern half of the area. Overall this commercial and industrial character area is of **low** sensitivity to change.

Landscape Character Area 17 – Thorpe Astley

- 6.3.73 This residential development dates predominantly from late 1990s to the present day. Earlier development lies within the north-east and has a relatively established and fairly green character with more emphasis on planting than in the later development to the south and west. There is a prominence of detached housing and slightly more generous plots, examples include Tillets Road, The Littlefare and Foxon Way. Later development is a mix of housing types from two storey detached to three storey semi-detached and terraced properties. It displays quite a cramped character of mostly red/yellow brick housing with often small frontages to dwellings, some shared driveways/parking courts and minimal planting to break up the buildings and hard landscaping.
- 6.3.74 Intermittent narrow grass verges appear along the main loop road serving the area, there is also some tree planting. A green amenity corridor is retained along Thorpe Astley Brook which runs through the development into an area of public open space between the built development and the M1. Although this is an establishing residential area, it has little intrinsic character and does not afford a strong sense of place; it is therefore assessed as having **low** sensitivity.

Analysis of Local Character Assessment

- 6.3.75 From this assessment a number of conclusions have been drawn:-

- The landscape context of the site combines a rural character with urban fringe, it is dominated mostly by agricultural farmland, with isolated farmsteads displaying the local vernacular, and partially by motorways, existing settlement and industry.
- The site is fairly well contained by existing landform, intervening vegetation and development. A plateau sits at higher ground in the north-west, while the majority of the east and west slopes gradually descend into the site creating two gentle valleys which are most apparent in the east; along the south of the Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road and Lubbesthorpe Brook. Higher ground, along which runs the A47 Hinckley and Desford Roads, contains the site from north-west to south-west, whereas the site is contained to the north by existing residential and to the east predominantly by the M1 corridor and industrial development. Mature vegetation along the majority of the site boundaries also assists in the physical containment of the site.
- The application site itself has strong influences of arable and pastoral farmland, existing settlement; both from the five farmsteads within the site and residential development adjacent to the north, east and south-western edges of the site, industrial and commercial development east of the M1 and south of the M69, motorway corridors; the M1 which contains the site along its eastern edge, and the M69 which bisects the site, and mature broadleaved woodland blocks; four distinctive plantations, designated SINCs, north of the M69. In terms of built development, the southern edge of Leicester Forest East along the site's northern edge and the western edge of Thorpe Astley towards the north-east are particularly prominent, as well as Meridian Business Park, also in the east.
- The overall character of the site is rural. Existing land cover comprises agricultural farmland; a mosaic of medium to large fields divided by an established and robust hedgerow network. There are several mature trees, some within hedgerows, including occasional veterans. Broadleaved woodland blocks are also a distinctive feature across the site. Despite this predominantly rural character, surrounding housing and commercial development are prominent in some locations. This has some degree of influence upon the overall character, even though some parts of the site are visually separate from these urban influences. Pylons and power lines continue to impact upon the rural appearance generally.
- One national designation lies within the site: the Scheduled Monument of Lubbesthorpe deserted medieval village. Local designations covering various parts of the site include; Enderby Conservation Area, Green Wedge, several of the woodland blocks and areas along the brook corridor are SINCs. A stretch of the brook also falls within the floodplain area. Several public rights of way, including one bridleway, traverse the site. No local landscape quality designations cover the site such as 'Area of Landscape Conservation'. The majority of the application site is considered to be of medium to low sensitivity. The SM (Character Area 5), Lubbesthorpe Brook (Character Area 7), Enderby Hall and Parkland (Character Area 11) and Enderby Fringe (Character Area 13) constitute the only elements of higher landscape sensitivity.

6.3.76 Landscape sensitivity can be summarised as follows:-

Landscape Character Area	Sensitivity of Character Area
Landscape Character Area 1 – Leicester Forest East	Low – Medium
Landscape Character Area 2 – Plateau	Low – Medium
Landscape Character Area 3 – North-East Slopes	Low – Medium
Landscape Character Area 4 – Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road	Medium
Landscape Character Area 5 – Abbey Farm	High
Landscape Character Area 6 – South-West Slopes	Low – Medium
Landscape Character Area 7 – Lubbesthorpe Brook Corridor	High
Landscape Character Area 8 – M1/M69 Corridor	Low
Landscape Character Area 9 – Enderby Sub-Station	Low
Landscape Character Area 10 – Warren Farm	Medium
Landscape Character Area 11 – Enderby Hall and Parkland	Medium – High
Landscape Character Area 12 – Kirk Lane	Medium
Landscape Character Area 13 – Enderby Fringe	Medium – High
Landscape Character Area 14 – Warren Lane Industrial Estate	Low
Landscape Character Area 15 – Enderby Warren Landfill Site	Low
Landscape Character Area 16 – Meridian Business Park	Low
Landscape Character Area 17 – Thorpe Astley	Low

Visual Resources

6.3.77 A comprehensive visual assessment has been undertaken to determine the visibility of the proposed development within the surrounding landscape and townscape. Key representative viewpoints have been selected (the majority of which have been agreed with BDC) to explore the potential visibility of the development and these enable a Zone of Visual Influence to be determined; indicated at **Appendix 6A: Figure 6.5**. Receptors encompass residents, users of rights of way, views from highways and people at work. In overall terms, the first two categories are generally of higher sensitivity than the latter two, although the context of individual receptors can have a bearing on their sensitivity.

6.3.78 A series of representative viewpoints (**Appendix 6A: Figures 6.5 (Photo Viewpoint Locations) and 6.6 (Photographs)**) have been selected to illustrate the varying degrees of site visibility and the potential effect on receptors. A total of 38 viewpoints have been assessed and are supported by photographs. Descriptions are provided at **Appendix 6M: Visual Effects Table**, key findings are summarised below:-

- The Project has a relatively restricted visual envelope owing to the interaction of rolling topography, existing woodland blocks and existing urban fabric. The visual

envelope is fairly well contained to the north, south and west. The application site is visible in part from higher points immediately east of the M1 at the edges of the industrial areas.

- Existing woodland blocks within the site are significant landscape assets and would form an integral part of the site's setting and GI framework and are occasionally visible from the surrounding area.
- Views of the site are largely screened from the majority of Leicester, its urban edge and Leicester Forest East, with the exception of residential streets in closest proximity, including Forest House Lane, and highways including Beggars Lane and the M1.
- Other individual properties and farms within or close to the application site would experience views of the Project. These include Abbey Cottages, Warren Farm, Yenwoods Farm and Lawn Farm. It is envisaged that potential views would be limited (predominantly first floor) and mitigated through structure planting in the longer term. Possible views of the Project would be more distant from Narborough Wood House Business Centre.
- There would be no adverse effects upon Lubbesthorpe DMV. Proposed built development would be contained by advance bunding works and woodland planting. This would be implemented at the outset of the Project to allow adequate establishment prior to the commencement of building works.
- Occasional transient views are available from the open countryside to the west. However, the site is largely screened in these views by intervening vegetation and topography.
- Leicester city and Leicester Forest East, along with associated infrastructure are visually prominent after dark.

6.3.79 Section 6.4 below sets out the Green Infrastructure proposals for the Project. It outlines mitigation measures to provide structural planting for screening purposes in appropriate locations.

6.4 PROJECT DESIGN

Potential Effects

6.4.1 Potential effects arising from the Project with respect to landscape and visual resources have been identified as part of the design process. These include both adverse and beneficial effects during the construction phase and the operation of the site. Potential adverse effects *could* include:-

- A medium to high localised landscape effect, whereby the landscape features of value; mature woodland blocks, mature hedgerows and trees, the SM and its wider setting, including areas of ridge and furrow, are completely lost or removed and no compensatory landscape habitats nor any additional landscape enhancements or mitigation measures are incorporated.
- Moderate adverse visual effects through inappropriate design and a lack of mitigation strategy such as an ill-conceived master plan and green infrastructure framework with the absence of structure planting and other screening elements.

- 6.4.2 Identifying such effects early on has assisted the development of the proposals, resulting in a considered and cohesive design approach overall.
- 6.4.3 The Project, which is the subject of this **Environmental Statement**, has developed and evolved in response to baseline environmental surveys and assessments along with the resulting identification of opportunities and constraints. Analysis of local landscape character and visual resources has informed the provision of the proposed Green Infrastructure framework. Although the majority of the site area is currently occupied by extensive arable farmland, there are areas of local character and features of landscape value. The Project has been designed in response to these character areas to enable their protection and enhancement as outlined below:-
- The SM and its wider setting would be protected from development and retained in its open form, although there would be benefits arising from carefully considered enhancement landscape structure planting.
 - SINC's would be protected and enhanced to increase their biodiversity value.
 - Existing woodland blocks are important landmarks within the application site and would be retained, protected and enhanced. Individual mature trees, including veterans, would also be retained and protected providing focal points within the built development.
 - Hedgerows, including historic hedgerows, would be retained and protected as far as practicable, with the development weaving into this existing strong network.
 - Lubbesthorpe brook would be assimilated into the green infrastructure framework to ensure its existing character is maintained
 - Retention of attractive farm buildings and successful assimilation into the built development; local centres and community farm/visitor centre.
 - Particular care will be required in the treatment of the interface between the parkland and employment development to ensure a satisfactory transition.
- 6.4.4 Proposed planting within structural landscape buffers would include native tree and shrub species that are commonly found within the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area and are suitable for inclusion in planting schemes. A range of other species may also be appropriate to particular sites or locations.

Green Infrastructure and Mitigation

- 6.4.5 The application site is well positioned within the landscape and, considering its scale, has a relatively restricted visual envelope. It also offers a strong landscape structure in terms of existing mature planting, both within the site and close to its boundaries, upon which a robust Green Infrastructure (GI) framework will be developed to encompass the proposed built development. Most of the built development would be located on flat ground and inward facing slopes, relating well to existing woodland blocks, hedgerows and trees. A landscape buffer of formal open space would visually separate the development from existing housing at Leicester Forest East. This would be supplemented by existing and proposed structure planting. Existing landscape elements include:-
- Landform;
 - Woodland blocks, some of which are designated SINC's;
 - Hedgerows of high conservation value;
 - Veteran trees and hedgerow trees;

- Scheduled Monument and wider setting;
- Enderby parkland;
- Lubbesthorpe brook, part of which is a designated SINIC;
- Green links, including several public rights of way and Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road.

6.4.6 Before any construction commences on site the main contractor will be responsible for installing protective fencing in accordance with **BS 5837, Trees in Relation to Construction**.

6.4.7 A cohesive and connective strategy proposed for the entire site would enhance the existing landscape framework, providing a robust GI within which to set the built development as well as a multifunctional landscape that caters for a wide range of recreational needs. It would be beneficial to the local and wider landscape by further strengthening the overall GI through the incorporation of existing landscape, ecology, arboriculture and cultural heritage features along with the attenuation of surface water run-off, resulting in a fully integrated masterplan. The GI strategy responds to all baseline environmental assessments and any identified opportunities and constraints and is included within the **Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Management Plan (GIBMP)**.

6.4.8 The current DLA masterplan has been assessed with respect to landscape mitigation measures and GI proposals. It embraces the important landscape elements and survey findings listed above while offering the following additional measures:-

- New areas of earth bunding combined with structure planting, notably along the eastern/M1 boundary and the M69 corridor would help form a defined physical and visual edge to the application site and further reduce the impacts of the motorways on the surrounding environment. Bunds would be up to a height of 6 metres;
- Three major distinctive areas of public open space within the SUE; recreation grounds, including formal sports pitches at the northern edge, the 'commons' located around the SM and extending centrally through the site which would afford a variety of wildlife habitats and experiences, and a park along the brook corridor in the south, incorporating a series of habitats suited to wetter landscapes. Additionally, Enderby parkland would provide a further low key area of informal open space, adjacent to the SES at the southern extremity of the application site;
- Sensitive treatment of the Scheduled Monument and appropriate planting around the perimeter to preserve and enhance its setting and unique identity. Historic hedgerows would be retained and could be enhanced to provide structure for new planting around the SM;
- The parkland associated with Enderby Hall would be retained and protected. As part of the development proposals it is intended that the parkland be made available as a public amenity, providing a community park. The **GIBMP** would ensure the retention and enhancement of its wildlife status, whilst also securing the historic setting of the listed hall;
- A series of smaller, well distributed and linked open spaces, including Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) and Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) would be incorporated throughout the Project;
- Reinforced green corridors, including public rights of way and Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road (incorporated as a key east to west route through the site);

- Strengthening and development of the existing footpath network which would be incorporated into the development proposals, creation of cycleways and green links building upon existing ecological commuting corridors. Routes would be enhanced as part of the green corridor network, connecting a hierarchy of accessible, multi-purpose green spaces ranging from sports fields to allotments and parkland;
- Existing woodlands would be utilised and enhanced within the Project to help give a distinctive edge to the built form and provide strong focal points, while acting as a nucleus for surrounding green infrastructure;
- Integration, protection and management of the designated SINCs along with the creation of new habitats incorporating measures that will contribute to local BAP targets. Existing wildlife corridors across the site would be retained and reinforced, providing connectivity with external habitats. The ecological potential of the site would be secured, and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement maximised;
- Hedgerows are a significant feature of the landscape and the majority would be retained, including those assessed as having high nature conservation value, as the basis of an interconnecting system of greenways. Adequate space will be provided around retained mature hedgerow trees to ensure their long-term future as key landscape and wildlife components;
- A sustainable drainage network utilising and improving the existing watercourses to increase biodiversity, as well as the introduction of water bodies and swales around the site to attenuate surface water run-off and improve water quality. The existing network of ditches and watercourses will be enhanced as part of the sustainable urban drainage system.

6.4.9 These objectives would be achieved through the implementation of a well-designed and considered Green Infrastructure plan based upon the thorough analysis of the baseline environmental setting of the site.

6.4.10 Proposed planting within the structural landscape buffers will include suitable native trees and shrub species common to the Upper Soar and Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland Landscape Character Areas.

6.4.11 Overall the Project would afford multi-functional green space in accordance with CABI's **Action for Housing Growth**, Sport England's **Active Design**, Natural England's **The Countryside in and around Towns** and **Nature Nearby**, and the **Eco-Towns Green Infrastructure Worksheet**. Relevant extracts are provided at **Appendix 6N**.

6.5 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

Landscape Effects

6.5.1 The Landscape impacts of the Project are considered with reference to:-

- Statutory and non-statutory landscape designations
- The appraisal of landscape character areas
- Individual components and features

- 6.5.2 This assessment considers that moderate or substantial impacts would be a significant impact. Lesser adverse impacts such as slight adverse impacts are also identified although these are not considered to be significant. Assessment at year 1 has been undertaken to assess the 'worst case' scenario and includes the effects of construction works. Further detail on the potential construction effects are described below. Where the assessment identifies that there are no likely significant adverse effects this takes into account any direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary effects as result of the Project. Permanent landscape effects of the completed scheme have been assessed on the basis of proposed structural planting with 10 years growth, when vegetation would be approximately 6-7 metres high, and, for comparison, 15 years growth at which time landscape planting would be nearing 10 metres in height. This highlights that the resultant landscape effect may reduce further in the longer term, when vegetation is well established. A schedule of landscape effects is provided at **Appendix 6L**.

Landscape Character Area 1 – Leicester Forest East

- 6.5.3 There would be no significant adverse effect upon the urban fabric of this area. Recreational development would occur on areas of agricultural land (Landscape Character Areas 2: Plateau and 3: North East Slopes) adjacent to the existing residential edge. Inevitably some areas would experience change where open fields are replaced by the Project. Existing vegetation and landform within the site would be retained and incorporated into the GI framework. Proposals include additional planting to create a softer, more gradual rural/urban edge which would also provide a further landscape buffer between the existing development and the Project whilst enhancing recreational opportunities. There would be initial slight adverse effects upon the character which would reduce, becoming **beneficial** in the longer term. However, effects would be localised and are not considered to be significant.

Landscape Character Area 2 – Plateau

- 6.5.4 A mix of parkland, residential development and a local centre, on the site of Old Warren Farm, is proposed on this plateau. The traditional red brick farm buildings would be utilised and integrated into the new local centre to retain part of the heritage of this character area. Existing hedgerow field boundaries and hedgerow trees would be retained as far as practicable and the built development would be sited within this framework. Additional landscape planting is proposed along the northern edge of the residential development reinforcing the existing hedgerow network. Although the current arable and pastoral farmland would become built development and open space, existing landscape features would largely be retained and form integral components within the development. Highway improvements to Beggars Lane would have a negligible effect overall. Therefore the resultant effect upon the character of this landscape is considered to be **slight to moderate beneficial** on completion of the Project.

Landscape Character Area 3 – North East Slopes

- 6.5.5 This character area forms a large part of the Project area north of the M69. The proposed GI retains two existing woodland blocks, which are strongly characteristic of the area, and many of the hedgerows. New woodland planting is proposed as well as avenue tree planting along the main vehicular routes. Public open spaces would be linked throughout

the built development with open space closer to the SM being particularly extensive. An area of allotments is also proposed in the north-east of the character area. All existing public rights of way would be retained and supplemented with a new footpath/cycleway link in the west. Proposed built development comprises of housing, secondary and primary schools and a district centre. The higher rise buildings, including the district centre, would be sited closer to the east, towards the M1. The proposed bridge across the M1 would be assimilated into the bunding and woodland planting proposed alongside the motorway, any associated adverse effects would be extremely localised. Although the magnitude of change from agricultural farmland to built development and ancillary uses would be medium to high, given a low to medium sensitivity the long term landscape effect would be **moderate beneficial** overall.

Landscape Character Area 4 – Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road

- 6.5.6 It is proposed that the bridle road becomes a dedicated footway/cycleway with minimal improvements and all existing vegetation along the roadsides would be retained and reinforced where appropriate. There would be no vehicular access other than a localised bus link from Watergate Lane into the SES south of the M69. Therefore there would be no significant adverse landscape effects upon this character area, conversely the overall resultant effects would be **moderate beneficial**.

Landscape Character Area 5 – Abbey Farm

- 6.5.7 There would be no adverse effects upon the fabric of this character area, the heritage asset would remain intact and become the hub of the GI framework. New woodland planting is proposed as part of the mitigation works to screen the new residential development as well as a combination of bunding and planting alongside the M1 which would screen the existing commercial and industrial development east of the M1. This mitigation would be carried out well in advance of the residential development adjacent to this character area and employment development south of the M69 to ensure its establishment. The farm buildings, particularly at Abbey Farm, are also important landscape and heritage features, these would be retained. A possible future use for these is the GI management centre for New Lubbesthorpe, where details of the SM could be displayed to raise its importance and increase public awareness. Public rights of way crossing the character area would also be retained. Given a high sensitivity and low magnitude of change the completed Project would result in a **moderate beneficial** landscape effect.

Landscape Character Area 6 – South-West Slopes

- 6.5.8 As with Landscape Character Area 3: North East Slopes, this area also forms a significant part of the Project area north of the M69. Again, the proposed GI retains two existing woodland blocks, which are strongly characteristic of the area, and the hedgerow network largely retained. New woodland planting is proposed as well as avenue tree planting along the main vehicular routes. Public open spaces would be linked throughout the built development with open space closer to the SM and Lubbesthorpe Brook being particularly extensive, approximately 50 percent of this character area would be retained as open space. An area of allotments is also proposed in the north-west. All existing public rights of way would be retained and supplemented with new footpath/cycleway links in the centre of the area and along the northern edge of the brook. Proposed built development

comprises of housing, a primary school and a local centre at the site of New House Farm. Highway improvements to Beggars Lane would have a negligible effect overall. Although the magnitude of change from agricultural farmland to built development and ancillary uses would be medium to high, given a low to medium sensitivity and a medium magnitude of change, the long term landscape effect would be **moderate beneficial**.

Landscape Character Area 7 – Lubbesthorpe Brook Corridor

- 6.5.9 There would be no significant adverse landscape effects upon the overall character of the brook which would be retained within a generous linear parkland along its length. A new access road would cross the brook, however any associated adverse effects would be extremely localised. Existing mature vegetation would be retained and reinforced with additional landscaping of appropriate species. The parkland would also encompass new areas of wetland alongside the brook. A parcel of residential development is proposed between Beggars Lane and the brook, however the planting proposed within the brook corridor would mitigate any slight adverse effect upon its character. Given a high sensitivity and low magnitude of change the resultant landscape effect would be **moderate beneficial**.

Landscape Character Area 8 – M1/M69 Corridor

- 6.5.10 There would be no discernable change to the landscape character of the M1/M69 corridor however it would benefit from the landscaping works, comprising of bunding and woodland planting, that forms part of the new bridge proposals and that proposed along the western edge of the M1, and both north and south of the M69. Therefore there would be **no significant adverse effects** upon the landscape character of this area.

Landscape Character Area 9 – Enderby Sub-Station

- 6.5.11 There would be **no adverse landscape effects** upon this character area which lies outside the application site, adjacent to the south-western boundary. Despite its proximity the area would be well contained from the Project by existing vegetation and additional extensive structure planting.

Landscape Character Area 10 – Warren Farm

- 6.5.12 Employment development is the primary proposal for this area and would be set within a robust landscape framework including Freeboard and Fishpool Spinneys which would form an integral part of the proposals. Additional significant woodland planting along the northern edge of the character area would supplement these. The proposed bridge crossing the M69 is not considered to have an adverse effect since it would be assimilated into the existing embankment located between the carriageways. As a result of converting the arable farmland into a high quality employment area the magnitude of change would be medium to high. Existing Green Wedge would largely be retained as open space and green links would be created between the woodland blocks both within the site boundary and at its perimeter. Taking the mitigation proposals into account, the overall landscape effect would be **slight beneficial** in the longer term.

Landscape Character Area 11 – Enderby Hall and Parkland

- 6.5.13 Enderby Hall and its immediate environs fall outside the application boundary, however, the parkland would form an important component of the Project's GI framework. Proposed enhancements would result in a beneficial magnitude of change, increasing its biodiversity and recreational value. Highway improvements to Leicester Lane would have a negligible effect overall. Built development would occur on agricultural land adjacent to the area (Landscape Character Area 10: Warren Farm). Despite this, and given the ecological improvements to the parkland, the Project would have a **beneficial** effect upon the character of the area overall and therefore would not result in any significant adverse effect.

Landscape Character Area 12 – Kirk Lane

- 6.5.14 Although adjacent to the southern application boundary, there would not be any significant landscape effects on the character of this area. Existing parkland located at the northern edge of the area would form part of the GI framework and employment development would occur within agricultural land adjacent to the north-eastern corner resulting in a low adverse magnitude of change. Highway improvements to Leicester Lane would have a negligible effect overall. As proposed enhancements take shape within the parkland and landscape planting establishes to soften the built development, the completed Project would result in a **slight beneficial** effect.

Landscape Character Area 13 – Enderby Fringe

- 6.5.15 There would be **no adverse landscape effects** upon the character of this area. Although close to the south-western edge of the application boundary, the Project would largely be contained from the area by Enderby Hall and associated mature vegetation. Also the Project would be physically separated from the area by Blaby Road.

Landscape Character Area 14 – Warren Lane Industrial Estate

- 6.5.16 Set back from where the built development would be located, and beyond the application boundary, the character of this area would largely remain unaffected in landscape terms. Proposed earth bunding adjacent to the northern edge is envisaged to have a low magnitude of change upon the area due to its proximity. However, this would provide a landscape buffer which would further mitigate existing environmental effects of the M69 eastbound carriageway having a beneficial effect in the short term and becoming increasingly **beneficial** over the longer term as structure planting establishes. Consequently, no significant adverse effects resulting from the Project are anticipated upon this area.

Landscape Character Area 15 – Enderby Warren Landfill Site

- 6.5.17 Although outside the application boundary, at the western edge of the Project, this character area would be in relatively close proximity to the proposed employment. However, owing to the nature of the area, proposed landscaping associated with high quality built development would render any potential landscape effects **beneficial** to the overall character of this area.

Landscape Character Area 16 – Meridian Business Park

- 6.5.18 There would be no significant adverse effect upon the urban fabric of this area resulting from the Project. Built development would occur on agricultural land west of the M1 which would separate this industrial and commercial character area from the Project. The proposed bridge crossing the M1 would lie adjacent to the northern edge of the character area and would therefore have **no significant adverse effect** upon the area.

Landscape Character Area 17 – Thorpe Astley

- 6.5.19 There would be no significant adverse effect upon the urban fabric of this area. Built development would occur on agricultural land west of the M1 which would separate the existing housing from the Project. A low adverse magnitude of change is anticipated within the character area due to the proximity of some existing properties to the Project, particularly those on higher ground, and the proposed bridge crossing the M1. Although the bridge would link the character area with the Project, any potential effects would be localised and are not considered to be significant. Landscaping and planting would soften the structure and help assimilate it into the existing development, this would provide additional recreational value resulting in a **slight beneficial** effect once vegetation is established.

Visual Effects

- 6.5.20 An assessment of the predicted visual effects of the Project has been undertaken. The maximum heights of buildings, excluding any point features would be up to 15 metres high unless stated otherwise. It has been assumed that an element of floodlighting would be included at the secondary school only. A Photo Viewpoint Location Plan and Photographs are included at **Appendix 6A: Figures 6.5 and 6.6** respectively. A Visual Effects Table is provided at **Appendix 6M**. Effects upon residential settlement, roads and public rights of way are described below.
- 6.5.21 Assessment at year 1 has been undertaken to assess the ‘worst case’ scenario and includes the effects of construction works. Further detail on the potential construction effects are described later on in this section. Visual effects of the completed Project have been assessed on the basis of proposed structural planting with 10 years growth, when vegetation would be approximately 6-7 metres high, and, for comparison, 15 years growth at which time landscape planting would be nearing 10 metres in height. This highlights that the resultant visual effect upon some receptors may reduce further in the longer term, when vegetation is well established.
- 6.5.22 The following assessment takes into consideration the use of natural resources within the site. It is not likely that the use of natural resources off-site, or the emission of pollutants, creation of nuisances and elimination of waste caused by the proposed scheme will result in significant adverse visual effects.

Residential Properties

Leicester Forest East (Viewpoints 12, 13, 36, 37, 38)

- 6.5.23 Existing views into the application site are not extensive, reaching only as far as the first hedgerow field boundary. Therefore Leicester Forest East residential fringe would have limited views of the Project, particularly the built development which would largely be screened by the proposed Old Warren Park. This would create a significant landscape buffer to the proposed built development comprising of a woodland planting belt along the Leicester Forest East residential boundary, areas of wildflower meadow and playing fields. Further structure planting is proposed to contain the new residential development, local centre and primary school. Current views across agricultural farmland would be replaced by the park and associated woodland planting. A moderate adverse effect during the construction period would result from distant views of the built development. Upon completion of the Project the Park would have a **slight beneficial** effect upon views from existing residential properties at Leicester Forest East.

Thorpe Astley (Viewpoint 10)

- 6.5.24 A large extent of existing residential development at Thorpe Astley is contained by bunding and new woodland planting along the motorway boundary. The northern area of housing, on higher ground, currently has views into the north-east of the application site. The proposed mitigation measures along the M1 / eastern site boundary would ultimately screen the Project from view and therefore not result in any significant adverse effect.

Lawn Farm (Viewpoint 35)

- 6.5.25 Open, slightly elevated easterly views are available across the application site. The uppermost parts of existing housing along the western fringe of Leicester Forest East are visible. Inevitably the Project would be visible, however intervening vegetation along Beggars Lane would be reinforced as part of the Green Infrastructure framework, this would help screen much of the proposed residential development within the west of the site close to Lawn Farm. Proposed landscape planting and public open space throughout the Project would help break up the views and filter built development further east, the uppermost parts of proposed development are likely to be visible at distance. The proposed northern vehicular access from Beggars Lane is unlikely to result in an adverse visual effect owing to localised topography and proposed landscaping. Moderate adverse visual effects would reduce to **slight adverse** upon completion as planting establishes.

Lawn Cottages

- 6.5.26 These properties front onto Beggars Lane and due to their location at the western edge of the application site along with the localised topography, views from the front of the cottages would remain largely unaffected. They would be contained from the proposed residential development to the south by structure planting, and to the north development would be set behind public open space adjacent to Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road. There would be a **slight adverse** visual effect upon completion of the Project.

Enderby Lodge (Viewpoint 34)

- 6.5.27 This property is relatively well contained by mature planting, although is slightly elevated and therefore likely to have first floor easterly views of the Project. As with Lawn Farm, the reinforcement of structure planting along Beggars Lane would screen much of the built development in the western part of the site, proposed landscaping and open space throughout the Project would help break up the built form and filter views of the built development further east. Again, the uppermost parts of proposed development are likely to be distantly visible. **Slight adverse** effects at worst would be experienced upon completion of the Project.

The Yenwoods (Viewpoint 30)

- 6.5.28 North easterly views across the application site from localised higher ground. Within the site the four woodland blocks and New House Farm are visible. Yenwoods Farm in the immediate foreground would be buffered by the new Brook Park proposed alongside Lubbesthorpe Brook. Although proposed residential development and the local centre, at the site of New House Farm, would inevitably be visible there would be a degree of distance between the Yenwoods and the built development which would be set beyond the park. Uppermost parts of the proposed development would be visible, though new tree planting associated with Brook Park and the wider Green Infrastructure framework would help filter such views. Moderate to substantial adverse visual effects during construction would become **moderate adverse** as planting establishes upon completion.

Enderby

- 6.5.29 Intervening landform and existing development would prevent views of the Project, therefore **no adverse visual effects** would occur.

Abbey Cottages

- 6.5.30 Views south and west are partly filtered by mature planting which defines the curtilage of these cottages. They would not experience any significant adverse effects due to the extensive proposed open space surrounding the SM. New woodland planting would form an effective screen to the proposed residential development and the employment would be well contained by the proposed landscape buffer along the M69. Proposed structure planting along the M1 would help screen views of the motorway and the M1/M69 junction. Slight to moderate adverse effects during the construction period would reduce to **slight beneficial** upon completion as planting establishes.

Roads

Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road (Viewpoints 1, 14, 17)

- 6.5.31 Inevitably the Project would be visible from Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road since it bisects the application site. Built development is proposed to be set well back from the roadside for the majority of its length. However, where it would be up to the road edge, structure planting is proposed which would help to screen and soften the buildings and also reinforce the existing character of this green corridor. Upon completion the overall effect

would vary along the road from **slight beneficial** at its eastern end where open space would be more prevalent to **slight to moderate adverse** towards the west where the built development would be closer to the road.

Beggars Lane (Viewpoint 31)

- 6.5.32 Two new vehicular access points are proposed from Beggars Lane which would lead to localised effects. Proposed belts of tree planting around these junctions and along the length of Beggars Lane would limit the amount of visible built development, although the Project would be intermittently visible along the lane due to the rolling topography. Landscape planting is proposed throughout the development which would screen distant views of the buildings. Initial moderate adverse visual effects would become **slight adverse** upon completion of the Project.

Blaby Road (B582) (Viewpoint 27)

- 6.5.33 Views north-west from the M1 bridge. Enderby Warren Landfill is visible in the distance along with Warren Farm which sits on higher ground. The employment development would be seen, though this is likely to be rooflines only, proposed single storey development at Warren Farm would be domestic in scale to be sympathetic to surrounding retained farm buildings. Existing tree planting reinforced with additional landscaping would screen much of the built development resulting in a **slight adverse** visual effect overall upon completion.

Kirk Lane (Viewpoint 28)

- 6.5.34 Open views across Enderby parkland towards the landfill site further north. Commercial development is prominent east of the M1. Employment development would be in view, however this would largely be screened by proposed mitigation which in turn would help to screen the existing sheds in the east. Overall the resultant visual effect would be **slight beneficial**.

Saint Johns (B4114) (Viewpoint 26)

- 6.5.35 Distance, intervening built development and vegetation would prevent views of the Project. There would be **no significant adverse visual effect**.

Public Rights of Way

Footpath W3: Within the North of the Application Site (Viewpoint 38)

- 6.5.36 Leicester Forest East services are screened by mature vegetation, however the Highways Agency depot is visible. New structure planting along either side of the footpath would provide an effective screen to this and filter views of the proposed bus link, resulting in a slight beneficial visual effect upon completion of the Project.

Footpath W3a: Within the North-East of the Application Site (Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 16)

- 6.5.37 Current views include rooftops of the existing residential fringe at Leicester Forest East above mature planting and Leicester Forest East service station, there are also open

south-easterly views across the application site. Proposed residential development and uppermost parts of the local centre would be visible, though the extent of these views would be limited towards the north due to the flatter topography. South-easterly views would include the secondary school grounds and the Commons public open space in the distance. Such views would benefit from the proposed mitigation along the M1 which would screen existing commercial and industrial development east of the motorway. There would be **slight to moderate adverse** visual effect overall upon completion.

Footpath W4: Within the East of the Application Site (Viewpoints 3, 4, 5, 10)

6.5.38 The majority of this footpath runs through the SM and its setting. Proposed residential development would be visible both distantly, from within the proposed open space surrounding the SM, and close range where the footpath follows the M1. Existing distant views of pylons and commercial buildings beyond the western site boundary would ultimately be screened by the Project. Upon completion the resultant visual effect would be **slight beneficial** overall once planting establishes.

6.5.39 It is unlikely that proposed built development in the SES would be visible on completion as the landscaped earth bund proposed along the M69 would screen the majority of development from this receptor. Development on higher ground at Warren Farm would be single storey and domestic in scale to be in keeping with the retained farm buildings.

Footpath W6: North-West of the Application Site (Viewpoint 35)

6.5.40 Views into the site are filtered by mature vegetation along Beggars Lane. The uppermost parts of existing housing along the western fringe of Leicester Forest East are visible. The Project would be visible however intervening vegetation along Beggars Lane would be reinforced as part of the Green Infrastructure framework which would help screen much of the proposed residential development within the west of the site. Proposed landscape planting and public open space throughout the Project would help break up the views and filter built development further east, the uppermost parts of proposed development are likely to be visible at distance. The proposed northern vehicular access from Beggars Lane is unlikely to result in an adverse visual effect owing to localised topography and proposed landscaping. A slight adverse visual effect during the construction period would become **negligible** upon completion.

Footpath W7: Within the North of the Application Site (Viewpoints 11, 12, 13, 37)

6.5.41 Topography and intervening mature vegetation limits southerly views across the site. Views to the north are contained by Leicester Forest East residential fringe. The proposed Old Warren Park would form a significant and effective landscape buffer to the proposed built development and would include extensive woodland planting and wildflower meadows, as well as playing fields. Uppermost parts of the proposed local centre and some residential development would be visible above the landscaping proposed along the built development edge. Old Warren Park would have a **slight beneficial** visual effect on local views upon completion of the Project.

Footpath V66: South-West of the Application Site (Viewpoint 29)

- 6.5.42 Intervening landform and vegetation prevent any views of the application site and therefore any potential views of the Project. There would be **no significant adverse visual effects**.

Footpath V80a: North-West of the Application Site (Viewpoints 32, 33, 34)

- 6.5.43 There are no views of the application site from the end of the footpath nearest Desford Road. Views are available of the western part of the site further east along the footpath. Intervening vegetation and landform limits visibility of the site to a short section of the path where it is on higher ground close to Enderby Lodge. Additional structure planting along Beggars Lane would screen much of the built development in the western part of the site, proposed tree planting and open space throughout the Project would help break up the built form and filter views of the built development further east. The uppermost parts of proposed development are likely to be distantly visible. There would be a **slight adverse** visual effect from the eastern section of this footpath.

Footpath V82: Within the North-West of the Application Site (Viewpoints 15, 18, 19, 20, 36)

- 6.5.44 Views of agricultural land would be replaced by the proposed Old Warren Park which would have a slight beneficial effect on local views from the northern end of the footpath. At the intersection with Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road, current views of agricultural fields and distant views of Warren Lane Industrial Estate would be replaced with proposed residential development and open space resulting in a slight adverse visual effect. Further towards the centre of the site at New House Farm, panoramic easterly and westerly views would be replaced with proposed built development including residential, a local centre and primary school as well as new roads. Proposed tree planting would reduce a substantial to moderate adverse visual effect during the construction period to **moderate adverse** upon completion of the Project once the planting becomes established.

Bridleway W118: Within the South-East of the Application Site (Viewpoints 21A, 21B, 22, 23A, 23B, 24, 25)

- 6.5.45 Existing elevated views from the access bridge over the M69 are open to the north and south across the application site. Proposed built development would inevitably be visible, although proposed residential development to the north would be set behind Brook Park and therefore be quite distant. Extensive woodland planting proposed along the northern edge of the M69 would also help screen built development in the foreground. Mitigation along the southern edge of the M69 would screen the employment development closest to the access bridge. There would be a **slight adverse** visual effect once planting establishes on completion. Further south along the bridleway, existing views towards the M1 would be replaced with the proposed employment development. Earth bunding and structure planting proposed between the buildings and the bridleway would screen a significant proportion of the built development and the new road from Leicester Lane as well as existing commercial units east of the motorway. An element of proposed built development on the site of Warren Farm, which is on higher ground, may be visible close to this area although it would be single storey and of domestic scale to be sympathetic to

the retained farm buildings. Overall there would be a **slight beneficial** visual effect upon local views once the Project is complete.

Construction Effects

6.5.46 The majority of the application site is currently agricultural farmland and therefore does not generate significant adverse construction effects. Disturbance caused by construction activities upon the landscape resource and visual receptors have already been considered within this Chapter. A combination of existing vegetation, proposed advance earth bunding and woodland planting combined with localised topography would screen much of the construction activities from views within the wider landscape and countryside. It is also important to note that concerns regarding possible visual effects upon the SM have been raised by English Heritage during the master planning process. Significant mitigation comprising landscaped earth bunds would be implemented at the outset, this would ensure avoidance of any adverse effects upon the SM and its wider landscape context during the construction phases of the Project. Anticipated effects during the development phases would primarily be caused by:-

- Clearance and set up of compound area;
- Earth moving and bunding works;
- M1 and M69 bridges;
- Works to existing highway junctions;
- New highway works;
- Building works;
- Construction traffic, including HGVs and staff cars travelling to and from site.

6.5.47 It is envisaged that any cut material arising from the proposals would be spread across the site and utilised for bunding and in areas of landscaping as far as practicable.

Night Time Effects

6.5.48 At up to 4,250 dwellings, the Project is considered to be large scale and it is therefore anticipated that a degree of night time visual effects would be generated, however these are not considered to be substantial for the reasons outlined below:-

- The development site would be adjacent to the existing urban fabric of Leicester City and Leicester Forest East which are visually prominent after dark; the Project would very much be seen as an expansion of Leicester.
- Although major new highway infrastructure would be implemented to serve both the proposed SUE (housing) and SES (employment) development, this would mostly be confined to the site area and its immediate periphery.
- Topographically the site is largely contained from the wider open landscape to the west of the proposed development. Existing residential and industrial development on flatter ground in the north and east also helps provide physical and visual containment of the site.
- The secondary school, primary schools and local centres associated with the Project are not considered to pose adverse night time effects. These elements would be set within residential development and therefore afforded some degree of enclosure from the built development itself.

- Floodlighting associated with the secondary school sports pitches would be limited and set back from the residential housing proposed south of the school to minimise potential effects as far as possible. Any adverse effects would be localised due to the topography, existing blocks of woodland and additional structure planting.
- Lighting types and levels would be developed in accordance with Best Practice guidance.
- Existing vegetation and the proposed GI framework would help provide substantial mitigation of any potential night time effects.

Cumulative Effects

6.5.49 This section assesses the likely significant effects of the Project when considered in the context of other future projects.

6.5.50 Cumulative effects involving the proposed Sustainable Urban Extensions at both Barwell and Earl Shilton, within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, are unlikely to occur. A number of factors including localised topography, existing vegetation and distance limit any potential intervisibility between New Lubbesthorpe and the proposed SUEs further west. Therefore cumulative effects have not been considered further in this Chapter.

6.6 STATEMENT OF EFFECTS

6.6.1 This landscape and visual assessment indicates that the Project would impact upon the local landscape character and visual resource. However, in landscape terms, the site is not exceptional nor is it protected. A well designed scheme would ultimately mitigate adverse effects and bring forward some positive benefits such as an extensive GI framework encompassing a range of recreational uses along with significantly increased biodiversity.

6.6.2 Although the magnitude of change would be medium to high, resulting from the loss of green field site and the conversion of agricultural farmland into high quality residential housing and employment development, the proposed GI framework would amount to more than 40 percent of the Project land use. It would build upon the existing green infrastructure of woodland, the complex hedgerow network and mature trees. Although some hedgerows would be lost, the majority would be retained.

6.6.3 Public rights of way would also be retained and integrated within the Project, their setting appropriately reinforced and enhanced. The proposed footpath and cycleway network would incorporate all existing definitive rights of way and offer increased recreational opportunities, not only throughout the Project but also providing connectivity to rights of way beyond the Project boundary with convenient access to surrounding communities including Leicester Forest East, Thorpe Astley, Enderby and Leicester itself.

6.6.4 While it is inevitable that a loss of open setting would occur as a result of the Project, particularly from the perspective of a relatively small number of existing residential properties close to the site boundary, it would create a new high quality residential character which is not only sympathetic to the setting of existing settlement and individual properties but also, through good design, provides an opportunity to create a cohesive

landscape character overall. Substantial parkland areas and significant new woodland planting would be connected by green corridors, incorporating hedgerows, within the development yet would also afford connectivity to the wider landscape surrounding the site.

- 6.6.5 Adverse landscape effects during the construction phase would be restricted to the site area only and adverse visual effects would essentially be limited to the localised areas adjacent to the application site. On completion the Project would result in a **slight to moderate beneficial landscape effect** overall. No significant adverse landscape effects are anticipated in the long term.
- 6.6.6 The Project has a restricted Zone of Visual Influence owing to the interaction of topography, vegetation and the surrounding urban fabric. Views of the proposed built development from residential properties at Leicester Forest East would be limited. A wide landscape buffer with significant woodland belts is proposed along the site's northern edge, between Leicester Forest East and the proposed residential development, resulting in a **slight beneficial visual effect** upon local views on completion of the Project.
- 6.6.7 Few individual properties, including Yenwoods Farm, would experience close range views of the proposed built development. However, such views would be extremely localised and buffered by extensive parkland areas proposed as part of the GI framework. Local public rights of way would remain relatively unaffected by the proposed built development. Inevitably there would be close range views but these would be transient in their nature. Upon completion of the Project, some footpaths would result in slight adverse visual effects although these would be localised, the majority of footpaths would result in a **slight beneficial visual effect** overall.
- 6.6.8 There would be no significant adverse night time effects since the proposed scheme would be seen as an expansion of Leicester from the east and would be well contained through landform, vegetation and the proposed Green Infrastructure framework from the west.
- 6.6.9 At 4,250 dwellings with associated facilities, the Project would result in a loss of green fields having a permanent effect upon the local landscape and visual resource. However, the site is not protected and resultant visual effects would be limited overall being localised and restricted in extent or infrequent. The Project affords an extensive GI framework which would be well designed to create a balance between recreation and conservation needs and ultimately there would be a range of beneficial landscape and visual effects arising from New Lubbesthorpe.