
3rd May 2023

Land to the South of
Warren Lane, North of
Weston Road, Long
Ashton

Landscape Evidence
of Mr. Jonathan Berry
BA (Hons), DipLA,
CMLI, AIEMA,
M.Arbor.A

Volume 1: Text

Between Long Ashton
Company and North Somerset
Council

Council Ref: 21/P/3076/OUT

Planning Inspectorate Ref: APP/
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**Tyler
Grange**

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Volume 3: Summary



Section 1: Introduction & Appeal Context

Witness

- 1.1. My name is Jonathan Berry, I am a co-founder and Director of Tyler Grange Group Ltd and I specialise in landscape and visual planning issues associated with development and change.

Qualifications

- 1.2. I hold a BA (Hons) degree in Landscape Architecture and a Post Graduate diploma in Landscape Architecture from the University of Gloucestershire. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (LI), an Associate of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and a Professional Member of the Arboricultural Association (AA).

Professional Practice

- 1.3. I started my career in 1998 as a landscape consultant at Countryside Planning and Management Ltd (CPM). By 2006 I was a Regional Director of Waterman CPM, responsible for all landscape planning and arboricultural projects in the North of the Country. I along with three colleagues formed Tyler Grange in January 2010.
- 1.4. I have been appointed by developers, local objection groups and public authorities to provide professional landscape and visual planning advice on a variety of projects, including major housing allocations, agricultural diversification schemes, open space appraisals, historic building conversions, tall building assessments and windfarm proposals. I have given evidence at numerous planning Inquiries during the last 25 years, for which the same methodology and approach as used in this case has been deemed robust by Local Planning Authorities and Planning Inspectors.
- 1.5. More specifically, I have spent the majority of my professional career to-date involved in the assessment of landscape and visual effects in relation to residential development at urban/rural fringe locations.

Instruction

- 1.6. Tyler Grange was originally instructed in June 2014 to undertake arboricultural, ecological and landscape consultancy surveys and reports, with work updated in 2017 to accompany the previous outline planning application (20/P/1547/OUT). Following the refusal of that application in November 2020, the work was updated again throughout 2019/2020, with final edits made in August 2021 to accompany Planning Application No. 21/P/3076/OUT.



- 1.7. I was not involved in the design process or the assessment undertaken for that application, which was overseen by our Landscape Director (Mr. Colin Pill). However, I was aware of the project and I have a sufficiently detached view of the proposals as required by the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', third edition (GLVIA) (see **CD 16.18** and **Appendix 1, paragraph 2.26**) in order to give an informed and professional assessment of the proposals.
- 1.8. The application was refused planning permission by North Somerset Council on 5th August 2022. I was instructed to act as landscape witness and to prepare evidence for this appeal in April 2023.

Statement of Truth

- 1.9. The evidence I have prepared here represents my professional opinion on the aspects of landscape and visual impact assessment, responding to North Somerset Council's (the Council) reasons for refusal. I believe the facts stated in this evidence are true, accurate and have been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution (the Landscape Institute).



Section 2: Background & Principal Issues

Landscape Statement of Common Ground

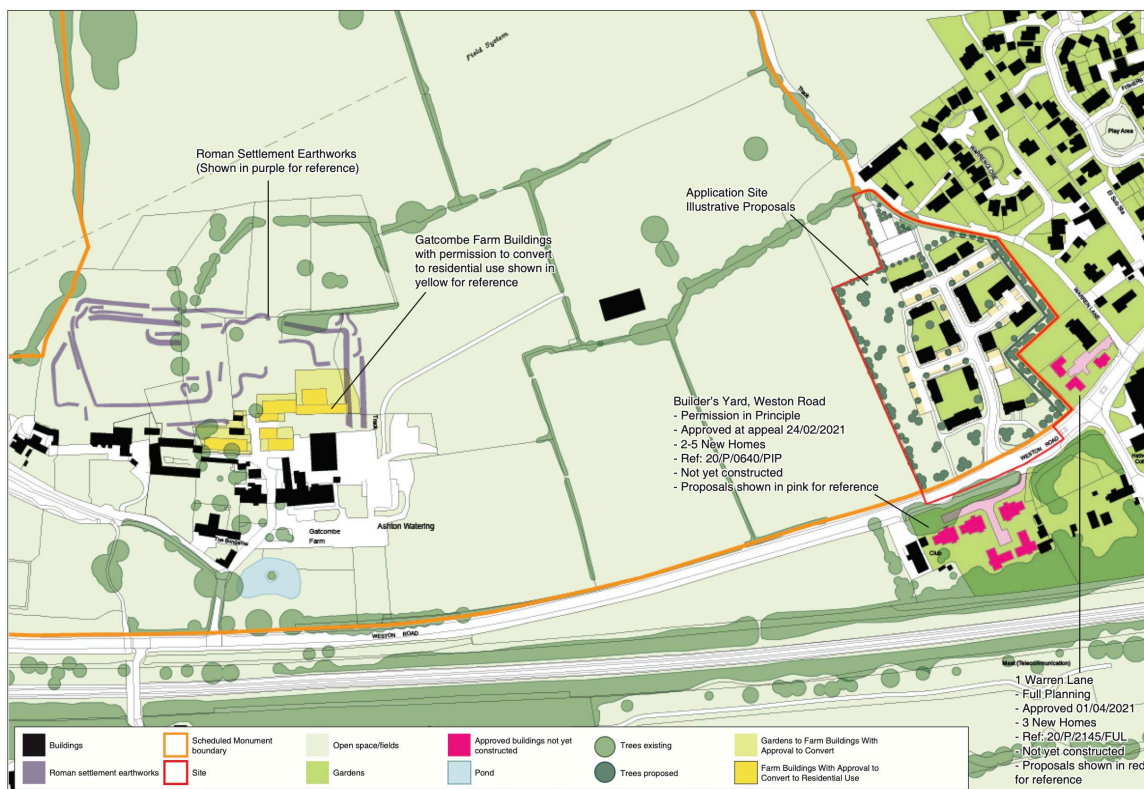
- 2.1. In order to reduce the scope of the landscape evidence, I have submitted a Landscape Statement of Common Ground (LSoCG) to the Council. Importantly, the LSoCG has established that the Appeal Site:
- i. Is not subject to any national or local qualitative landscape designations;
 - ii. Is situated at the immediate settlement edge of Long Ashton;
 - iii. Is located within the North Somerset Council Landscape Character Assessment (2018): Landscape Character Type (LCT) J – Rolling Valley Farmland; and Landscape Character Area (LCA) J5 – Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland;
 - iv. Is not considered to be a “*valued landscape*” within the meaning of paragraph 174(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework;
 - v. Comprises 0.9 hectares (ha) of open space, which represents 40% of the Site; and
 - vi. That the Reason for Refusal (RfR) does not make specific reference to landscape considerations as being a determinative issue and the refusal does not cite Policy DM10 – Landscape (of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 – Development Management Policies) nor Policy ENV5 – Conserving and enhancing wildlife, biodiversity and historic assets, including designated areas of local ecological and landscape value (of the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan).
- 2.2. In terms of the landscape matters of disagreement, these are limited to:
- i. That the general location and scale of the Appeal Scheme is not suitable; and
 - ii. That the proposed Appeal Scheme does not comply with Policy CS5 (Landscape and the Historic Environment) of the North Somerset Core Strategy, nor the landscape aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

The Planning Application

- 2.3. The submitted planning application occupies land located on the western side of Long Ashton situated immediately adjacent to, and in the immediate context of the existing settlement edge along Weston Road (see **TG Insert 1**).



TG Insert 1



- 2.4. The Appeal Site covers a total area of approximately 2.22 hectares (ha) and the submitted proposals broadly encompass the following:

Residential Development Area – 1.32ha (60%)

- 2.5. The overall scheme seeks approval for a rural exception affordable housing development to provide up to 35 affordable homes to meet local needs. A single vehicular access point into the Appeal Site is proposed, from Weston Road. Vehicles are guided around the Site leading up-slope with secondary routes running along the contours linking east to west. Pedestrian routes are provided throughout, with a new link proposed to Warren Lane which utilises the existing field gate to avoid breaking through the established hedgerow.
- 2.6. In terms of appearance, red Bristol stone is found throughout the village, with a predominance along Long Ashton/Weston Road. The stone could be used on prominent gables, boundary walls and as lintel and sill details to the windows. The stone could be combined with rendered facades, that are also common component of the local context. The render should have a variety of tones with simple detailing around windows, stone sills and elements of timber framing detail on taller gables. Simple pitched roof forms are proposed with the use of gables with overhanging eaves breaking the roof line.
- 2.7. The built development will be predominately 2 storey, with the opportunity for some 2.5 storey focal points marking the entry to the Site. High quality boundary treatments are a significant part of the character of Long Ashton. The existing stone wall to Weston Road will be retained and adapted to suite the new entrance.



Open Space & Green Infrastructure – 0.9ha (40%)

- 2.8. The proposals for the Site include 0.9ha of Green Infrastructure (GI). The GI will have a range of benefits for the assimilation of the scheme into the landscape to protect, retain, replace and enhance existing features. The proposal is landscape-led and shows a good distribution of landscaped set-backs and open space within the Site to offer options for introducing natural play to complement the existing play areas throughout Long Ashton.
- 2.9. There is also capacity for supplementing existing wildlife corridors with new hedge and tree planting and, the re-creation of natural field boundary to the west to improve the arrival experience into Long Ashton and creating enhanced wildlife habitats. Through application of DEFRA's latest Biodiversity Net Gain 4.0 metric, the Illustrative Masterplan indicates that the Appeal Site has the ability to deliver an increase of at least 1.78 habitat units (equating to a 42% gain) and 1.93 hedgerow units (equating to 130% gain). This far exceed the gains in biodiversity targeted in the Environment Act 2021 (currently set at 10%), which is due to become mandatory but is not yet in force.
- 2.10. The provision of community allotments also assists in meeting unmet local demand in Long Ashton and the proposals supplement the GI and include orchard planting and a rose garden area to the northern section of the Site.
- 2.11. The planning application was accompanied by a comprehensive suite of supporting information which comprised all the baseline environmental studies carried out by a consultant team. The technical studies and analysis from the environmental work were utilised to inform the Design and Access Statement (DAS) (see **CD 1.4**) and the scheme layout.

Consultation Process & Officers Report

Pre-Application Response & Agreement of Scope of Work

- 2.12. The pre-application consultation response from North Somerset Council (see **Volume 2, Appendix 2, LVIA – Appendix 1**) included a section entitled “*Landscape Impact Assessment*”. It draws reference to the Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (March 2018) and the Landscape Character Assessment (September 2018), noting that:

“The Council’s Landscape Character Assessment (updated 2018) states that the site falls within the J5: Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland LCA. It is classified as of ‘moderate’ character ‘due to the frequent villages with modern outskirts and ubiquitous ribbon development along major roads which weakens the rural character of the otherwise largely pastoral landscape’. The landscape condition is however described as ‘good’ ‘with large areas of intact pasture with thick hedgerows and hedgerow trees’. The Landscape Strategy is to conserve the intact pastoral landscape while strengthening elements of weaker character such as the village edges.

The landscape character strengthens above this site where the landscape falls within the E5: Tickenham Ridges and Combes. It is a strong landscape character area in good condition, although suburban style development rising up the ridges detracts from the



character. The very open nature of the large gently sloping field of which this site forms a significant part, means that it is highly visible in the immediate vicinity, although less so at a distance where vegetation and topography act to enclose views of this end of the village.”

- 2.13. Opinion is then offered on the Illustrative Layout itself, but without reference back to the Council’s supporting evidence base or Supplementary Planning Documents. Instead, emotive language is used to dismiss the scheme. The Officer notes that:

“The proposal is detached in nature from the village to the east, and appears to have no connection with Warren Lane (neither vehicle nor pedestrian), albeit it abuts it along part of the northern edge. Links along the Weston Road exist and the scheme therefore utilises a pedestrian link following the perimeter landscape proposals to the south and west, and an internal road network to access the remainder of the site.”

- 2.14. It is also stated that the suggested landscaping would be ineffective, noting that:

“Perimeter landscape proposals are intended to provide visual buffers to the south, west and north of the site. They may contain community allotments, orchards and other amenity space and perimeter hedges with trees, which would require further archaeological advice, as trees and cultivation can harm any surviving archaeology. This buffer cannot be relied upon to be visually effective. Ponds and drainage ditches require unimpeded access for maintenance (no trees and shrubs) and where land is set aside for cultivation. Note also that allotment provision is seldom visually attractive and its placement of the visible outer edge of the village is not likely to enhance the approach.”

- 2.15. Overall, the response concludes that:

“The proposals are discouraged, but if an application is submitted it will require a full Landscape and Visual impact Assessment (LVIA).”

- 2.16. Despite that advice, an LVIA was not listed as an important document or requirement for a formal planning application. However, one was prepared and the scope was agreed, as set out at para. 2.1(iv) of the LSoCG, which confirms that:

“The scope of the LVIA was agreed with North Somerset Council (Kevin Carlton) on 2nd September 2019, including the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, the viewpoint selection (Viewpoints 1-12) and also the 2km Study Area.”

- 2.17. It is also important to note that the scheme parameters and Illustrative Masterplan did evolve from that presented at pre-application stage (see Figure 4.7 of the DAS – **CD 1.4**), in order to address some of the concerns of the Council.

Officers Report (5th August 2022)

- 2.18. The consultation summary pages include a section headed “Landscape”, which presents the following points:

- *“Landscape Character is moderate, but the landscape sensitivity (to housing) is high, so the landscape scheme is a key consideration.*



- *Updated LVIA and the revised Site Plan from previous refusal submitted open space has been substantially increased to the west and now has the scope to deliver a sufficient buffer to the wider landscape.*
- *Properties on descending slope less apparent and set back with potential for tree planting to the front (should note that tree planting cannot be done over any water storage tanks or existing retained archaeology.*
- *The LVIA notes that residents of Warren Lane and users of PRow LA12/29/10 would experience moderate adverse visual effects, but planting will assist in mitigating these localised views.*
- *Remainder of visual effects will be minor adverse to negligible.”*

2.19. In essence, this represents a more positive response from that received at the pre-application stage and an appreciation that adverse effects arising will be localised, with a substantial increase in planting and capacity for mitigation.

2.20. Under the heading of “Character and Appearance”, the Officers Report states that:

“While concern has been raised over the proposed development significantly altering the gateway into Long Ashton and resulting in a loss of open green space, as with the previously refused planning application 20/P/1547/OUT, layout and scale are reserved matters. However, parameter and illustrative plans have been submitted indicating the proposed development has been set further back from the western site boundary (circa 18-22m) and enhancing open landscaped areas to the western boundary adjoining the open field.

It is considered that the Landscape Character of the application site is moderate, but the landscape sensitivity (to housing) is high and as such the landscape scheme would have been a key consideration under any reserved matters application should this outline application have been approved.”

2.21. Again, this acknowledges the improvements that were made to the scheme parameters and that should the development be permitted, then a detailed landscaping scheme would be capable of responding to and over-coming the high sensitivity judgement.

2.22. Finally, and consistent with the above content of the Officers Report, in relation to “*Conclusions and Planning Balance*”, no reference is made to unacceptable harm on the landscape character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons for Refusal

2.23. The application was recommended for refusal and a Decision Notice (see **CD 3.2**) was issued on 5th August 2022. At the time of the refusal, there was no criticism of the submitted LVA. There were no outstanding requests for any further information and no competing technical assessment which supported the refusal.

2.24. There are two components to the Reason for Refusal (RfR) for the proposed development, which state that:



- “1 *The proposed development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The Housing Needs Survey and alternative site considerations submitted in support of the application are insufficient to demonstrate that the proposal would provide limited affordable housing to meet local needs under policies in the development plan. There is no Parish Council support for the proposal. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS17 (a), (b), (c) & (d), the Affordable Housing SPD, Policies LHN 3 and LHN 4 of the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan and paragraphs 147-149 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- 2 *The proposed development would result in the complete removal of all archaeological remains from the development site and would cause unacceptable harm to the Scheduled Monument. These remains form part of the significance of the designation of this heritage asset. In addition, the development of part of the historic field pattern associated with the Scheduled Monument would cause unacceptable harm to the historic landscape. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM6 of the North Somerset Sites and Development Plan, and paragraphs 195, 199, 200, 201,202 and 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework.”*

2.25. It is important to note that the RfR before us in this case does not make any reference to, or establish any concerns in relation to:

- i. Visual Encroachment or Visual Coalescence;
- ii. Failure to Protect of Rural Vistas or Views;
- iii. Adverse Impacts upon the intrinsic Character and Appearance of the Landscape; and
- iv. As already noted, it does not suggest non-compliance with Policy DM10 – Landscape (of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 – Development Management Policies) nor Policy ENV5 – Conserving and enhancing wildlife, biodiversity and historic assets, including designated areas of local ecological and landscape value (of the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan).

Scope & Structure of Evidence

- 2.26. With reference to the disputed matters set out within the Landscape SoCG, the focus of my evidence is upon the general assertion that the location and scale of the proposed development would be unsuitable, with regards to the historic landscape and Green Belt visual openness.
- 2.27. One specific observation I make in relation to the submitted planning application material is that the Council have made no criticism about the scope, approach, content and overall judgements of the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) report (see



CD 1.8 or Volume 2, Appendix 2). To avoid unnecessary duplication, I will refer to the content, findings and judgements of that LVIA throughout my evidence.

- 2.28. In terms of the structure of my evidence, I will provide a summary of the existing baseline context, consider the relevance and findings of the landscape character assessment documents; and, then I will demonstrate that the Appeal Site can be sensitively developed in a way that does not result in any significant adverse effects upon both character and views.
- 2.29. I will consider the Green Belt context and visual openness, before demonstrating how the Appeal Scheme complies Policy CS5 of the North Somerset Core Strategy; and, the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).
- 2.30. I will also undertake a high-level landscape and visual critique of the Alternative Sites (as identified in the Council's Call for Sites information to inform the emerging Local Plan 2038), before providing an overall conclusion.
- 2.31. My evidence will cover landscape and visual specific observations, with heritage, setting and archaeological matters being dealt with by Robert Sutton of Cotswold Archaeology and, in respect of the wider policy context and overall planning balance, I defer to the evidence and expertise of Mr. Mel Clinton of Nash Partnership.
- 2.32. Within my evidence, where appropriate, I refer to published best practice guidance for considering landscape and visual matters, this comprises:
- i. Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA), LI and IEMA, 2013 (see extracts at **Volume 2, Appendix 1** or **CD 1.8**); and
 - ii. An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, October 2014 (see **CD 16.19**).
- 2.33. For ease of following my evidence, it should be read alongside the Plans contained in Volume 2 and following submitted planning application documents:
- Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (see **Appendix 2** or **CD 1.8**);
 - Landscape Strategy Plan (see **Volume 2, Plan 10** and **CD 1.39**);
 - Design & Access Statement (see **CD 1.4**);
 - Parameter Plan – Green Infrastructure (see **CD 1.29**); and
 - Illustrative Masterplan (see **CD 1.26**).



Section 3: Appeal Site, Landscape Character & Visual Context

Appeal Site Character Context

- 3.1. For the purposes of my evidence and associated assessment judgements, the wider study area has been based on the Site itself and the area around the Site that has the potential to experience landscape and visual effects were the Site to be developed as proposed, which I have agreed to be an area of approximately 2km concentrically from the Appeal Site boundary.
- 3.2. Where I refer to the Site and its immediate surroundings, that has been defined by the visibility of the proposed development and the area within which some degree of perceptible change might be experienced. With reference to my Volume 2 Plans, that has been based on the worst case Zone of Theoretical Influence (see **Plan 5: Zone of Theoretical Visibility**) and my verified Photoviewpoint Locations (see **Plan 6: Photoviewpoint Locations & Extent of Visibility**), which demonstrates that main area of visual inter-visibility is broadly within 200-500m of the Appeal Site.
- 3.3. As agreed at para. 2.1(xi) of the LSoCG, the Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality.
- 3.4. The Appeal Site itself (see **TG Insert 2**) comprises a single ploughed arable field, with agricultural pasture to the immediate west, segregated from the Site by an open electric wire boundary fence, as the former hedge has declined over time. Hedgerows with trees are present to the northern and eastern boundaries, but with trees of greater maturity within the hedgerow to the north, located on a raised mound. The southern boundary is defined by a low stone wall, which has failed in places.
- 3.5. In terms of landform, the Site slopes downhill gently from the north-west to the south-east, falling some 18m (from approximately 67m AOD to 49m AOD), and the lower section of the site forms part of the valley floor with a predominantly flat area formed adjacent to Weston Road.
- 3.6. Being at the immediate settlement edge, the visual influence of the existing residential built form along Warren Lane to the north and east of the Site is clear, as is the urbanising affect of Weston Road. Small garden allotment plots also adjoin the eastern boundary of the Appeal Site, as does the new close-board timber fencing that surrounds the 3 approved dwellings at No.1 Warren Lane.
- 3.7. In terms of the surrounding character and settlement pattern, historic map regression confirms that Long Ashton dates back to the 15th Century, with a focus around All Saints Church and expansion towards the eastern side of the current settlement. There has since been three key stages of growth with elements from each stage overlapping to form today's landscape, buildings, streets, and places. The 20th Century saw further development throughout the valley and adjoining slopes, to both the east and west, including the Kings



Croft development, which is located to the north-east of the Appeal Site (see page 8 of the DAS – **CD 1.4**).

- 3.8. The centre of the village is a fertile wooded vale and the Ashton Brook runs through the valley floor, although it is now culverted in parts. The landscape rises to the north to a range of picturesque hills which permit panoramic views over the surrounding countryside, towards Barrow Hill and Bedminster Down. The wider strategic landscape contributes to the setting of the village providing a wooded backdrop formed by the Ashton Hill Plantation and nearby wooded blocks such as Cook's Wood, Fenn's Wood, Keed's Wood and Barrow Wood.
- 3.9. The development of the valley slopes, with buildings running parallel to the contours and with a strong relationship with the road (such as Providence Lane), have an openness and have used the distant views to good advantage. The eastern end of the village in particular still retains a feeling of lower density and a more distinctive landscape, where the vernacular and street typology has greater variety and historical integrity.

TG Insert 2



Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.10. For the purposes of my evidence I recognise 'Landscape' as defined by the European Landscape Convention, 2000 (ELC):

"...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".

- 3.11. Landscape character is defined in the GLVIA (see **Appendix 1** and **CD 16.18**) as:

"The distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse".

- 3.12. The relevant published landscape characterisations are summarised below.

District Landscape Character

North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment (September 2018)

- 3.13. At district scale North Somerset Council has prepared the 'North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment' (NSLCA) Adopted September 2018. The majority of the landscape associated with the Appeal Site itself lies within Landscape Character Types (LCT) J: Rolling Valley Farmland, with the very northern portion located within LCT E: Limestone Ridges and Combes (see **Volume 2, Plan 2: Published Landscape Character**). Section 2 of the submitted LVIA (see **Appendix 2** or **CD 1.8**), sets out this character context in full.
- 3.14. My evidence considers the more local scale character assessment that has subdivided the landscape types into smaller more detailed Landscape Character Areas (LCA). The Appeal Site is identified within LCA J5: Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland, with the very northern portion located within area LCA E5: Tickenham Ridges and Combes.
- 3.15. Given that the proposed built development and direct changes relate to LCA J5: Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland, I have focused upon that. The characteristics of which are described as being:

- *"Gently undulating landform based on Mercia Mudstone with Head and Alluvium;*
- *Rural pastoral landscape set in a wide valley framed by wooded ridges;*
- *Intact hedgerow network with hedgerow trees of oak;*
- *Areas of historic parkland with mature parkland trees rising up to the lower slopes of the ridges;*
- *Frequent large villages such as Long Ashton, Backwell and Claverham with historic stone buildings at centre and modern infill;*
- *Network of winding rural roads with major road and railway passing along the*



valley floor edge; and

- *Scattered stone farmsteads with stone outbuildings and walls.”*

3.16. The character of the LCA J5 is described as “*moderate*” and its condition is considered to be “*good*” due to the “*large areas of intact pasture with thick hedgerows and hedgerow trees and small winding rural roads. Some elements of the landscape are declining such as the small farm orchards*”. In my opinion, this description does not accurately reflect the Appeal Site itself, but does reflect the adjoining land to the west. As described above, the Site is arable in nature, it is influenced by its surroundings, which includes the neighbouring settlement edge and the visible residential development that is present beyond the eastern boundary and partially to the southern boundary. The hedgerows are not entirely intact, the Site is not associated with historic parkland and it does not relate to scattered stone farmsteads. These characteristics associate the Site with the linear settlement pattern and valley transport corridor of Long Ashton, rather than a contributing part of the wider rural scene and intact pasture (see **Volume 2, Plan 3: Local Landscape Character**).

3.17. The Landscape Guidelines’ provided for LCA J5 include:

- *“Conserve the rural nature of the pastoral landscape;*
- *Continue with sensitive, cyclical/rotational management of hedgerows;*
- *Nurture new and existing hedgerow trees;*
- *Encourage traditional methods of land management;*
- *Promote active management and replanting of orchards using local fruit varieties;*
- *Minimise the impact of the urban edge and the encroachment of visually intrusive land uses through design and appropriate land management;*
- *There should be a presumption against arable in areas of archaeological landscape defined by earthworks and areas of historic parkland; and*
- *To prevent poaching of earthworks, light grazing management is recommended.”*

3.18. These guidelines are not presented alongside the absence of built development and clearly the conservation and enhancement of landscape can be enabled through new development. The above principles were considered in the design and evolution of the Appeal scheme, which does not result in the loss of pastoral landscape, introduces new hedgerows and tree planting, proposes a new area of orchard planting and minimises urban encroachment through the appropriate design of the western boundary.



North Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (March 2018)

- 3.19. Wardell Armstrong was commissioned by the Council to undertake a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the area surrounding selected settlements within the district. The purpose of this assessment was to inform the site selection process for non-strategic growth and to ensure that the important characteristics of the North Somerset landscape are not unacceptably harmed. Regarding land to the west of Long Ashton the following was recorded:

“To the west of the village is a large SAM (Roman settlement, part of an associated field system and earlier Iron Age settlement remains at Gatcombe Farm’). The land in this location is also open and visually prominent, rising up to George’s Hill Plantation. Owing to the above, this land is of high sensitivity”.

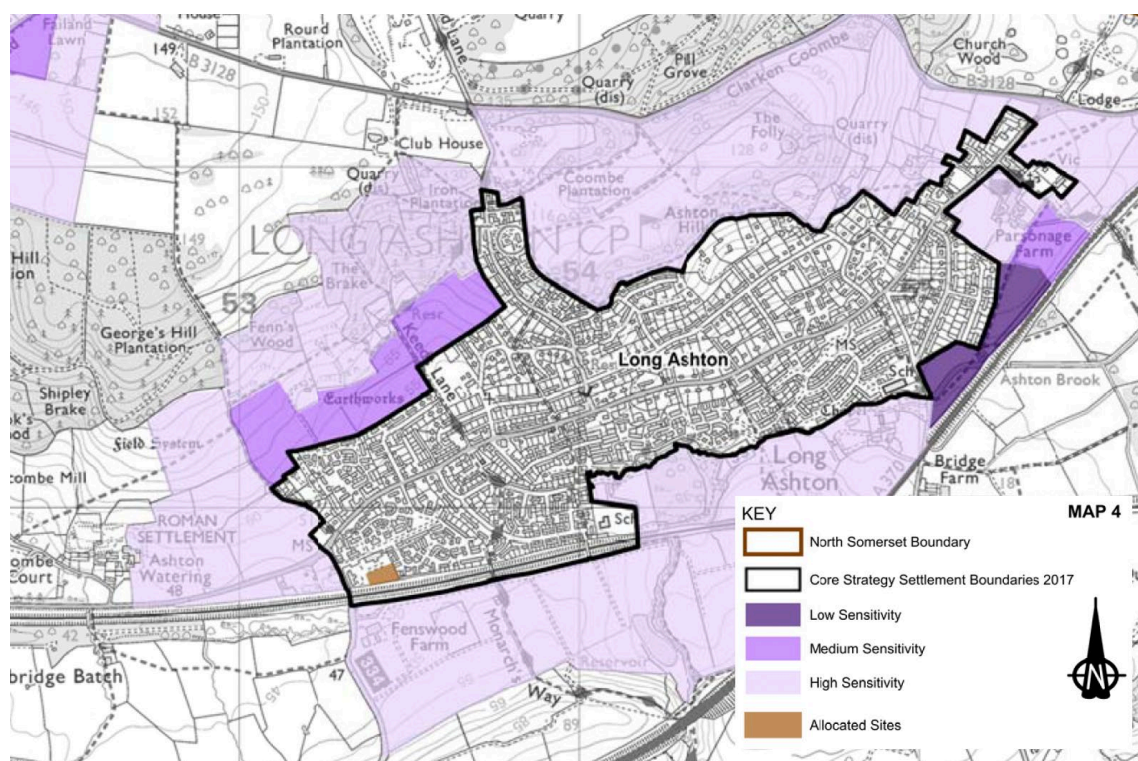
- 3.20. The sensitivity assessment concludes that all land to the west of Long Ashton is of “*high sensitivity*”. It is important to note that the majority of the immediate settlement fringe around is also categorised as high sensitivity. However, a portion of the land to the north-east of the Appeal Site is categorised a “*medium sensitivity*” with the following explanation and justification:

*“The To the north-west of the village there are fields adjacent to the settlement edge, between Warren Lane and Keeds Lane, and east of Keeds Lane. Although these fields are on rising topography, any development here would be viewed in the context of existing development. In addition, this land fits well within the existing settlement form. Owing to the above, this land is of medium sensitivity and any development here would require landscape mitigation planting to assimilate it into the existing settlement.” (see **TG Insert 3**).*

- 3.21. That judgement has down-graded the sensitivity of the landscape in that location given the visual inter-visibility with the settlement edge, despite the rising topography and proximity to the SAM. I see no reason why the same approach should not be applied to the Appeal Site.
- 3.22. It is my opinion, given the observations above and findings of the more recent LCA (which also assigns a moderate judgement for LCA J5), the Appeal Site is located on low lying land on the visible edge of Long Ashton and should also be attributed a medium sensitivity status. This is considered in further detail below.



TG Insert 3



Landscape Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity

- 3.23. The overall sensitivity of the landscape as a resource is formed through combined judgements on value and susceptibility. This approach is established at para. 5.39 of GLVIA (see Page 88 of **Appendix 1** and **CD 16.18**).
- 3.24. When considering landscape value, it is necessary to consider the Site and the perceptible context in terms of the presence of designations and a range of factors as set out in GLVIA. Para. 5.19 confirms that:

“A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding value, but the value attached to undesignated landscapes also needs to be carefully considered and individual elements of the landscape such as trees, buildings or hedgerows may also have a value. All need to be considered where relevant.”

- 3.25. The process has been followed to inform the judgements set out within the LVIA and my evidence and the findings are summarised below.

Landscape Designations

- 3.26. As set out at para. 2.1 (xii) of the Landscape SOCG, the Site is not a “valued landscape” within the meaning of paragraph 174(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).



3.27. The Site is not covered by or adjacent to any national or local qualitative landscape designations. Indeed, the baseline information also assists in highlighting the more distinctive, diverse, valuable and protected landscape and ecological sites that influence the wider landscape context.

Value Criteria

3.28. Aside from the presence or absence of a designation or documented statutory status, para. 5.28 of GLVIA also suggests that where there is no clear or up-to-date evidence to indicate landscape value, it should be determined through new survey and analysis. It is therefore appropriate to review the Site and its immediate context in terms of criteria/factors that contribute to landscape value. The aspects that are noted as being relevant within the GLVIA assessment process (see Page 84, Box 5.1 of **Appendix 1** and **CD 16.18**) include:

- *“Landscape Quality (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements;*
- *Scenic Quality: The term used to describe landscapes which appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses);*
- *Rarity: The presence of rare features and elements in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type;*
- *Representativeness: Whether the landscape contains a particular character, and/or features and elements, which are considered particularly important examples;*
- *Conservation Interests: The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right;*
- *Recreation Value: Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important;*
- *Perceptual Aspects: A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities and / or tranquillity; and*
- *Associations: Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or event in history that contribute to perceptions of natural beauty of the area.”*

3.29. To assist the decision maker, for each of these considerations it is generally accepted that a range can exist from ‘good’ through ‘ordinary’ to ‘poor’ in terms of the landscape performance (or from high to low). Table TG1 as contained within the submitted LVIA (see **CD 1.8** or **Appendix 2**) sets out a transparent commentary on these factors and then presents an overall judgement on landscape value associated with the Site and its immediately perceptible surroundings.



- 3.30. Having considered the above factors in accordance with GLVIA and considering the absence of a qualitative designation, it is judged that the Site and perceptible surroundings should be considered within a range of ordinary or medium in terms of landscape value. All undeveloped landscape beyond the settlement edge is often valued by the local community to some extent, but the LVIA and my assessment confirms that whilst the local landscape may have a pleasant character, it exhibits relatively ordinary characteristics of medium value, relevant at a local level. The Site does not possess any qualities or attributes which would require safeguarding in perpetuity (consistent with the findings of the Council's LCA).

Susceptibility

- 3.31. In relation to the susceptibility¹ of the Site and immediately perceptible area of land to accommodate the change proposed, it is necessary to consider the specifics of the Site and the type of development proposed. Contextually this is a characteristically varied and typical rural and settlement fringe landscape with a presence of discernible built development and adjoining highways. Based on my experience I consider the levels of character susceptibility for this project as being:

High Susceptibility - *The landscape is such that changes in terms of the development proposed would be entirely at odds with the character of the local area, related to matters including pattern, grain, use, scale and mass.*

Medium Susceptibility - *The proposed development has a degree of consistency with the existing scale, pattern, grain, land use of the prevailing character, although mitigation may be appropriate to enhance assimilation.*

Low Susceptibility - *The development proposed is entirely consistent with the character of the local area, related to matters including pattern, grain, use, scale and mass.*

- 3.32. The proposals seek to incorporate, re-create and enhance the majority of the boundary trees and hedgerows and, would seek the longevity of such features through on-going management. Furthermore, housing occupies the local landscape and there is a clear ability for the proposed mitigation measures to further assimilate the proposed development into the landscape.

- 3.33. Given the existing land use and the above factors, I therefore consider that the Site is of medium susceptibility to the changes proposed.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 3.34. This is an ordinary undesignated landscape, of medium or ordinary value, with capacity to absorb characteristic change at the expanding settlement edge of Long Ashton. Combining judgements made on value and susceptibility, overall, I consider the Site and the perceptual surroundings to be of medium sensitivity. This is consistent of the judgements set out in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), where the character of the LCA J5 is described as "*moderate*".

- 3.35. Plainly speaking, that means that the Site and surroundings are not recognised by way of a designation but includes some typical characteristics and features that creates a landscape with some structure and a pattern of recognisable features. However, given the

¹ Landscape Susceptibility - The ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences



Site context, the proposed development has a degree of consistency with the existing scale, pattern, grain, land use of the prevailing character, whereby mitigation is appropriate to enhance assimilation of the proposed development.

Visual Character, Susceptibility and Sensitivity

3.36. The extent of the visibility of the Site, nature of the existing views and types of visual receptors are summarised below. It is also supported by the material contained at **Volume 2** of my evidence, including:

- Plan 6: Photoviewpoint Locations & Extent of Views; and
- Photoviewpoints 1 to 12.

3.37. The photographic material represents a variety of people (visual receptors) and locations in accordance with the GLVIA (see **para. 6.19, bullet point 1 of Volume 2, Appendix 1 and CD 16.18**). They are representative (not exhaustive) and provide a robust basis for judgments to be reached. As noted in **para. 6.21** of GLVIA, in respect of the selection of viewpoints:

“The emphasis must always be on proportionality in relation to the scale and nature of the development proposal and its likely significant effects, and on agreement with the competent authority and consultation bodies.”

3.38. The viewpoints selected cover all compass points; near and middle-distance locations; for people engaged in walking, cycling and users of local roads. As set out at para. 2.1 (iv) of the Landscape SOCG, agreement was previously reached with the Council regarding the suitability of the viewpoint selection and the 2km study area. At the time of determination there were no requests for further viewpoints to be considered.

Visibility

3.39. In order to determine the extent of the area from which the development has the potential to be seen Geographic Information System (GIS) and Ordnance Survey Terrain data are modelled to create a topographical plan (see Volume 2, Plan 4: Topography) and the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping (see Volume 2, Plan 5: Zone of Theoretical Visibility).

3.40. Following a review of the ZTV, a range of views have been considered which include local/intermediate viewpoint locations (which range from 0-1km) and distant viewpoint locations (which range from 1-2km) from the Site. The field verification process enables the assessor to view the Site and define the overall extent of views and inter-visibility, taking into account vegetation and built form.

3.41. The overall visibility and visual context of the Appeal Site is described below.

- i. North - distant views are screened by a combination of intervening built form within Long Ashton and the wooded rising landform associated with Ashton Hill Plantation, George’s Hill Plantation and Fenns Wood. Local views of the Site are achieved from the footpath network to the north. The footpaths are situated within a network of



pasture fields (footpath LA12/28/30), bounded by mature hedgerows or in the case of footpath LA12/29/10 it is located on an agricultural lane flanked by mature hedgerows. Views are filtered by the mature hedgerow and trees along the northern Site boundary. In views from the north-east, built form within Long Ashton screens all inter-visibility (see **Photoviewpoints 1, 2, and 3**).

- ii. East - distant views from the east are limited to vantage points located to the south-east due to the immediate intervening built form at Warren Lane and the associated boundary treatments. Looking back from Monarch's Way (footpath LA12/7/30) near the A370, the Appeal Site is seen beyond the existing built form and is seen within this urban context. The elevated ridgeline to the north of the Site forms the skyline and backdrop to the view. It is possible for the most elevated northern portion of the Site to be viewed from a distant viewpoint location (see **Photoviewpoint 9**), albeit a small component part of a much wider panorama. Some residents along Warren Lane can obviously obtain near-distant views of the Site (see **Photoviewpoint 4**), but it relates to a limited number of highly localised receptors.
- iii. South - distant views from the south are heavily filtered by intervening vegetation and the associated undulating landform. The focus of these views looking back from footpaths to the north of Barrow Gurney (footpaths LA3/27/10, LA3/2/20 and LA3/6/20) is on the elevated distant wooded skyline visible on the opposite side of the valley. Glimpsed views of the Appeal Site itself can be seen, where it forms a very small component part of the landscape, but also viewed against the existing settled context (see **Photoviewpoints 10, 11 and 12**). In terms of the southern Appeal Site boundary and views from Weston Road, the low stone wall does permit localised open views north over the sloping landform, towards the existing properties associated with Warren Lane (see **Photoviewpoints 6, 10 and 11**). However, even those localised views to the south are contained by the roadside timber fencing and wooded railway corridor beyond.
- iv. West - distant views to and from the west are focused along the valley with the elevated and wooded landform to north and south apparent in the view. Undulating terrain is present within the valley and the Appeal Site itself is largely screened from view, in relation to receptors such as Ashton Watering, where the topography and associated intervening vegetation restricts inter-visibility (see **Photoviewpoint 7**). From the elevated north and south-west, views are filtered by the characteristic vegetated hill tops. In local views from the west, the Site is seen in the foreground of the view with the existing settlement edge of Long Ashton and rendered properties on Warren Lane forming the visible backdrop to the view (see **Photoviewpoint 8**).

Visual Susceptibility

- 3.42. The visual receptors identified that may experience some change in view or visual amenity as a result of the development of the Site have been set out below, with reference to their broad categorisation and, associated susceptibility and sensitivity judgements.



3.43. Based on my experience I consider the levels of visual susceptibility for this project as being:

High Visual Susceptibility - *The visual composition following the development as proposed will include discordant and incongruent elements;*

Medium visual Susceptibility - *The visual composition following the development as proposed will be consistent with the baseline situation, although some aspects may be at odds with the visual composition; and*

Low Visual Susceptibility - *The visual composition following the development as proposed will be in harmony with the existing composition.*

3.44. Considering the visual context based on the available data and my field assessment, the visual susceptibility of the receiving landscape to accommodate development of this type is assessed to be medium. This reflects the Appeal Site's existing visual composition on the edge of Long Ashton, with existing residential development present and recognition that the proposed development will occupy open fields and will be brought closer to some surrounding receptors.

Visual Sensitivity

Private Residential Properties / Settlement Edge

3.45. It is generally accepted and set out within GLVIA (see **page 113, para. 6.33 of Appendix 1 and CD 16.18**) that views from residents at home are considered less tolerant to change. However, it is important to note that such views are private and more sensitive in relation to rooms occupied during daylight hours. Residential receptors are therefore categorised as being of high sensitivity or medium where new development has been established in the knowledge of an adjoining development application. It is also inevitable that where new housing is dependent on greenfield extensions to expand sustainable settlements, that such housing will be visible from the existing housing which it adjoins.

3.46. Because the Site is located on existing green fields and situated on the periphery of the settlement, both dispersed properties and housing on the settlement edge may be affected by the proposed development.

3.47. More specifically, the housing that currently experiences partial or clear views of the Site are listed below:

- Residents along the western edge of Long Ashton, particularly the 17 properties associated with Warren Lane.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

3.48. This type of receptor is also considered to be of high sensitivity and therefore an important consideration in the context of visual impact assessment. However, the transient nature of users and the sequential experience of the landscape must be factored, as must the existing visual context.



3.49. The closest definitive footpaths and receptors include:

- The users of approximately 270m of the PRow (footpath LA12/28/30), located to the north-west of the Site and which runs parallel to Weston Road, connecting Ashton Watering to Long Ashton;
- The users of a short section of PRow (footpath LA12/29/10), located to the north of the Site and which connects Warren Lane to footpath LA12/28/30;
- The users of a short section of PRow (footpath LA12/28/10), located to the north-east of the Site and which connects Warren Lane to Providence Lane;
- The users of approximately 290m of Monarch's Way PRow (footpath LA12/7/30), located to the south-east of the Site and which connects Long Ashton to Ashton Brook;
- The users of a short section of PRow (footpath LA3/27/10), located to the south of the Site and which connects Wild Country Lane to Barrow Gurney;
- The users of a short section of PRow (footpath LA3/2/20), located to the south-west of the Site and which connects Redwood Farm with Barrow Gurney; and
- The users of a short distance of PRow (footpath LA3/6/20), located to the south-west of the Site and which connects Barrow Street with Barrow Court Lane.

Transport Infrastructure / Local Highways

3.50. The sensitivity of views from transport corridors are generally considered to be low for roads where users experience largely transient and glimpsed views, with focus on the road ahead. However, where some of the surrounding minor roads are used for recreational pursuits (such as cycling) and the sensitivity has been adjusted to medium.

3.51. The surrounding highway receptors include:

- Users of the Weston Road, over a distance of approximately 480m;
- The junction of Weston Road and Wild Country Lane; and
- Users of Warren Lane.

Agricultural Land

3.52. The workers on the surrounding agricultural land are considered as low sensitivity receptors, due their focus on other activities. The main receptors include:

- Workers associated with the land at Gatcombe Farm and Ashton Watering.

3.53. Overall, it is apparent that those receptors that have clear views of the Appeal Site are highly localised, and that middle-distant and distant views are filtered by intervening



vegetation and landform. Where the Site can be seen, it is in the context of the existing settlement edge.



Section 4: Landscape & Visual Effects

- 4.1. This section of my evidence presents the predicted magnitude of change and resultant effects that will arise as a consequence of the proposed development. It focuses on the residual effects that arise at year 15 with mitigation measures established and, it summaries the judgements contained within the submitted LVIA (see **Appendix 2** or **CD 1.8**).
- 4.2. A development scheme of this size and nature would be unlikely to warrant the production of a full 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (LVIA) as 'significant' adverse environmental effects would not arise, unless the proposed development had been screened and deemed to require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which was not the case here.
- 4.3. However, despite it not being cited as a required document within the pre-application response from the Council, a full LVIA was provided.
- 4.4. I have summarised below my consideration of the likely magnitude of change and the importance of effects that could be predicted in relation to both landscape character and visual amenity. In relation to landscape character, I have just focused on LCA J5: Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland and the Appeal Site itself.

Magnitude of Change & Importance of Landscape Effects

- 4.5. Landscape effects are assessed in terms of the interaction between the magnitude of the change brought about by the development and the quality, value & sensitivity of the landscape resource affected. The landscape effects can be: beneficial, neutral or adverse.
- 4.6. In this way, landscapes of the highest sensitivity and quality, when subjected to a high magnitude of change from the proposed development, are likely to give rise to 'substantial' landscape effects. Conversely, landscapes of low sensitivity and quality, when subjected to a low magnitude of change from the proposed development, are likely to give rise to only 'slight' or 'neutral' landscape effects. Beneficial landscape effects may arise from such things as the creation of new landscape features, changes to management practices and improved public access.
- 4.7. In accordance with GLVIA (see **Appendix 1** and **CD 16.18**, pages 90-93, para. 5.48-5.57), judgements are needed about the size or scale of change, the geographical extent of the area influenced, the extent to which landscape elements will be lost (or gained); and the degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape will alter.
- 4.8. My own assessment has also determined that the Site and the immediately surrounding landscape is an ordinary undesignated landscape, of 'medium' or 'ordinary' value, with capacity to absorb characteristic change at the expanding settlement edge of Long Ashton. The proposed development will result in the loss of some of the existing greenfield elements (the arable land) and a short section of the existing boundary wall along Weston Road.



- 4.9. The scheme can also deliver the enhancement of existing features as well as new landscape features, through the provision of open space, allotments, a landscape buffer to the west, a substantial green setback to Weston Road, all of which constitutes 0.9ha of connecting Green Infrastructure. Overall, the vast majority of the identified typical boundary features will be retained, reinstated and enhanced. Also, opportunities exist to establish long-term management of the proposed vegetation structure (see **TG Insert 4**).

TG Insert 4



- 4.10. Against that context, at a localised-district level, and given the analysis and condition of the wider LCA J5: Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland, it is judged that there will be a low magnitude of change. There will be a partial loss of some ordinary features, affecting a localised portion of the defined LCA, but the change will also incorporate substantial enhancements to the Appeal Site, which will be beneficial and permanent. The development will not introduce elements that are unduly prominent nor uncharacteristic at the settlement edge, thus resulting in a minor adverse importance of effect.
- 4.11. In terms of the Appeal Site itself and the immediate surroundings (defined by the visibility of the proposed development and the area within which some degree of perceptible change might be experienced), I judge that there would be a moderate magnitude of change, as the proposed development would not result in the permanent loss of key features of the landscape nor would it introduce highly conspicuous and uncharacteristic elements into the local landscape. Housing and urban form is already a strong and recognisable component of the local landscape. Furthermore, the proposals enable the conservation and



enhancement of landscape features, the benefits of which have to be given appropriate weight.

- 4.12. When considering the overall impact upon the Appeal Site itself, my assessment considers that the proposed development would result in a moderate adverse importance of effect. The change would result in localised alterations to the existing baseline context, with the loss of a small arable field, but introducing development that I consider to be characteristic. This is the inevitable impact of developing any greenfield land.
- 4.13. To represent a significant effect towards the top of the harm hierarchy, the development as proposed would have to cause substantial loss or unacceptable alteration to a number of valued components of landscape, including the introduction of elements that are both visually intrusive and uncharacteristic. This is not the case in my opinion and when judged against fieldwork and the content of the Council's own Landscape Character Assessment, which recognises that development can be accommodated where it is sympathetic to the local landscape character, in response to the appropriate Landscape Guidelines.

Magnitude of Change & Importance of Visual Effects

- 4.14. Visual effects are concerned with people's views of the landscape/townscape and the change that will occur. The magnitude of change is the degree in which the view(s) may be altered as a result of the proposed development and will generally decrease with distance from its source, until a point is reached where there is no discernible change.
- 4.15. In order to determine the extent to which change in the view can be assessed the following principal categories have been considered, in accordance with GLVIA (see **Appendix 1** and **CD 16.18**, page 112, para. 6.27):
- *“The extent of the view that would be occupied by the development (degree of visual intrusion): full, partial, glimpsed, etc;*
 - *The proportion of the development or particular features that would be visible: full, most, small amount, none;*
 - *The distance of the viewpoint from the development and whether the viewpoint would focus on the development due to proximity or the development would form one element in a panoramic view;*
 - *Whether the view is transient or one of a sequence of views, as from a moving vehicle or footpath.”*
- 4.16. The visual baseline in Section 3 of my evidence identified that the Appeal Site is generally well contained in views by virtue of the adjoining settlement area, the associated topography and by the established woodland blocks that occupy the surrounding slopes.
- 4.17. A summary of the predicted magnitude of change and resultant effects is set out below, taking each receptor group in turn. It should be noted that an inevitable consequence of greenfield development that it will result in visual change. There is no policy or guidance



requirement for residential development to be invisible, especially in an area characterised by residential development.

Private Residential Properties / Settlement Edge

- 4.18. It is important to note that the residents overlooking the Appeal Site from this location are limited to those set back over 10 metres from the Site's eastern boundary, of which there are approximately 10 dwellings. These dwellings are of a mixed orientation, most of which do not look directly towards the Site from their principal elevations. They include residential gardens with a variety of evergreen and deciduous tree and shrub planting which assist in filtering views from this location. The existing vegetation along the eastern boundary of the site comprises a 2.5-metre-high hedgerow and several trees which will also filter views of the Site from this location (see **Photoviewpoint 4**).
- 4.19. This visible magnitude of change is considered to be moderate-low adverse, resulting in moderate adverse effects overall. The views of the Site will change from filtered views of an arable field to filtered views of residential built form set beyond the existing hedgerow boundary and proposed Green Infrastructure corridor to the east of the Site. Although the setting back of development from the GI corridor will allow for the retention of a degree of openness and limit overlooking, there will be an inevitable visual change in such close proximity. However, the development will not be intrusive or visually uncharacteristic in this location.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 4.20. For the users PRoW (footpath LA12/28/30), located to the north-west of the Site, the magnitude of change will be low, as completed development will be partially visible beyond intervening vegetation and whilst it would be permanent it would be seen in the context of the existing settlement edge to the west of Long Ashton. The glimpsed views of the proposed development would also represent a very small and visually characteristic component of a much wider panorama, resulting in minor adverse effects.
- 4.21. It is a similar judgement for the users of a short section of PRoW (footpath LA12/29/10), located to the north of the Site, as the completed development would result in minor loss to existing elements of the landscape and glimpsed view experience. The introduction of residential dwellings to the west of the existing settlement edge of Long Ashton will not be uncharacteristic and due the retained vegetation to the east of the Site, would cause limited visual intrusion along the majority of the footpath route.
- 4.22. In terms of the users of a short section of PRoW (footpath LA12/28/10), located to the north-east of the Site, the predicted change would be negligible and the effects neutral, as the Appeal Site is screened by the intervening topography and the Kings Croft residential estate.
- 4.23. For the more distant views from the users of approximately 290m of Monarch's Way PRoW (footpath LA12/7/30), located to the south-east of the Site, the elevated section of the footpath enables views towards some of the Appeal Site. Based on the submitted parameters, a small proportion of built development would be visible, but softened with the



associated GI and with allotments occupying the upper slope. The proposed development will sit within the confines of the existing settlement envelope, resulting in a low magnitude of change. Again, the Site and the proposed development represents a discrete and characteristic component of a much wider panorama and the overall effects predicted are considered negligible.

- 4.24. A similar judgement can be made for the users of the other distant PRow to the south of the Appeal Site (footpath LA3/27/10, LA3/2/20 and LA3/6/20), as as the development would cause limited (if any) change to the views, given the intervening landform and associated vegetation. The development would create neither adverse or beneficial change to these visual receptors due to the distance from the Site, and the proposal being viewed as a very small component part of the existing settlement edge to the west of Long Ashton. It is likely that during summer months the Site would not be visible at all.

Transport Infrastructure / Local Highways

- 4.25. For the users of Weston Road, over a distance of approximately 480m, the proposed development edge will be visible on approach to Long Ashton from the west. The magnitude of change is judged to be moderate-minor, as the arrival into the settlement presents filtered views of properties, softened by the proposed network of GI. The existing settlement features, such as the District Guide Headquarters and the red brick former University of Bristol Research Centre, will still occupy the forward-visibility (see **TG Insert 5** – extracted from page 32 of the DAS). As such, the minor adverse effects arising are highly localised. The residential nature of the proposal is not visually uncharacteristic and would cause limited visual intrusion. Furthermore, this judgement needs to be balanced against the creation of a much softer settlement edge, which helps to safeguard separation as required by the objectives of the Council’s LCA.

TG Insert 5



Agricultural Land

- 4.26. The predicted magnitude of change upon the Workers associated with the land at Gatcombe Farm and Ashton Watering is considered to be low. Obviously, workers immediately adjacent to the Appeal Site will notice a change, but overall the development reflects the visual character of the existing settlement edge. It would not be seen as an incongruent or uncharacteristic feature and, with the establishment of the landscape mitigation over time, the resultant effects are judged as being minor adverse-negligible.
- 4.27. Overall, with the exception of receptors that immediately adjoin the Appeal Site, the majority of the visual effects predicted range from minor adverse to negligible. This helps to highlight the limited and localised nature of the effects, which is an important consideration when determining the suitability and overall harm that will arise as a result of the proposed development in this location.



Section 5: Green Belt & Visual Openness

Green Belt Context

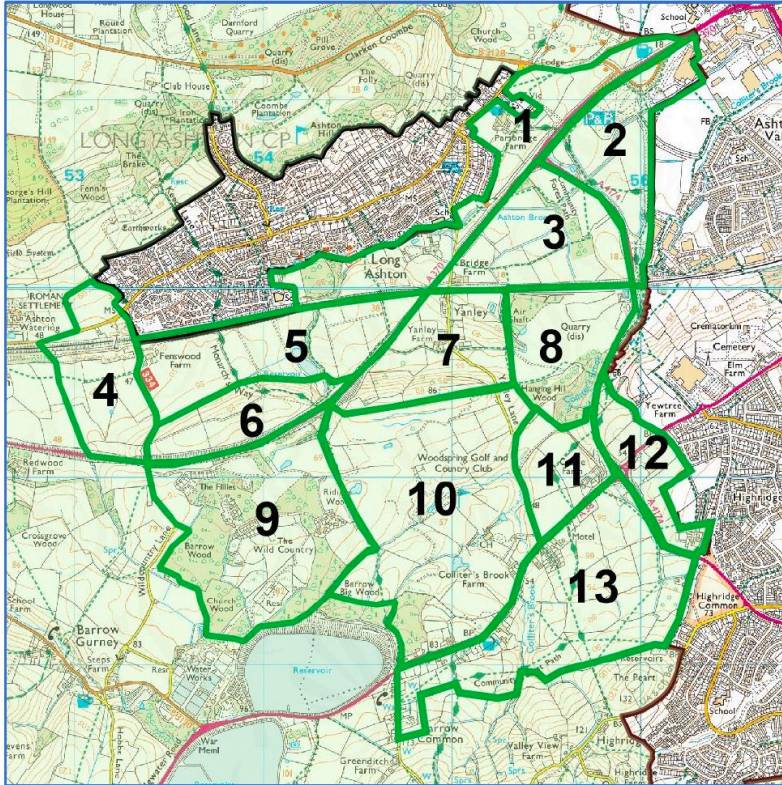
- 5.1. Long Ashton is surrounded by the Bristol and Bath Green Belt, which was broadly established in the mid-1950s through the Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire County Development Plans. The majority of the Bristol and Bath Green Belt fell within the Somerset authority area and the Green Belt designation was locally adopted in 1957 and then given Ministerial approval in 1966.
- 5.2. The Avon County Structure Plan of 1985 further defined the general extent of the Green Belt at that time with the detailed boundaries defined in Local Plans. These included the South West Avon Green Belt Local Plan, adopted in 1988, which set out the justification for the boundaries at that time. The most recent strategic plan to cover the entire plan area was the Joint Structure Plan 2002 which has now been superseded. The Joint Structure Plan defined the continued general extent of the Green Belt and showed it on a key diagram Policy 16.
- 5.3. Overall, the aim of the Green Belt in the West of England has been, in the main, to prevent the urban sprawl and merger of Bristol and Bath. It is apparent, however, from the 2002 Joint Structure Plan that emphasis was placed on preserving the setting and special character of the villages and towns within the Green Belt, as well as the overall aim of checking the growth of Bristol and Bath and preventing the merger of the two cities.
- 5.4. It covers 40% of the District's land area and for Long Ashton, which is one of the larger villages, the close proximity to Bristol with a narrow wedge of land separating it from the city to the east, the importance of maintaining its separate identity was recognised in the original boundary justification set out in the South West Avon Green Belt Local Plan and has most recently been re-emphasised in the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Plan (see **CD 4.3**) with the introduction of a policy protecting an area of separation (see **Volume 2, Plan 1: Landscape Planning Context**).
- 5.5. Importantly, Green Belt is not designated because of any inherent landscape attributes.
- 5.6. Within the most recent studies, including the Green Belt Review – Part 1 (see **CD 16.23**), the Appeal Site is located within the 'Edge of Bristol Broad Location'. That is further subdivided, with the Site occupying the very northern portion of 'Parcel 4 – Land West of Long Ashton'. (see **TG Insert 6**).
- 5.7. The overall assessment contribution to the Green Belt purposes (in terms of the harm to arise through development) for the wider Parcel 4 area is 'Moderate', based on the following judgements:

- Purpose 1 Sprawl – Moderate/Low



- Purpose 2 Merging – Moderate/High
- Purpose 3 Encroachment – High
- Purpose 4 Setting of Historic Towns –Low
- Purpose 5 Regeneration – Neutral

TG Insert 6



5.8. Taking purpose each in turn below, I analyse the findings of the Green Belt Review and establish my own judgements.

Purpose 1 – To Check Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-Up Areas of Bristol

5.9. The accompanying assessment on page 34 of the document confirms that this parcel is “sufficiently distant from the urban edge of Bristol to not constitute significant harm in terms of the sprawl of Bristol”. In my opinion, the parcel and Site more specifically represent very low harm given it’s geographical location and distance from Bristol. This is much more applicable to the Green Belt parcels on the eastern side of Long Ashton.

Purpose 2 – Prevent Neighbouring Towns from Merging

5.10. The justification for “moderate/High” harm is that “development would contribute to reducing the physical gap between the Nailsea/ Backwell area and Bristol in this transport corridor. Whilst the development of single small sites may have moderate harm the erosion of the



gaps along the transport corridor collectively it results in the merger of the towns and result in significant harm”.

- 5.11. I do not consider it necessary to assume collective and cumulative harm when considering Parcel 4 and the Appeal Site in isolation and for the purpose of determining this appeal. The physical gap between the current settlement boundary of Long Ashton and Nailsea (based on a straightline distance between two closest points) is approximately 4.40km with no appreciable inter-visibility. The development of the Site based on the submitted parameters (assuming the maximum depth of the proposed development) would reduce that distance by approximately 80m (1.82%).
- 5.12. This represents an extremely small degree of merging that would not be perceptible in the relation to the scale of the existing gap, nor those travelling through it as a transport corridor. The Green Belt Review has over-stated the degree of harm, which in my opinion would be low.

Purpose 3 – Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment

- 5.13. The Green Belt Review on page 35 states that *“The land forms part of the open rural countryside with few urbanising features. Pressure to develop continues evidenced by the call for sites submissions on parts of the parcel”*. The extent to which the parcel and the Appeal Site represents rural countryside with a lack of urbanising features has been misrepresented in my opinion. The description provides no consideration at all about the immediately adjoining residential development associated with Warren Lane, that wraps around a portion of the Appeal Site.
- 5.14. Approximately half the depth of the proposed development parameters (40m) already sit within the lateral and westward limits of the existing properties associated with Warren Lane. The proposed scheme represents a very small incursion and the pressure for development via the Plan process should not be used to influence or justify assigning a higher degree of harm. In my opinion, the harm would be no greater than medium/low.

Purpose 4 – Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns

- 5.15. I agree with the judgement established within the Green Belt Review, as the parcel and Appeal Site play no role in preserving the setting and special characteristics of a historic town.
- 5.16. To summarise, my judgements are:
- Purpose 1 Sprawl – Low
 - Purpose 2 Merging – Low
 - Purpose 3 Encroachment – Medium/Low
 - Purpose 4 Setting of Historic Towns – Low
 - Purpose 5 Regeneration – Neutral



5.17. Even if one was to endorse the findings of the Green Belt Review, it is still apparent that Parcel 4 and the Appeal Site perform better and result in less harm, with only 1 other parcel performing better (see **TG Insert 7**). I will consider the alternative sites in more detail later within my evidence. Some of those parcels are of a significant scale, have a high degree of inter-visibility and have no relationship with the established settlement edge, yet they have also been considered to represent moderate harm.

TG insert 7

No.	Parcel Name	Purpose 1 Sprawl	Purpose 2 Merger	Purpose 3 Encroachment	Purpose 4 Setting Historic towns	Purpose 5 Regeneration	Overall Assessment
1	SE Long Ashton	Mod	High	High	Mod	Neutral	High
2	Land adjacent to Bristol including the Park and Ride	High	High	Mod	Mod/Low	Neutral	High
3	Land east of A370, north of railway, SW of A4174	High	High	High	Mod/Low	Neutral	High
4	Land west of Long Ashton	Mod/Low	Mod/High	High	Low	Neutral	Mod
5	South of Long Ashton-Fenswood Farm	Mod/Low	Mod/High	High	Low	Neutral	Mod
6	Yanley Ridge north of A370	Mod/Low	Mod/High	High	Low	Neutral	Mod
7	Yanley	Mod	Mod/High	High	Low	Neutral	Mod/High
8	Yanley Landfill/Hanging Hill Wood	Mod/High	High	Mod	Low	Neutral	Mod/High
9	Barrow Hospital	Mod/Low	Low	High	Mod	Neutral	Mod
10	Woodspring Golf Club	Mod/High	Low	Mod/High	Low	Neutral	Mod
11	Castle Farm area	High	Low	High	Low	Neutral	Mod/High
12	Inside the SBL south	Mod	Low	Mod	Low	Neutral	Mod/Low
13	Land South of A38	High	Low	High	Mod	Neutral	High

5.18. In terms of potential mitigation measures, page 17, para. 52 of the Green Belt Review also indicates that if Green Belt land were to be released, that proposed Green Infrastructure and open space as part of any development might still remain in the Green Belt. Furthermore, that additional measures could be considered to mitigate and compensate, such as *“landscape improvements to secure the separation and separate identity of Long Ashton”*.

5.19. As already established, the proposed GI Parameters (see **CD 1.29**) and a considerable buffer along the western boundary of the Appeal Site (approximately 25m to 40m in width) demonstrates the ability to provide a better degree of enclosure and a more robust Green Belt boundary, that could secure the long-term separation and identity of the settlement on it’s western edge.



Visual Openness

- 5.20. Rather than treating any change as having a greater impact on the visual openness of the Green Belt, the correct approach is to consider the impact or harm, if any, caused by that change. The LVIA submitted as part of the planning application and my professional judgements provide that consideration.
- 5.21. In this case, the Appeal Site comprises a small scale portion of arable land at the immediate settlement edge. It has few notable features, other than typical or degraded boundary features that can be largely retained and enhanced. Furthermore, approximately 40% of the Site has been offered as Green Infrastructure, for which a GI Parameters Plan (see **CD 1.29**), can be subject to a Condition, should this appeal be allowed.
- 5.22. To make a professional judgement on the harm arising from the development proposals, it is important to consider the existing context as described above and establish whether the changes arising would materially detract the visual openness of the Green Belt. As set out in Section 4 of my evidence, whilst the Appeal Site and wider agricultural land does have some inherent scenic quality, it is not a remote and undeveloped rural landscape and, it does not form part of a high quality, distinctive or protected mosaic of landscape features. Indeed, even the Council's own LCA considers the landscape to be of medium sensitivity and the specific reference to *"good condition"* relates to *"large areas of intact pasture with thick hedgerows and hedgerow trees and small winding rural roads"*. This does not describe the Appeal Site.
- 5.23. The development will not introduce elements that are unduly prominent nor uncharacteristic at the settlement edge, thus resulting in a minor adverse importance of effect on the LCA.
- 5.24. I do acknowledge that whilst there will be an evident change to the Site itself, as an area of greenfield arable land, with some short sections of wall at the settlement fringe lost to residential built development; but that sort of change is inevitable for the development in settlement fringe locations. The recognised assessment approach for landscape professionals relates to consideration of change against the relevant character area attributes and the ability to mitigate and, is not limited only to the Site-specific loss of a greenfield area and associated individual features. The latter approach would always over-inflate the predicted effects arising. The importance of effect on the Site specific character during occupation will be moderate adverse, with the loss of typical features at the immediate settlement fringe, and the ability to incorporate further enhancements and reinstate native hedgerows, resulting in notable BNG gain.
- 5.25. Visually, the greatest magnitude of change is highly localised and associated with residential, recreational and highway receptors that adjoin the Appeal Site itself (see **Volume 2, Photoviewpoints 2, 3 and 6**). As such, the perceptual loss of visual openness and views across the Site are also highly localised. Worst case, the full depth of view lost when looking north from Weston Road is approximately 170m. However, that change would only be experienced along a short (122m) stretch of the highway, beyond which the full expanse of the adjoining fields would once again be visible. Through the established design parameters and mitigation, the development would not appear visually prominent, incongruous or uncharacteristic.



- 5.26. When considering the change in visual openness at a wider scale and in relation to the surrounding views across and into the valley, it is evident from Section 4 of my evidence and the submitted LVIA, that the Appeal Site and the proposed development would be barely perceptible, resulting in minor adverse or negligible effects (see **Volume 2, Photoviewpoints 1, 7, 9, 10 and 11**). With the proposed development forming such a small component part of much wider panoramas, and scenes that contain layers of wooded landform, rising hills and settled backdrops, any reduction in visual openness would be imperceptible.
- 5.27. Overall, it is my judgement that the development parameters proposed for the Appeal Site would maintain both the integrity of the surrounding landscape character and the visual openness of the wider Green Belt, albeit I accept that the contribution the Appeal Site itself makes to openness would be reduced by the introduction of built development on the area that is to be developed.



Section 6: Policy Compliance

- 6.1. This section of my evidence deals with the landscape policy context, specifically those policies included within the reason for refusal. In respect of the wider policy context and overall planning balance, I defer to the evidence and expertise of Mr. Mel Clinton.
- 6.2. Firstly, I deal with Policy CS5 (Landscape and the Historic Environment) of the North Somerset Core Strategy (see **CD 4.1**), then secondly, I address the relevant aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). As already noted, the RfR did not make specific reference to landscape considerations as being a determinative issue and the refusal does not cite Policy DM10 – Landscape (of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 – Development Management Policies) nor Policy ENV5 – Conserving and enhancing wildlife, biodiversity and historic assets, including designated areas of local ecological and landscape value (of the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan).

Policy CS5 – Landscape and the Historic Environment

- 6.3. This is a 2-part policy covering both landscape and the historic environment. It does not establish clear criteria against which to judge compliance, but presents broad statements of intent, recognising at para. 3.88 that much will depend on the establishment of detailed development management policies.
- 6.4. From a landscape perspective, it is clear that the policy does not preclude greenfield development (which would also be inconsistent with the Framework) but seeks to ensure that the landscape and townscape is protected and enhanced by the careful, sensitive management and design of development. It then confirms that “*close regard*” should be given to National Character Areas, the 11 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and the 31 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).
- 6.5. The policy also introduces hierarchy in protection and sensitivity, noting that the significance of the landscape of the Mendip Hills is acknowledged by their designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 6.6. As an ordinary landscape, the Appeal Site sits towards the lower end of the sensitivity hierarchy, and the proposed development has had close regard to the Councils LCA, by creating scheme parameters that protect and enhance the few landscape features that contribute to its current character. Also, the review of the historic settlement regression identifies that this is the logical direction of growth; and, the scheme also delivers a number of positive attributes that satisfy the LCA objectives, such as the introduction of new hedgerows and tree planting, the provision of a new area of orchard planting and minimising urban encroachment through the appropriate design of the western boundary buffer.
- 6.7. In my opinion, the policy would be considered unduly restrictive and inconsistent with the NPPF if it were to seek to protect and enhance all of the landscape of North Somerset to safeguard its diversity, distinctiveness and quality. Clearly, the policy allows for a judgement to be made with respect to landscape matters and the historic environment.



- 6.8. My judgement is that the policy wording does not set out a specific requirement for the safeguarding of an individual Site, just because it is currently free from development; and the ability to enhance through development is also a component part of the policy wording. In this case, the landscape-led approach has been sympathetic to the landscape context in order to produce a scheme that both protects and enhances the landscape, and thus complies with the policy.

National Planning Policy

- 6.9. The Reason for Refusal makes reference to the Framework, with specific reference to paras. 147-149. For thoroughness, I deal with the other relevant landscape components of the Framework below.

Achieving Well-Designed Places (Para. 130 and 131)

- 6.10. I acknowledge that para. 130, criterion 'b' requires developments be "*visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*". The proposed development offers opportunities to deliver improvements associated with an increase in multi-functional and accessible green space and the provision of substantial landscaping, both appropriate and effective in my opinion when judged against the Council's own studies. Overall, approximately 40% of the Appeal Site represents proposed open space and Green Infrastructure.
- 6.11. Criterion 'c' also sets out to ensure that developments "*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)*".
- 6.12. As set out in my evidence and the submitted DAS, the development layout responds to the typical characteristics of the area, providing dwellings and gardens that complement the appearance, density and scale of the expanding settlement edge character.
- 6.13. Also, in accordance with criterion 'e', the proposed development parameters offer the potential to create publicly accessible open space.
- 6.14. These are not points disputed by the Council.
- 6.15. Within the revised Framework, para. 131 requires that:

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible."

- 6.16. The submitted DAS information and the Landscape Strategy Plan (see **Volume 2, Plan 10: Landscape Strategy**) illustrates the potential for the inclusion of tree-lined streets and larger native trees within the proposed areas of public open space, as well as the provision of an orchard. When determining the scope of work for the landscape material to accompany a planning application, the type of application usually steers the level of detail available. This in turn determines the type of information in respect of 'landscaping' to be



submitted. In this case, broad principles have been established to accompany the outline planning application, but further information regarding the specification, size, distribution and design of street tree planting will be secured via an appropriately worded Condition.

- 6.17. Furthermore, and in accordance with the policy objectives, existing trees are retained across the Site wherever possible.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment (Para. 174-176)

- 6.18. Section 15 of the Framework sets out policies relating to the natural environment. They deal with issues such as landscape, biodiversity, air quality, noise pollution and land instability amongst other matters. The policies seek to protect and enhance valued landscapes and to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.
- 6.19. As agreed at para. 2.1(xii) of the Landscape SoCG, the Appeal Site is not a 'valued landscape' under para. 174(a) of the Framework. The Appeal Site is not covered by or adjacent to any national or local landscape designations. Indeed, the baseline information available and the TG Table 1 consideration undertaken in the LVIA (the GLVIA Box 5.1 appraisal), assists in establishing that the surrounding landscape is ordinary and of localised 'medium' sensitivity.
- 6.20. Furthermore, in terms of the recognised hierarchy of international to locally designated sites (para. 175) and the greater weight to be applied to conserving and enhancing the top tier of protected landscapes (para. 176), the Appeal Site falls outside of such classifications. It sits towards the lower end of any hierarchy and represents ordinary landscape at an immediate settlement fringe location. Indeed, given the recent direction of growth in Long Ashton, it represents a logical housing site in landscape and visual terms.
- 6.21. The local landscape may have a pleasant character, but it exhibits relatively ordinary characteristics and does not possess any qualities or attributes which would require safeguarding in perpetuity to maintain the understanding of either the surrounding LCA J5: Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland.
- 6.22. With reference to para. 174(b), the Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. It is important to note that 'recognition' does not mean the protection of all countryside from development.
- 6.23. Para. 036 of the Planning Practice Guidance provides further clarity, noting that:

"Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary."



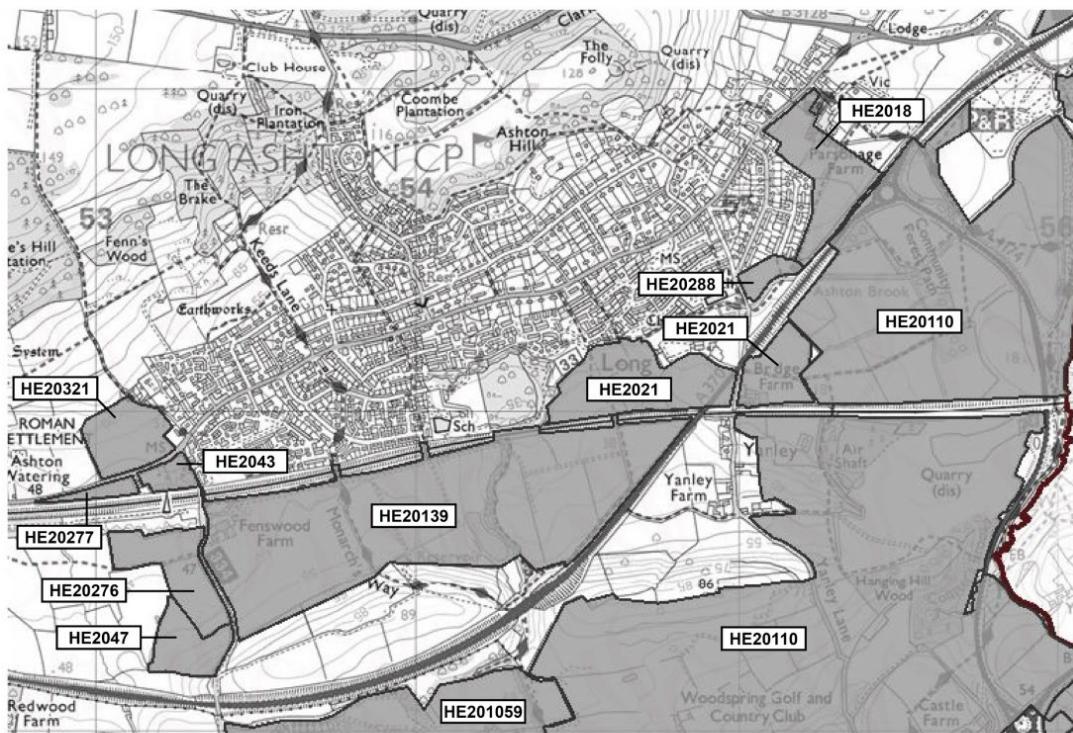
6.24. The Council has highlighted more sensitive landscapes across the wider District and also locally sensitive LCA characteristics that represent particular local landscape value and need safeguarding; however, a number are not of direct relevance to the Appeal Site itself, or can be addressed as the proposed mitigation measures respond to the existing landscape framework and offer appropriate enhancement of features that have become lost or eroded. In my opinion, the approach taken conserves and enhances the natural environment, in accordance with the objectives of the Framework.



Section 7: Consideration of Alternative Sites

- 7.1. This section undertakes a high-level landscape and visual critique of the Alternative Sites, as contained within the Council's Call for Sites information to inform the emerging Local Plan 2038. It assists in summarising the constraints that are applicable to Long Ashton and helps to calibrate the judgements made with regards to the suitability of the Appeal Site for development.
- 7.2. For each Alternative Site, I have used the Council's latest studies to identify the relevant Landscape Character Area (LCA), the assigned Landscape Sensitivity, the Green Belt Parcel number and associated Green Belt Purpose contribution. The critique should be read alongside **Volume 2, Plan 1: Landscape Planning Context, Plan 8: Alternative Sites Photoviewpoint Locations** and **Plan 9: Alternative Sites Photosheets**. Also, **TG Insert 8** illustrates the location of the Alternative Sites.

TG Insert 8



2020 Call For Sites Land Parcels

HE20277 & HE2043

- 7.3. HE20277 is a triangular parcel of pasture on the approach to Long Ashton, directly adjacent to the railway line, with open boundaries allowing for visibility towards the District Guide Headquarters. Development in this location could be intrusive and would extend



development much further west towards Ashton Watering and alter the context of the current approach. HE2043 is a well-contained parcel of land (known as Builder's Yard) that has already had approval at appeal for 2-5 new homes. It shares a logical boundary with the Appeal Site and would not be seen as visual encroachment (see **Alternative Sites Photoviewpoints 11 and 12**).

- LCA – Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland.
- LCA Sensitivity – High.
- Green Belt Parcel – 4.
- Green Belt Purpose Contribution – Moderate.

HE2021

7.4. This parcel of land has limited accessibility off Yanley Lane and the surrounding dense vegetation reduces its visual connection to the adjoining settlement edge to the north associated with Theynes Croft. The land also has notable domed topography and a strong internal hedgerow. It is also in close proximity to Ashton Brook, the A370 and the railway line, all of which would act as constraints to development (see **Alternative Sites Photoviewpoint 4**).

7.5. Other constraints include the proximity to the Long Ashton Westleaze & Wyke and Yanley Conservation Area.

- LCA – Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland.
- LCA Sensitivity – High.
- Green Belt Parcel – 1.
- Green Belt Purpose Contribution – High.

HE20288

7.6. The land currently appears to be used as an informal area of open space, accessed via the Festival Way surfaced footpath and cycleway. It also adjoins the Ashton Brook and the existing houses on Glebe Road and Parsonage Road overlook the greenspace. It is also traversed by overhead power lines (see **Alternative Sites Photoviewpoint 13**).

7.7. Other constraints include the proximity to the Long Ashton Westleaze & Wyke and Yanley Conservation Area. Neighbourhood Plan Area of Separation (Policy ENV1).

- LCA – Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland.
- LCA Sensitivity – Low.
- Green Belt Parcel – 1.



- Green Belt Purpose Contribution – High.

HE2018

- 7.8. This sloping area of pasture land has both inter-visibility with the edge of Bristol, contains an active farmstead and has a direct relationship with the low density cluster of historic buildings associated with the Grade II* All Saints Church and the Long Ashton Conservation Area. It coincides with a narrowing of the Green Belt, hence the Neighbourhood Plan desire to maintain the physical connection with Bristol (see **Alternative Sites Photoviewpoints 1 and 2**).
- 7.9. Other constraints include Long Ashton Conservation Area and Grade II Listed Buildings. Neighbourhood Plan Area of Separation (Policy ENV1).
- LCA – Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland.
 - LCA Sensitivity – Low, Medium and High.
 - Green Belt Parcel – 1.
 - Green Belt Purpose Contribution – High.

HE20110

- 7.10. This is a large and complex area of landscape with many constraints and opportunities. Clearly it represents a strategic site and is located to the south of the railway and the A370 bypass. It is remote from the settlement influence of Long Ashton and development options would be significantly constrained by topography, historic landscape features, sensitive ecological features and an intact mosaic of enclosed pasture (see **Alternative Sites Photoviewpoints 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10**).
- 7.11. Other constraints include South Bank Meadow, Yanley – Site of Nature Conservation Interest and Hanging Hill Wood – Ancient Woodland. Proximity to Long Ashton Westleaze & Wyke and Yanley Conservation Area. Neighbourhood Plan Site of Open Space Value (Policy LC4) and Area of Separation (Policy ENV1). The northern portion of the land parcel is also within Flood Zone 2.
- LCA – Land Yeo, Kenn River and River Avon Flood Plain & Colliters Brook Rolling Valley Farmland.
 - LCA Sensitivity – Not Assessed.
 - Green Belt Parcels – 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13.
 - Green Belt Purpose Contribution – High, High, Moderate-High, Moderate-High, Moderate, Moderate-High, Moderate-Low and High.



HE201059

- 7.12. Again, this is another large strategic site located to the south of the railway line and the A370. It is particularly remote from the existing settlement. With a complex distribution of woodland and tree cover, development options appear limited to the former hospital, where Bovis Homes are already constructing dwellings.
- 7.13. Other constraints include Barrow Tanks – Site of Nature Conservation Interest and Barrow hospital Tree Preservation Orders.
- LCA – Colliters Brook Rolling Valley Farmland.
 - LCA Sensitivity – Not Assessed (Some Allocations).
 - Green Belt Parcel – 9.
 - Green Belt Purpose Contribution – Moderate.

HE20139

- 7.14. This is a series of large arable fields, that also comprises wooded slopes, a pond associated with the Ashton Brook and an extensive network of PRow. A large portion of the land is also fenced off and managed as a species rich meadow. It feels somewhat segregated from Long Ashton itself, but located within the valley it does benefit from some visual containment (see **Alternative Sites Photoviewpoints 11 and 14**).
- 7.15. Other constraints include Ashton Brook – Site of Nature Conservation Interest and the creation of Lark Meadow (species rich grassland creation – co-operative project between the Lance Trust and Fenswood Farm).
- LCA – Land Yeo, Kenn River and River Avon Flood Plain and Colliters Brook Rolling Valley Farmland.
 - LCA Sensitivity – High.
 - Green Belt Parcel – 5.
 - Green Belt Purpose Contribution – Moderate.

HE20276 & HE2047

- 7.16. These parcels are surrounded by an intact framework of hedgerows and the rural pasture feels remote from the existing settlement (see **Alternative Sites Photoviewpoint 15**).
- 7.17. Other constraints
- LCA – – Land Yeo, Kenn River and River Avon Flood Plain and Colliters Brook Rolling Valley Farmland.



- LCA Sensitivity – Not Assessed.
- Green Belt Parcel – 4.
- Green Belt Purpose Contribution – Moderate.

7.18. Overall, it is clear that the rising topography to the north and south of Long Ashton and, the proximity to Bristol to the east, creates a notable constraint to the outward expansion of the settlement. The larger parcels to the south of the railway line and the A370 are perceived as being remote of urban influence, alongside which they comprise a complex mosaic of landscape and ecological features, including intact pasture and ancient woodland.



Section 8: Conclusion

- 8.1. It is important to note that the Reason for Refusal (RfR) does not make specific reference to landscape considerations as being a determinative issue. Consistent with that, the refusal does not cite Policy DM10 – Landscape (of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 – Development Management Policies) nor Policy ENV5 – Conserving and enhancing wildlife, biodiversity and historic assets, including designated areas of local ecological and landscape value (of the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan).
- 8.2. My evidence has demonstrated the following:
- i. That the Appeal Site is not internationally, nationally or locally designated for its landscape quality;
 - ii. That the Appeal Site is ordinary and does not form part of a valued landscape with identified qualities, in the context of para. 174(a) of the Framework;
 - iii. That the scheme offers substantial new landscaping and Green Infrastructure (GI), which represents 40% of the total Site area; and measurable enhancements that result in over a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. The quantum of GI as shown on the GI Parameters Plan can be secured through an appropriately worded Condition;
 - iv. That the up to date LCA classifies J5 (Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland) and the Site as being moderate and that a number of the specific landscape attributes that it seeks to conserve do not relate to the Appeal Site itself; however, clear opportunities have been taken to enhance the landscape in accordance with the LCA objectives;
 - v. That the sensitivity of other sites to the north of Long Ashton have been downgraded to medium given the visual inter-visibility with the settlement edge and despite the rising topography and proximity to the SAM. The same approach should be applied to the Appeal Site;
 - vi. That predicted landscape effects are typical of a settlement fringe greenfield site and highly localised. The proposed development does not alter the context and understanding of the local character areas; and that change to the Site itself from arable to residential development is not a suitable test for determining impact and harm, but full consideration is needed in relation to the value of the features to be both lost and gained;
 - vii. That the predicted visual effects are also localised, thus any associated impact and harm is also tightly drawn to the Site itself and immediate surroundings. In close proximity, it is inevitable that change will be visible; however, that visual change is characteristic, softened by landscaping and there is nothing objectionable or unusual about inter-visibility between housing in a settlement fringe location;



- viii. That the Council's Green Belt Review overstated the contribution made by Parcel 4, but even if those findings were endorsed, Parcel 4 and the Appeal Site within it, still perform better than many of the other Sites. The development parameters proposed for the Appeal Site would maintain both the integrity of the surrounding landscape character and the visual openness of the wider Green Belt; and
- ix. That the majority of the Alternative Sites being considered (as identified in the Council's Call for Sites information to inform the emerging Local Plan 2038), are significantly constrained and have much less capacity to absorb development without harm to both the landscape and Green Belt context.

8.3. For the reasons set out in my evidence, I respectfully submit that there are no grounds for refusing this Appeal on the basis of landscape and visual effects. The Site is well-suited for residential development (in landscape and visual terms) and will deliver high quality sustainable development, consistent with local and national policy.

