

Land off School Lane, Little Melton, Norfolk

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

July 2021



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1. Introduction

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal has been prepared on behalf of Gable Developments to determine the potential impact of new residential development on land off School Lane, Little Melton.

Purposes of the Document

- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to assess the landscape, visual and cultural impacts of the potential development on the site.
- 1.3 The document evaluates the contribution of the site to the landscape character, visual amenity and cultural and heritage features of the local area before assessing the potential impacts of the development on that character and amenity.

Structure of the Document

Landscape Baseline

BROOM

- 1.4 This section assesses the character and quality of the local landscape before identifying the extent to which the proposal site contributes to or detracts from that character and therefore its sensitivity to change.
- 1.5 The assessment of the character and of the proposal site identifies the wider landscape receptors that may be affected by the proposals, as well as their sensitivity to change. These receptors may be features or elements of character that need to be preserved, restored or enhanced.

Development Proposals and Site description

1.6 This section reviews the historic development of the site and its landscape setting, and describes the development proposals.

Landscape and Visual Assessment

 This section assesses the potential landscape and visual impacts of development on the site, based on a thorough field survey and panoramic site photographs. The precise locations of the photographs were plotted using GPS.



Site Location

2. Personal Statement

- 2.1 This report has been prepared by Luke Broom-Lynne CMLI MRTPI.
- 2.2 I am an independent Chartered Landscape Architect and Chartered Town Planner with over 30 years in professional practice. I was awarded a BA Degree in Landscape Architecture from Leeds Metropolitan University in 1983, followed by a Post-graduate Diploma (with commendation) in 1985. I have been a Chartered member of the Landscape Institute since 1989 and of the Royal Town Planning Institute since 2004.
- 2.3 I worked in initially in the public sector, including senior posts in the planning teams of the Broads Authority and Norwich City Council. I have worked in the private sector for the past 18 years, including a period as Partner in a major regional planning and property consultancy. I now work as an independent landscape planning consultant, involved in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Urban Design and Masterplanning for a wide range of commercial and residential projects throughout the UK.
- 2.4 Major recent projects have included
 - University of East Anglia Landscape Strategy
 - Bewilderwood, Tatton Park and Hoveton LVIAs and Landscape Strategy
 - North Weald AONB, Essex Coast and Pembrokeshire



- LVIAs for new solar farms

- Future Biogas LVIAs and landscape strategy for various power plants in Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.
- Coltishall airfield Solar Park LVIA and landscape strategy.
- Grays, Essex Masterplanning and urban design for new residential development
- Bridlington, Yorkshire New holiday development
- Edinburgh LVIA for new Park and Ride scheme
- Pembroke, S. Wales LVIA for new solar farm
- 2.5 I believe that my submission complies with the requirements of the Codes of Professional Conduct of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Landscape Institute.

3. **Planning Context**

National Planning Policy

- 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework requires that the policies in a Local Plan follow the approach of "a presumption in favour of sustainable development", with clear local policies that will guide how the presumption will be applied locally. The UK government defines sustainable development as that which leads to improvement in terms of the economic, social and environmental dimension
- 3.2 To ensure that each dimension of sustainable development is properly assessed in decision-making, the Development Management Policies have been arranged around the three dimensions of sustainable development.
- 3.3 The implications on all three dimensions must be considered in every decision – applying relevant policies other relevant material considerations. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework the decision makers must make development management decisions to achieve sustainable development by seeking economic, social and environmental gains from all development, "jointly and simultaneously".
- The impacts will range from Positive, through degrees 3.4 of adverse impact which could be mitigated, to unacceptable adverse impact.

- 3.5 If a development proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact in any one dimension, then the proposal should be refused.
- Crucially, the benefits and adverse impacts will be 3.10 Key relevant policies include: 3.6 weighed and no one dimension will routinely have precedence over the others.

South Norfolk Local Plan **Development Management Policies Document** (DMPD)

- 3.7 The DMPD was adopted in October 2015. It sets out 3.13 the Development Management policies and local 3.14 ground rules that the Council use to judge whether development proposals are acceptable over the next 15 years or so; they are intended to be used by the Council to promote sustainable development and to make decisions on all planning applications in the district.
- Notwithstanding the need to consider the economic 3.8 and social dimensions of all decisions (Policy DM 1.1). the DMPD states that the Council is committed to ensuring that development proposals do not cause significant harm to irreplaceable environmental assets, and do make positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment and people's guality of life. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3.9 The DMPD emphasises that all development proposals

should demonstrate that full regard has been given to local circumstances and the distinctive local characters and qualities of the places found in South Norfolk.

- 3.11 Policy DM 3.8
- 3.12 Major development should be masterplanned using an inclusive recognised process demonstrating how the whole scheme will be delivered and related to adjacent areas.
- Policy DM 3.13
- Planning permission will be refused where proposed development would lead to an excessive or unreasonable impact on existing neighbouring occupants and the amenity of the area or a poor level of amenity for new occupiers.
- 3.15 The National Planning Policy Framework and Joint Core Strategy emphasise the importance of identifying and responding to landscape character and distinctiveness through good design. Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have taken into account the key findings from the 2001 South Norfolk Landscape Assessment as updated by the 2012 review. This will be particularly relevant when the development sits in a location with distinctive and sensitive landscape characteristics.

Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ)



- 3.16 The NSBLPZ has been identified where there are high 3.22 levels of visual accessibility to and from the road to a 3.23 predominantly open rural area that plays an important part in making the landscape setting of Norwich. This Zone does not have a distinct or special landscape character in its own right.
- 3.17 Any development to be permitted within the Landscape Zone (including that within the highway and other transport corridors) should have regard to 3.24 protecting the openness of the Landscape Zone and, 3.25 where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the Southern Bypass, including the practice of wild flower planting and management regimes.
- 3.18 The opportunities for long distance views into the city 3.26 of Norwich from the south of the city are limited by the topography and screening effect of vegetation. However, fieldwork has identified important 3.27 opportunities to view the city from the northern edge of the plateau to the south west and south east of the city. In these areas, broad Key Views 'cones' have been identified.
- 3.19 Within these 'cones' all development proposals should ensure they do not obstruct the long views to and from 3.29 the city.
 3.30
- 3.20 Policy DM 4.6 Landscape Setting of Norwich
- 3.21 All development proposals will not harm and where possible should enhance the landscape setting of Norwich with regard to the following considerations:

2 NSBLPZ

³ All development proposals within the Norwich 3.31 Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ), as shown on the Policies Map, should have regard to protecting the openness of the Zone and, where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the southern bypass, including the practice of wild flower planting and management regimes.

4 Key Views

- 8.25 All development proposals located within the Key Views 'cones' shown on the Policies Map should ensure they do not obstruct the long distance views to and from the City.
- 3.26 It is noted that the School Lane site is located within on of the designated 'View Cones'.

.27 Undeveloped Approaches

3.28 All development proposals within the visual zone of influence viewed from the identified Undeveloped Approaches to Norwich should reinforce and avoid undermining the rural character of the Undeveloped Approaches to Norwich.

9 Gateways

3.30 All development proposals on the approaches to defined Gateways (shown on the Proposal Map) shall reinforce and avoid undermining the significance of these Gateways as the visual points of the landscape and townscape change marking the 'arrival' at and 'departure' from the city of Norwich. 31 Development which would significantly harm the NSBLPZ or the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area will not be permitted.





Extract from Map 4.6, South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document showing the Norwich Southern Bypass Protection Zone

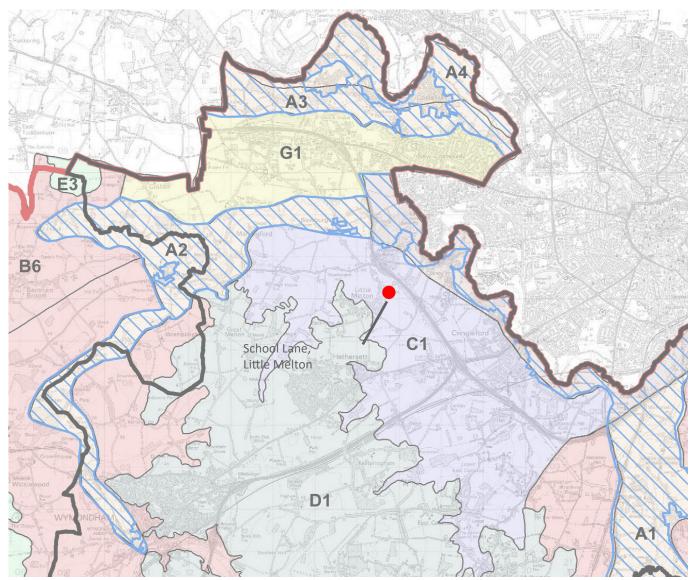


South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment

3.32 The South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment identifies the site as being within C1: Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland. This area occurs to the southwest of Norwich and is defined by the rural and urban reaches of the River Yare to the east and north, and by the settled plateau farmland around Hethersett and Wymondham (above the 40m contour) to the south. The character area is entirely within the Norwich Policy Area.

Key Characteristics

- Shelving landform with a gently undulating topography created by the presence of small tributary stream valleys cutting through the landscape providing a variety of open/more intimate landscape settings and long/framed views.
- Transitional landscape occupying the mid ground between the upland plateau of the Wymondham-Hethersett settled plateau farmland and the principal Yare Valley and forming part of the transition between the rural and urban landscape.
- Peaceful farmland with small farm woodlands and intermittently wooded tributary valleys creating a quiet rural atmosphere.
- Presence of large parkland estates, particularly associated directly with the tributary valleys. Estate railings. Boundary fences, tree-lined avenues and traditional wooded parkland contribute to



Extract from the South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment



landscape character.

- Sparsely settled landscape of small clusters of farmhouses, small villages and rural dwellings interspersed with large manorial buildings and halls.
- A sense of impenetrability and remoteness despite the presence of major transportation corridors. The Norwich Southern Bypass and A11 Wymondham Road trisect the landscape and the area is also traversed by the main Norwich-London railway line. These routes create corridors of movement and noise in this otherwise peaceful landscape. Elsewhere, there is an intricate network of narrow rural roads and lanes.
- Yare Minor Tributaries Streams elusive evident but usually hidden within the landscape by topography or trees noticeable only at fording points or at close-range.
- Arable and pastoral farmland of cereals and sugarbeet with more pastoral land uses within the immediate tributary valley corridor. Fields surrounded by sparse hedges and hedgerow trees, with occasional mature/veteran oaks forming a distinctive feature alongside the lanes.
- Vernacular architectural character, predominantly of rural buildings and estate dwellings. More modern dwellings are found in the larger villages.
- High number of large dwellings set in extensive grounds including characteristic large detached halls and manor houses, usually constructed of brick, of high architectural quality, associated

with the parkland estates of Keswick, Intwood, Thickthorn and Colney. These are frequently screened by woodland, and therefore visible only at close range.

- Intermittent long views towards the City of Norwich.
- Presence of large institutional buildings including new hospital and areas of the Research Park at Colney.

Sensitivities and Vulnerabilities

- 3.33 The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this landscape character have been identified. They include:
 - proximity to Norwich and loss of rural farmland character through expansion of the urban edge of the City beyond the Yare Valley or development associated with the Southern Bypass/A11
 - particular vulnerability to loss of clarity of the rural/urban divide created by the Yare Valley;
 - incremental change including upgrading of the rural lane network (e.g. kerbing and lighting) plus isolated developments (e.g. institutions) resulting in a more urban character:
 - a gently shelving topography from the plateau and long views making this area especially sensitive to the location of any new development/ infrastructure - and potential impact on views to the City;

- loss and degradation in the character of the historic parkland and designed landscapes, particularly with changing uses and demands;
- loss of mature tree boundaries (without replacement) resulting in further 'opening up' of views plus loss of woodland;
- suburbanisation of field and parkland boundaries.

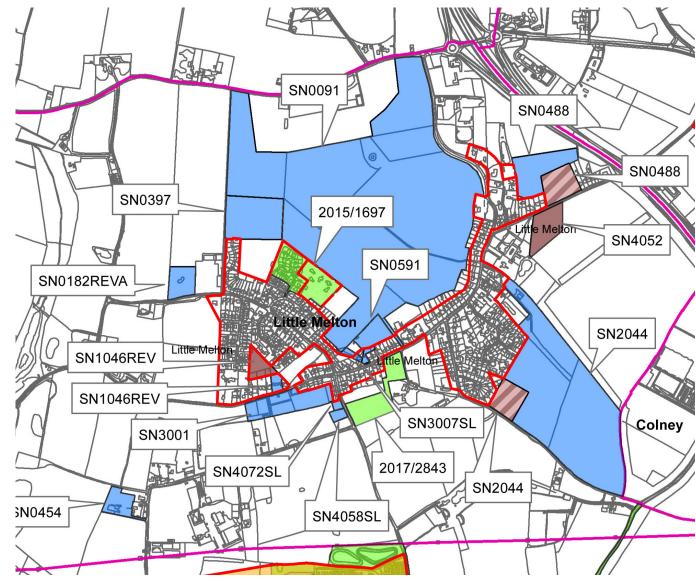
Development Considerations

- Any development must respect the character of the Yare Tributary Farmland and Parkland Character Area and conserve and enhance the key landscape assets as described in the landscape character assessment. In particular it must seek to
- maintain the peaceful farmland landscape and a clear rural/urban transition. This will include reference to the following key criteria:
- respect the sparsely settled character of the area with small villages, isolated buildings of vernacular character and large institutional buildings in extensive grounds;
- protect the quality, character and setting of the key landscape assets, notably the tributary corridors and the historic parklands which characterise the Yare Tributary Farmland and Parkland;
- seek to ensure the restoration and management of historic landscapes as a condition of permission for new uses/development within these areas;
- consider impact of proposals on the intricate rural lane network — avoid widening, kerbing, lighting



which will quickly impart a more urban character;

- consider impact on key views from the higher plateau landscape, the adjoining character areas (particularly the Yare Valley Urban Fringe) and views towards the City:
- ensure that the rural character of the landscape of the Norwich Southern Bypass Protection Zone is maintained and that differential development North and South of the road do not erode the unity of the Character Area.



Extract from the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (Site no. SN4052)



4. Landscape Character

- 4.1 Analysis of historical mapping shows how the vegetation, development and land patterns have evolved in this area.
- 4.2 The mapping shows that by the time of the First Series Ordnance Survey plan, the application site formed part of a larger field of approximately 6.6 hectares, fringed by boundary trees. It is clear that at least two of the boundary trees are still present along the site boundary , along School Lane. These are now veteran Oak trees of significant landscape value. At that stage, the village appeared to comprise scattered cottages and orchards loosely spread along School Lane west of the site. The countryside around appears to comprise a patchwork of rectilinear small to medium-sized fields.
- 4.3 By the late 1940s, that landscape remained much the same, with some modest increase in housing, such as the small council estate Braymeadow 500 metres to the south-west.
- 4.4 By the late 1980s, many of the fields have become amalgamated, and in-fill development has resulted in low-density development spread along the roads of the village. This has resulted in the current character of a relatively loose linear development, with small to medium sized cottages and bungalows, many set back with relatively large front gardens. At that time the application site was in an area of open farmland.



Historic mapping. Top left: Tithe Map (c.1840). Top right Ordnance Survey 1890. Bottom left: Aerial view 1946. Bottom right: Aerial view 1988



4.5

- 4.6 Since the construction of the Norwich Southern Bypass in 1992, the character or the landscape has changed markedly as landscaping associated with the bypass has matured. The bypass is located just 200 metres north-west of the application site, and has been screened with a substantial tree belt which now not only hides the bypass itself but also prevents views outward over the landscape from users of the bypass.
- 4.7 A substantial tree belt has also been established 130 metres to the south-east of the application site creating further screening and enclosure. It is also screened from Manor Farm Barns to the south-west by a mature belt of trees. The overall result is a landscape of much less openness than previously, with the application site being relatively enclosed and with limited views of it. There are few public rights of way in the area and limited views of the site from public areas.
- 4.8 The topographical plan shows that the site occupies the north-facing side of a shallow valley of a tributary of the River Yare. The site slopes from an elevation of around 25 metres above Ordnance Datum at the northern corner, to about 32 metres at the southern.
- 4.9 In terms of the South Norfolk's Little Melton & Great Melton Village Cluster Assessment of Housing Allocations, the site is considered to be 'a reasonable option for allocation. The site is located to the south of School Lane where there are reasonable verges but no footways, the road would need to be widened and include footpaths. It would also need to be demonstrated

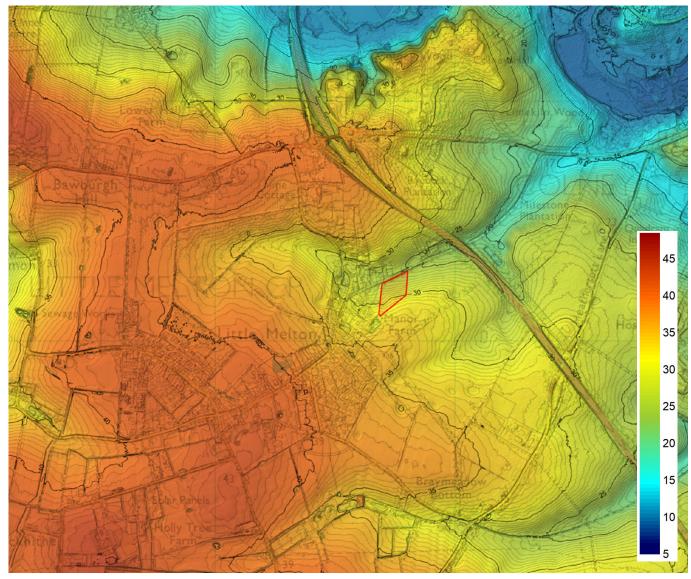


Top left: Aerial view 2020. Top right: View of the junction of School Lane Bottom left: View of the Village Inn in the older part of the village. Bottom right: View of typical properties in the village



that sufficient visibility splays can be achieved, prior to accepting development is acceptable. Whilst the site is located within a residential context, located to the west is Manor Farm Barns which is considered a nondesignated heritage asset, the impact of the setting would need to be considered.

4.10 In landscape terms, the site is relatively open where the Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone seeks to protect openness. The site does not have any significant arboricultural issues.'



Site topography



5. Site Proposals

5.1 The proposal is for an allocation of approximately 25 dwellings on a site area of approximately 1 hectare.



Site Proposals





Site in context



6. Visual Assessment

- 6.1 In order to undertake the assessment, the application site and its environs were walked over one day to determine potential views, and identify representative locations (receptors) to demonstrate the visual impact.
- 6.2 Photographs have been used to demonstrate the key views and vistas, and to indicate potential visibility to and from the proposed development site. The location of the viewpoints was logged using GPS and this data was used to prepare the panoramic visualisations which were used in the preparation of the proposals. The following section summarises the potential visual impacts.



Viewpoints used in the visual assessment







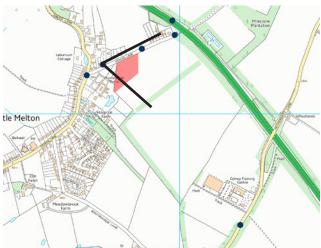
Viewpoint 1 Camera: Canon 6D Full Frame DSLR Lens focal length: 50mm

Location: 52.6189°N, 1.197333°E, 57m TG1653307148 616533, 307148

View north-eastwards from the junction of Green Lane and School Lane, approximately 160 metres from the site and 450 metres from the Norwich Southern Bypass. Existing trees and hedgerow provide screening and contribute to the rural character of the area. A substantial tree belt at the end of the road completely screens the bypass from view.







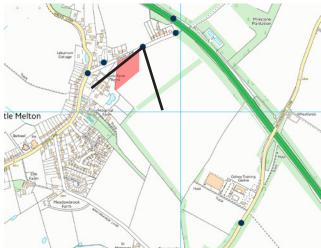
Viewpoint 2 Camera: Canon 6D Full Frame DSLR Lens focal length: 50mm

Location: 52.619141°N, 1.198267°E, 53m TG1659507178 616595, 307178

This is the view Eastwards from School Lane, approximately 70 metres from the site and 350 metres from the bypass, showing the dense hedgerow and trees around Manor Farm. The application site is located between the end of this belt of trees and the isolated veteran Oak tree in the distance. The access point for the new development would be located in this area of open space, although a minor visual element subject to detailed design.







Viewpoint 3 Camera: Canon 6D Full Frame DSLR Lens focal length: 50mm

Location: 52.619888°N, 1.201377°E, 49m TG1680207270 616802, 307270

This is the view south-westwards over the site from the edge of the larger arable field. The field is separated from school lane by a grassy earth bank up to 2 metres high, which limits views into the site from School Lane. The large Oak tree on the right is a veteran Oak tree which was present of the First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping. The field has an enclosed character, surrounded by maturing trees on three boundaries, which screen views inwards and outwards.







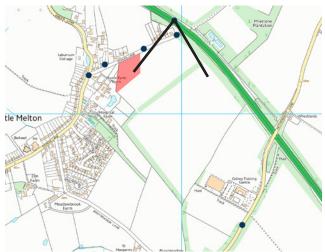
Viewpoint 4 Camera: Canon 6D Full Frame DSLR Lens focal length: 50mm

Location: 52.620441°N, 1.203917°E, 47m TG1697107339 616971, 307339

View southwestwards from the end of School Lane, approximately 190 metres from the application site and next to the bypass which is heavily screened by maturing trees. The high earth bank along the side of School Lane adds to the sense of enclosure here, and limits views to the site itself.







Viewpoint 5

Location: 52.621086°N, 1.2036282°E TG1694807410 616948, 307410

View southwards from the Norwich Southern bypass, showing how the maturing landscaping has created and enclosed character, obscuring all views to the wider landscape in this area.







Viewpoint 6 Camera: Canon 6D Full Frame DSLR Lens focal length: 50mm

Location: 52.612124°N, 1.2077752°E TG1727306426 617273, 306426

View North-westwards from Hethersett Lane, approximately 900 metres from the application site. The landscape here is more open, with wider views that near the site, but the woodland belt SE of the site screens it completely from this location.



7. Conclusion

- 7.1 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal was undertaken to determine the potential impact of residential development on approximately 1 hectare of land off School Lane, Little Melton.
- 7.2 The site comprises part of an existing arable field of approximately 7.8 hectares, with no notable landscape features apart from an earth bank and two veteran Oak trees along the boundary with School Lane.
- 7.3 There is a limited local network of public rights of way, although School Lane itself technically links with the truncated School Lane on the opposite side of the bypass. However, this would entail a dangerous crossing of the bypass, and it is unlikely that it is used frequently. The result is that the site is well screened from public viewpoints.
- 7.4 As noted earlier since the construction of the Norwich Southern Bypass in 1992, the character of the landscape has changed markedly as landscaping associated with the bypass has matured. The bypass is located just 200 metres north-west of the application site, and has been screened with a substantial tree belt which now not only hides the bypass itself but also prevents views outward over the landscape from users of the bypass.
- 7.5 A substantial tree belt has also been established 130 metres to the south-east of the application site, along the field boundary, creating further screening and

enclosure. It is also screened from Manor Farm Barns to the south-west by a mature belt of trees. The overall result is a landscape of much less openness than previously, with the application site being relatively 7.9 enclosed and with limited views of it. There are few public rights of way in the area and limited views of the site from public areas.

- 7.6 That part of the site proposed for built development would obviously undergo a significant change (from open land to new housing), but it is considered that 7.10 development here would have a limited impact on the countryside around it, subject to sensitive, landscape-led design. The new houses would mainly be visible from close to the Site only, and in the context of a local edge of settlement area where such views are characteristic.
- 7.7 The site is located within the Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone which aims to 'ensure that the rural character of the landscape of the Norwich Southern Bypass Protection Zone is maintained and that differential development North and South of the road do not erode the unity of the Character Area.' It is also just inside one of the designated Key View Cones, which were designated to ensure that development does not obstruct the long distance views to and from the City.
- 7.8 However, as discussed earlier, the landscape around the site is enclosed by mature and maturing trees and shrubs, and sensitive development would not

noticeably impact upon the openness of the Zone or upon key views.

- In terms of the impact on landscape and townscape character, the most significant potential impact will be the introduction of new development onto a currently arable field on the edge of the village. However, it has been noted that the site is relatively enclosed and within a maturing landscape setting.
- 10 Landscape measures, which will soften the impact of the new buildings as well as enhance the local landscape structure, should comprise boundary hedgerow using native species, primarily Hawthorn, Field Maple and Blackthorn, with additional tree planting of English Oak to provide long-term stature trees.
- 7.11 In terms of addressing the Development Considerations set out in the South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document, as well as other key factors these are summarised in the following page. The impact has been coded in three levels:
 - Red: Potential impacts for which it might not be possible to completely mitigate
 - Amber: Potential impacts which could be mitigated by sensitive design
 - Green: Positive or no noticeable impacts



SPD Development Considerations	Impact of proposed development
All development proposals within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ) should have regard to protecting the openness of the Zone and, where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the southern bypass, including the practice of wild flower planting and management regimes.	The site has become enclosed due to new planting post-bypass construction, which is now semi-mature and resulting in a loss of openness. Sensitive proposals here would have a limited impact on the sense of openness of the character area.
All development proposals located within the Key Views 'cones' shown on the Policies Map should ensure they do not obstruct the long distance views to and from the City.	Although located within the designated 'Key View Cone', maturing planting now prevents any long distance views to or from the City.
Respect the sparsely settled character of the area with small villages, isolated buildings of vernacular character and large institutional buildings in extensive grounds.	Dependent on detailed design to ensure that the scale of development is in keeping with the local character.
Protect the quality, character and setting of the key landscape assets, notably the tributary corridors and the historic parklands which characterise the Yare Tributary Farmland and Parkland.	Dependent on detailed design to ensure in particular that any veteran trees are protected.
Seek to ensure the restoration and management of historic landscapes as a condition of permission for new uses/development within these areas.	Not relevant in this case.
Consider impact of proposals on the intricate rural lane network — avoid widening. kerbing, lighting which will quickly impart a more urban character.	Dependent on detailed design to ensure that the rural character of School Lane is protected.
Consider impact on key views from the higher plateau landscape, the adjoining character areas (particularly the Yare Valley Urban Fringe) and views towards the City.	The site is well screened from all directions
Impact on designated heritage elements: listed buildings, ancient monuments, etc.	No impact on such assets
Impact on public rights of way	No impact on such assets
Impact on neighbouring residential amenity	Potential impact on neighbouring residences which can be mitigated through sensitive design

Potential impacts for which it might not be possible to completely mitigate

Potential impacts which could be mitigated by sensitive design

Positive or no noticeable impacts



8. Summary

- 8.1 To summarise, this appraisal has determined the following:
 - Although located within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone, and within a designated 'Key View Cone', the site is largely enclosed by maturing tree belts which limits wider views toward the site and reduces the sense of openness. The view cone would not be affected.
 - The visual impact will be relatively limited to close proximity to the site, and will not detrimentally affect the wider landscape.
 - Visual impacts from residential properties to the north and west could be mitigated by sensitive design and mitigation planting.
 - Existing mature and veteran Oak trees should be protected.
 - Mitigation landscaping, comprising native hedgerow and trees along the boundaries, would provide additional landscape structure and positively enhance to visual edge to the village.
 - The site is thus considered suitable for development, subject to a robust landscape-led design.



