

BLADE

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

LAND SITUATED EAST OF RUGBY ROAD, CLIFTON-UPON-DUNSMORE, RUGBY, WARWICKSHIRE, CV23 0DE

ON BEHALF OF

RICHBOROUGH

JULY 2025

V4

BIODIVERSITY
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- 1.1. BLADE Landscape Architects Limited ('BLADE') were commissioned on behalf of Richborough (the 'Applicant') to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for a new residential development on land situated east of Rugby Road in Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, Warwickshire, CV23 0DE (the 'site').
- 1.2. The site is located at OS Grid Reference: SP 52666 75951 (site centre); see Appendix BLA 1. The site is located within the administrative area of Rugby Borough Council, which acts as the statutory planning authority. The Site is currently managed as agricultural arable land.

The Proposed Development

- 1.3. The Applicant is submitting an outline planning application for the construction of up to 160 dwellings, with access, landscaping, sustainable drainage features, and associated infrastructure. All matters are reserved except for primary vehicular access from the western site boundary (the 'proposed development'); see Appendix BLA 2 of this LVA.
- 1.4. This LVA is part of a suite of documents accompanying a planning application for the Proposed Development. The Site and Proposed Development are described later within this LVA, with further Site details given in the Planning Statement which accompanies the planning application.

The Purpose of this Landscape Visual Appraisal

- 1.5. This report has been prepared by a Chartered Landscape Architect with experience in landscape design and planning in the development sector. All drawings referenced within this assessment are in Appendices of the LVA.
- 1.6. The purpose of this LVA is to identify the baseline conditions of the Site and surrounding area and to determine those landscape and visual characteristics that might inform the design of the development proposals, including recommendations for mitigation. It then provides an appraisal of the landscape and visual effects predicted to arise from the development of the Site as follows:
 - Landscape fabric, when there is physical change to components of the landscape; landform, land use or a land cover.
 - Landscape character, caused by changes in the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape; and
 - Visual amenity caused by changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of Development.

2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Site

- 2.1. In May 2025, BLADE's Site survey which was undertaken during dry weather conditions and clear visibility. BLADE identified the following features:
- 2.2. **Topography:** The Site has a gently undulating landform ranging from 118m AOD to 112m AOD north to south respectively, and circa 108m AOD along the western boundary to neighbouring Newall Close.
- 2.3. The Site is situated on the southwestern edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore village, which is located at circa 120m AOD within the village centre (at the crossroads of Rugby Road/Lilbourne Road/Church Street (within the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Conservation Area).
- 2.4. To the southwest-west, the eastern edge of Rugby town is located within sloped landform at circa 100m AOD rising to circa 115m AOD along Clifton Road in Hillmorton approximately 1.3km southwest of the Site. Landform rises through this eastern edge of the town through the residential area of Hillmorton.
- 2.5. Beyond Site area, landform gently undulates across a plateau like landform before topography sloping away to Houlton Way (circa 95-100m AOD) with the route of the Oxford Canal situated west of this vehicle route at circa 95m AOD.
- 2.6. Rugby Road is the main vehicle route running through the southwestern-western edge connecting with Lilbourne Road/Church Street within the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Conservation Area. Nearest the Site, Rugby Road travels along at circa 107-113m AOD having risen up from Houlton Way to the southwest at circa 93m AOD.
- 2.7. The north edge of the site adjoins the Clifton Public Park which is situated off the Rugby Road further into the village. This public park is situated at 115 to 118m AOD.
- 2.8. Land beyond Clifton-upon-Dunsmore is gently undulating across the initial 1km distance from the village. For instance; land to the north along Newton Road and agricultural fields thereof are circa 91m AOD gently sloping away from the village centre at circa 1120m AOD.
- 2.9. To the east, landform is relatively flat and is circa 118m AOD within the initial 1km distance from the Site, and to the west beyond the Site, landform slopes away and down to the settlement of Brownsover at circa 88m AOD. Across this initial distance of the village, land is managed predominantly for agriculture with groups of trees and small woodland blocks.
- 2.10. The route of the River Avon passes northeast to southwest beyond the village within the lower lying topography of this landform.

- 2.11. **Land Use and Landscape Fabric:** The site is one, individual agricultural field managed for arable crop production. The site contains no trees within its interior. The site is lineated with a hedge line of native hedgerow with occasional hedge line trees; this encloses the Site area. There are degraded and gappy sections of these hedgerows.
- 2.12. The western to northwestern edge to the neighbouring residential developments has a mixture of robust and degraded field hedgerows, as well as timber close boarded fencing where the hedgerow is missing/near missing. There are scattered hedgerow trees within the hedge line as well as those within the private amenity rear garden space to these dwellings. The boundary to the public open space is predominantly unvegetated with occasional native trees, and enclosed by fencing.
- 2.13. **Recreation:** There is no Public Access to the site or a Public Right of Way ('PRoW') within or passing immediately along the Site's boundaries. There is a limited network of PRoW routes within the setting of the Site, especially within the initial 1 km distance of the site's location. There is a small number of PRoW passing along the village edge nearest to the site's location; see Appendix BLA 1.
- 2.14. A National Trail Long Distance Walking Route passes along the Oxford Canal as well as the Shakespeare's Avon Way National Trail which links Clifton-upon-Dunsmore to the wider open countryside.
- 2.15. Beyond this, PRoW pass through the wider open countryside and are generally linear in their route and limited in frequency possibly reflecting the large agricultural field pattern beyond the village.
- 2.16. Further analysis is provided within Section 7, Table BLA 7.1 further on in this LVA document.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The Proposed Development is shown in Appendix BLA 2. A summary of the proposed development is detailed below:

- Up to 160 no. new dwellings are proposed.
- Dwellings of two storey in height, with some 'pepper-potting' of up to 2.5 storey at nodal points within the scheme. The scheme is proposed at a similar density to the existing settlement pattern neighboring the site at Newall Close, along Rugby Road to the north, and through the village.
- Access to the development will be via a new single vehicle and pedestrian access from Newall Close through the western boundary
- The integration of the built scheme with extensive green infrastructure, green corridors and formal pedestrian walking routes.
- Formal public open space through the scheme, as well as semi-natural and natural green space with green corridor routes running through the scheme for pedestrian and cycle friendly movement, and linkage to the wider urban area and open countryside beyond the boundary of the site.
- SuDs attenuation basins and swales.
- Public open space with formal and informal landscape treatment, ecological betterment and habitat creation.
- Public open space within the northern portion of the Site arranged so as to integrate with the adjoining Clifton Park and effectively extend this public park into the core of the scheme and accessible for all.

3.2. The DAS supporting this application provides full details of the development proposals, and proposed schedule of implementation, and the proposed Illustrative Site Masterplan is contained in Appendix BLA 2 of this LVA report.

4.0 LANDSCAPE MITIGATION MEASURES

- 4.1. Landscape mitigation measures have been developed through consideration of the host landscape character for the proposed development. These provide an appropriate solution for a development that offsets and / or reduces landscape and visual effects, and if practicable, enhances the local landscape fabric.
- 4.2. The site is located adjoining the southwestern edge of the village and is managed as agricultural land. In understanding the Site's landscape context, and its relationship with its setting, BLADE refers to the Landscape Character Assessment published by the Rugby Borough Council, which was published in January 2025.
- 4.3. As discussed in further detail within Section 7 of this LVA, the southwestern edge to the village adjoins the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area, which is broken down into smaller Landscape Tyes, within which, the Site is found within the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe. This is the host Landscape Character Area and the host Landscape Type.
- 4.4. For the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area the recently published Landscape Character Assessment includes written landscape management guidelines which it has prescribed for the host landscape which help guide the future development of this landscape, retain, enhance or recreate typical landscape character features.
- 4.5. For this host landscape character area, the LPA highlights the pressures for change in this landscape character area, and highlights the following key issues:
 - *'Inappropriate development bordering woodlands, causing habitat fragmentation and species isolation.*
 - *Loss of mature trees remnant from the 1970s epidemic has exacerbated habitat fragmentation.*
 - *Loss of hedgerows due to urban development and agricultural intensification. The creation of larger fields has exacerbated habitat fragmentation. In addition, there has been a general decline in the practice of hedge laying and an increase in annual trimming, resulting in gaps and loss of structure.*
 - *Sensitive design is lacking in some new residential developments, particularly around historic villages and Rugby's peri-urban areas. A high number of converted redundant farm buildings for residential and holiday use are not in line with the landscape character.*
 - *Significant decrease in the number of dairy farms and mixed farming in the area.*
 - *Ridge and furrow and other historical earthworks continue to be lost as a result of ploughing, reseeded and the conversion to arable land.'*

- 4.6. From the outset of the masterplanning process, BLADE has iteratively fed into the design process to optimise the retention of the existing field hedgerow and field pattern, allowing for the bolstering of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees to ensure the continuity for field pattern and structure of the landscape along the southwestern edge of the village.
- 4.7. Additionally to this, BLADE notes that the proposed development would retain the existing landform (except for the minor-remodelling for new homes, roadway and the proposed attenuation ponds), and therefore, the general pattern of the Site's landform would be retained.
- 4.8. New planting would be of native species of local importance, and if available, local provenance. The detailed landscape design proposal would be confirmed at the reserved matters stage. However, the Illustrated Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) defines the landscape enhancement and mitigation principals for this outline planning application submitted by the Applicant.
- 4.9. This host landscape, the LPA have an overall management strategy which seeks to '*plan, manage and protect the distinctiveness of the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area*'. This strategy would retain existing landscape fabric, and ensure it is bolstered and enhanced with similar native planting as well as providing new green infrastructure for the scheme.
- 4.10. The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan confirms additional planting and landscape measures which reflect the LPA's guidance for the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area, which included:
- *Protect hedgerows and hedgerow trees, many of which are Oak trees (Quercus robur).*
 - *Maintaining and enhancing the enclosed wooded character of the landscape. This is especially important in Dunsmore Parklands which is generally in decline.*
 - *Maintaining and enhancing the distinctive character of the landscape. This is especially important in Plateau Farmlands where a large area between Cawston Spinney and the Coventry Road is in decline.*
 - *Enhance the structure and key features of the farmed landscape. This is especially important in the Plateau Fringe which is generally in decline.*
 - *Planting of woodlands should be encouraged where appropriate. The mosaic of habitats including woodlands, hedgerows and heathlands, alongside the sustainable management of agricultural land will enhance the character of the landscape.*
 - *Protect and manage the historic character and settlement pattern, including the deserted settlements, ancient settlements, veteran trees, farmsteads, country houses and landscaped parklands. This will enhance the educational and recreational experience for urban and rural communities.'*
- 4.11. Drawing on this LVA and the forgoing technical information and analysis, the Proposed Development aims to offset and reduce the effect of the application proposal. The below initiatives draw on the further guidelines provided for this Landscape Character Area:

- Retention of the existing landscape features, and where practicable bolster the existing landscape fabric including existing field hedge lines and trees which enclose the Site's boundaries for visual mitigation, as well as the ecological amenity and habitat retention, as well as contribute to the structure of the landscape for the integration of the proposed scheme within.
- Locating the proposed residential development within the interior of the Site with green corridors running through to link with an extensive public open space, which would remain undeveloped; for instance:
- Further to this, the following measures have been introduced into the scheme to reduce the overall discernibility of the newly built form. Wide buffers to set development well within the site to enable a lower FFL for new development. New built form would be nestled below the wider context of the site i.e., the marginally rising landform beyond the Site boundary to the north and northwest.
- The site is of sufficient scale that it can integrate the scheme within green infrastructure of retained and bolstered landscape fabric, as well as new landscaping and habitat creation. The scheme which would be managed as natural and semi-natural green space, as well as providing areas of open space with an attenuation basin (lower southeastern portion of the Site).
- Develop a walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment with extensive green corridors which interlink with the wider village and provide connectivity to the nearby Public Rights of Way into the open countryside.
- The addition of hedgerow, and new tree planting includes locally characteristic orchard planting within the Site and to the Site's boundaries to afford enhancement to the existing landscape fabric, and arboricultural continuity for the long-term establishment of tree planting within the proposed scheme.
- Through these landscape measures – retaining and bolstering the existing features and enhancing with new landscaping – to enable a similar experience of entering and leaving the village along Rugby Road, and a similar experience when viewing the Site from the south, and on approaching the village along Hillmorton Lane to the east – therefore, the scheme seeks to preserve the existing landscape structure of these green fields and it bolstering its existing landscape fabric. This is aided by deliberately setting new built form into the Site area beyond extensive green buffers to the built form.
- Provision of native hedging and ornamental planting to the new housing plots within the development.
- Ensuring the proposed dwellings respect the local built character including the layout, height and scale of buildings.

4.12. In combination, the establishment of these measures serves to reduce the potential for landscape and visual effects on the identified baseline receptors. The focus of these measures is less about screening and filtering views, rather, these measures are about enhancing the existing landscape resources and integrating the proposal well within its setting.

Construction Phase

- 4.13. It is envisaged that the Development Proposal would be delivered in one phase. Consequently, given the foregoing, the following activities and elements have the potential to cause a temporary direct effect on the landscape fabric of the application Site, and an indirect effect, on the landscape and visual amenity of the study area:
- Erection of, and visual effect, of temporary site hoarding / fencing to enclose the Site, and tree protection fencing (to accord to BS 5837: 2012) within the Site, and along its boundaries.
 - Temporary portacabin structures for site welfare and office, and vehicle parking area.
 - Earthworks excavation for the formation of construction levels.
 - Utility of Site access off Newall Close for the proposed pedestrian access / egress for the Proposed Development – to be positioned optimizing retained hedgerow and tree planting.
 - Excavations for the construction of the proposed dwellings, garages, roads and drives.
 - HGV deliveries to Site and movement of vehicles on Site delivering materials.
- 4.14. All ground disturbances would be confined as far as practicable and working widths during construction operations would be restricted resulting in a minimal interference with existing soil structures and habitats.

Construction Mitigation

- 4.15. The details of construction methods, timing and phasing are not known at this stage; however, this appraisal has assumed a reasonable worst-case scenario. The following measures could be implemented and adhered to during the temporary construction phase:
- An approved Arboriculture Method Statement (AMS) incorporating best practice guidance set out in British Standard 5837: 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction could be adopted, which would ensure retained trees and hedgerow are not adversely affected during the construction process.
 - Visual screening, such as hoardings, could be adopted around sections of the Site boundary to protect more sensitive visual receptors in proximity, including residential receptors and users of the Public Right of Way as appropriate.
 - Construction works that create dust would be kept to a minimum within proximity of residential receptors and receptors near the Site; and
 - Mitigation measures for construction lighting are likely to include directional fittings and restricted hours of operation, and if requested by the LPA, could be outlined within the Lighting Strategy for the project.

5.0 FINDINGS OF THE BASELINE APPRAISAL

- 5.1. This LVA has involved a desk study, field work, data processing and analysis as well as interpretation using professional judgement undertaken by a Landscape Architect in late May 2025 and based on best practice guidance¹. Prior to this, the assessing Landscape Architect has iteratively worked on the assemblance of the Proposed Development since 2022.
- 5.2. Typically, a 15-year time horizon is used as the basis for conclusions about the residual levels of effect. 15 years is a well-established and accepted compromise between assessing the shorter-term effects (which may often be rather 'raw' before any proposed mitigation has had time to take effect) and an excessively long time.

Definition of Study Area

- 5.3. To establish the baseline context of the Site and its surrounding, and to assess the potential limit of material effects, the study area was informed through a plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV'). This ZTV was plotted over a radius of 5km distance from the Site's boundary, and to assess the potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at two geographical scales:
 - Initially, a broad 'study area' was adopted, the extent of which was is illustrated on the Site Context plan (see Appendix BLA 1), which was formed mainly on a desk based study. This broad study area enabled the geographical scope of the appraisal to be defined based on the Site's environmental planning context and the extent of views to and from the Site; and
 - After undertaking our field-based assessment, this broad study area was redefined to the land area most likely to experience landscape effects. The extent of this detailed study area is up to 2km.
- 5.4. Through on-site observations, a Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) was also identified. Through visiting publicly accessible locations, walking PRoW routes and driving the local road network, BLADE have determined a zone by which the Site is discernible.
- 5.5. In this case, vegetation and built form across the relatively flat topography surrounding the Site encloses the Site to the north, south and west. To the east the site is enclosed by vegetation including a dense tree belt along a portion of the railway line to the east. At medium distance to the south-east partial views of some of the Site's boundary vegetation are available where gaps in vegetation along Green Lane allow. Further south, views towards the Site from roadways and PRoW routes are restricted due to layers of intervening vegetation.
- 5.6. At long distance to the east on the slightly higher landform, views of dwellings to the south of the Site are partially available from limited locations where gaps in vegetation allow however the Site itself is restricted from view. To the north-east views are also restricted by layers of intervening vegetation.

¹ *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013)*

- 5.7. The primary zone of visibility is where representative viewpoints are assessed, and whilst there may be views from the wider area beyond the primary zone, views are less open, and likely to be filtered, or to an extent screened by existing landscape features, built development or landform.
- 5.8. The ZTV study area enabled the geographical scope of the appraisal to be defined based on the Site's environmental planning context and the extent of views to and from the Site. This informed the field-based assessment to the land area most likely to experience the effects of the Proposed Development.
- 5.9. Through on-site observations, a Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) was also identified. The ZPV is where representative viewpoints are assessed, and whilst there may be views from the wider area beyond the primary zone, views are less open, and likely to be filtered, or to an extent screened by existing landscape features, built development or landform.
- 5.10. The primary zone of visibility is where representative viewpoints are assessed, and whilst there may be views from the wider area beyond the primary zone, views are less open, and likely to be filtered, or to an extent screened by existing landscape features, built development or landform.

Viewpoint Selection

- 5.11. Given the foregoing, representative viewpoints have been selected. In selecting these viewpoints, BLADE has been conscious of appraising the Site from all points of the compass, as well as within a range of distances to the Site, as well as testing the development proposals from a range of receptor types. The selection of these Viewpoints was agreed through consultation with the Local Planning Authority during May 2025; see the final Appendix of this LVA.
- 5.12. A list of the selected viewpoints and their reasons for selection is provided in Table BLA 5.2 overleaf. The location of representative viewpoints is illustrated on the Site Context Plan (Appendix BLA 1). Viewpoint Sensitivity is defined as high, medium or low based on an interpretation of a combination of parameters, as follows and defined in Table BLA 5.1:
- Location and context of the viewpoint;
 - Land use or main activity at the viewpoint;
 - Frequency and duration of use;
 - Landscape character and quality of the intervening landscape; and
 - Value attached to view.

Table BLA 5.1: Visual Sensitivity in relation to Main Activity at Viewpoint

Visual Sensitivity	Land Use
Very High	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View is: designed/has intentional association with surroundings; recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset/designated/promoted viewpoint; nationally/internationally designated right of way; protected/recognised in planning policy designation.
High	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or PRoW.
Medium	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas.
Low	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View of clearly lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.
Negligible	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.

Table BLA 5.2 – Summary of Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Location	OS Grid Ref	Approx Distance from the Closest Site Boundary	Reason for Selection (Site Topography: c. 108-118m AOD)
1	View from Clifton Recreation Ground situated to the north of the Site looking south (N.B. 'Important View' within Neighbourhood Plan (2025))	452781 , 276177	0.2km N/0 degrees looking S/180 degrees	This viewpoint is from the public park neighbouring the Site's northern boundary. The draft Neighbourhood Plan (2025) highlights views south from this location as an Important View. Users of the park would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. Topography: 116m AOD.
2	View from Shutterworth Road within the neighbouring residential area of Clifton upon Dunsmore, with views looking southwest towards the Site	452880 , 276205	0.25km NE/25 degrees looking SW/205 degrees	Viewpoint from a village edge location nearest to the Site. Road users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. This viewpoint demonstrates discernibility of the Site from the neighbouring area of residential built form. Topography: 118m AOD.
3	View from Shutterworth Road within the neighbouring residential area of Clifton upon Dunsmore, with views looking west towards the Site	452910 , 276110	0.15 degrees looking E/75 W/250 degrees	Viewpoint from a village edge location nearest to the Site. Road users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. This viewpoint demonstrates discernibility of the Site from the neighbouring area of residential built form. Topography: 119m AOD.
4	View from PRoW (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore looking southwest across intervening fields towards the Site	453166 , 276026	0.7km E/75 degrees Looking SW/240 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRoW passing through open countryside on the edge of the village. Located to the east of the Site PRoW users would have broad, wide views across intervening fields towards the location of the Site. PRoW users would have a high susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. Topography: 118m AOD.
5	View from PRoW (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-	453179 , 275765	0.9km SE/135 degrees looking NW/315 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRoW passing through open countryside on the edge of the village. Located to the east of the Site PRoW users would have broad, wide views across intervening

	Dinsmore looking northwest across intervening fields towards the Site			fields towards the location of the Site. PRow users would have a high susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. Topography: 117m AOD.
6	View from PRow (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside nearest to Hillmorton Lane looking across intervening fields west towards the Site	453211 , 275401	1.3km SE/140 degrees looking W/290 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRow passing through open countryside nearest Hillmorton Lane within open countryside. PRow users would have broad, wide views across intervening fields towards the location of the Site. PRow users would have a high susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. Topography: 120m AOD.
7	View from Hillmorton Lane looking across northwest across intervening fields towards the Site	453123 , 275162	1.65km SE/150 degrees looking NW/330 degrees km	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View minor vehicle route passing from Rugby towards the village of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. Vehicle route users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. There is no pedestrian route and this is not a promoted route. The PRow does not connect with further PRow off road. Topography: 116m AOD.
8	View from Permissive Route on the edge of Houlton leading to Hillmorton Locks looking northwest across a very long range distance towards the Site	454006 , 274687	3.2km SE/140 degrees looking NW/310 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from permissive route leading from recent and new residential development (on the edge of Houlton) leading towards Hillmorton Locks. Users of the route would have a medium susceptibility to change (given ongoing development and urban edge) and a medium visual sensitivity. Topography: 94m AOD
9	View from Permissive Route passing across Normandy Hill looking northwest across a very long range distance towards the Site (N.B. 'Important View' within Neighbourhood Plan (2025))	454049 , 274363	4.1km SE/140 degrees looking NW/320 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from permissive route passing across Normandy Hill with the route situated between new residential development (on the edge of Houlton) and Hillmorton Locks. Users of the route would have a medium susceptibility to change (given ongoing development and urban edge) and a high visual sensitivity. Topography: 105m AOD.
10	View from Hillmorton Locks looking northwest across a very long range distance towards the Site (N.B. 'Important View' within Neighbourhood Plan (2025))	453770 , 274587	3.3km SE/140 degrees looking NW/320 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRow passing between south of Warton with back/towards the southwestern village edge. This route is not a promoted route and is not within a National or statutory designated landscape. PRow users would have a high susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. Topography: 93m AOD.

11	View from the PRoW National Trail Oxford Canal Long Distance Walking Route situated south-southeast of the Site passing along the edge of Rugby with the Site situated on elevated landform beyond the slope	452491 , 275644	0.5km S/195 degrees looking N/15 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRoW passing along canal. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the Site from the south as the National Trail passes along the edge of Rugby. PRoW users would have a high susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. Topography: 116m AOD.
12	View from Whinfield Park Public Open Space situated off Butlin Road, Hillmorton, Rugby looking north east across the intervening urban area	451797 , 274955	1.95km SW/225 degrees looking NE/45 degrees	This viewpoint is from the public park within the urban setting of Hillmorton, Rugby neighbouring the Site's northern boundary. This viewpoint demonstrated the discernibility of the Site from the urban area of Rugby south of the village. Users of the park would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. Topography:116m AOD.
13	View from PRoW (LPA ref: 333/Rb48/1) passing wooded open space near to Whinfield Park Public Open Space looking northwest towards the Site across the intervening urban area of Hillmorton, Rugby	452175 , 274977	1.9km SW/220 degrees looking NE/40 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRoW passing through a wooded area of the urban space within Hillmorton, Rugby. This viewpoints demonstrates the discoverability of the Site from within the urban area of Hillmorton to the south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. Users of the park would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. Topography:110m AOD.
14	View from the PRoW LPA ref: 333/R114/1 National Trail Shakespeare's Avon Way Long Distance Walking Route passing along the urban edge of Brownsover connecting Brownsover with Clifton-upon-Dunsmore	451930 , 276675	1.75km NW/310 degrees looking SE/130 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRoW passing through open countryside on the edge of Brownsover connecting with Rugby and the village of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. This viewpoint looks southeast across the intervening fields and village of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. PRoW users would have a high susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. Topography: 94m AOD.
15	View from the PRoW LPA ref: 333/R114/1 National Trail Shakespeare's Avon Way Long Distance Walking Route	452260 , 276580	1.25km NW/320 degrees looking SE/150 degrees	Not situated within a National or locally designated landscape. View from PRoW passing through open countryside approaching Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. PRoW users would have a high

	approaching Clifton-upon-Dunsmore			susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. Topography: 88m AOD.
16	View from Vicarage Hill/Rugby Road passing through the southwestern edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore looking east across the proposed access to the Site	452381 , 276101	Within 0.1km W/270 degrees looking E/90 degrees	Viewpoint from a village edge location nearest to the Site. Road users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. This viewpoint demonstrates discernibility of the Site as road users approach/leave the village. Topography: 108m AOD.

Residential Receptors/Dwellings

- 5.13. Views from residential dwellings, although likely to be of high to very high sensitivity to changes in the view, are not protected by National planning guidance or local planning policy. Accordingly, changes to the character, 'quality' and nature of private views are not a material planning consideration in the de-termination of a planning application. However, they remain relevant to this review of the predicted extent and nature of visual change, so are reviewed briefly below.
- 5.14. Given our field based assessment, we noted that a limited number of residential dwellings overlook the Site, with the Site being screened from the wider landscape due to further intervening built form and layers of intervening field boundary vegetation. Consequently, BLADE has scoped out residential properties within medium to long range distance of the Site across all compass directions. In these instances, the Proposed Development is unlikely to be discernible to the casual observer due to intervening vegetation and built form.
- 5.15. The existing residential dwellings which have intervisibility with the Site and for which likely effects will be experienced are as follows:
- Properties situated on Shutterworth Road oriented north to south located neighbouring the Site.
 - Properties situated on Rugby Road nearest Clifton Park oriented north to south neighbouring the Site and located up to 0.35km distance of the Site's boundary.
 - Properties situated on Newall Close located neighbouring the Site's southwestern edge oriented southeast to northwest.
 - Properties situated on Rugby Road nearest the Site oriented southeast to northwest located within 0.25km distance of the Site's boundary
 - Scattered properties on Hillmorton Lane oriented east to west located within 0.75km distance of the Site's boundary

- Properties within Hillmorton, Rugby oriented north to south located within 1.5km distance of the Site's boundary

Road Users

5.16. Given BLADE's field-based assessment, the following routes were determined as most likely to experience the effects of the Proposed Development at the Site:

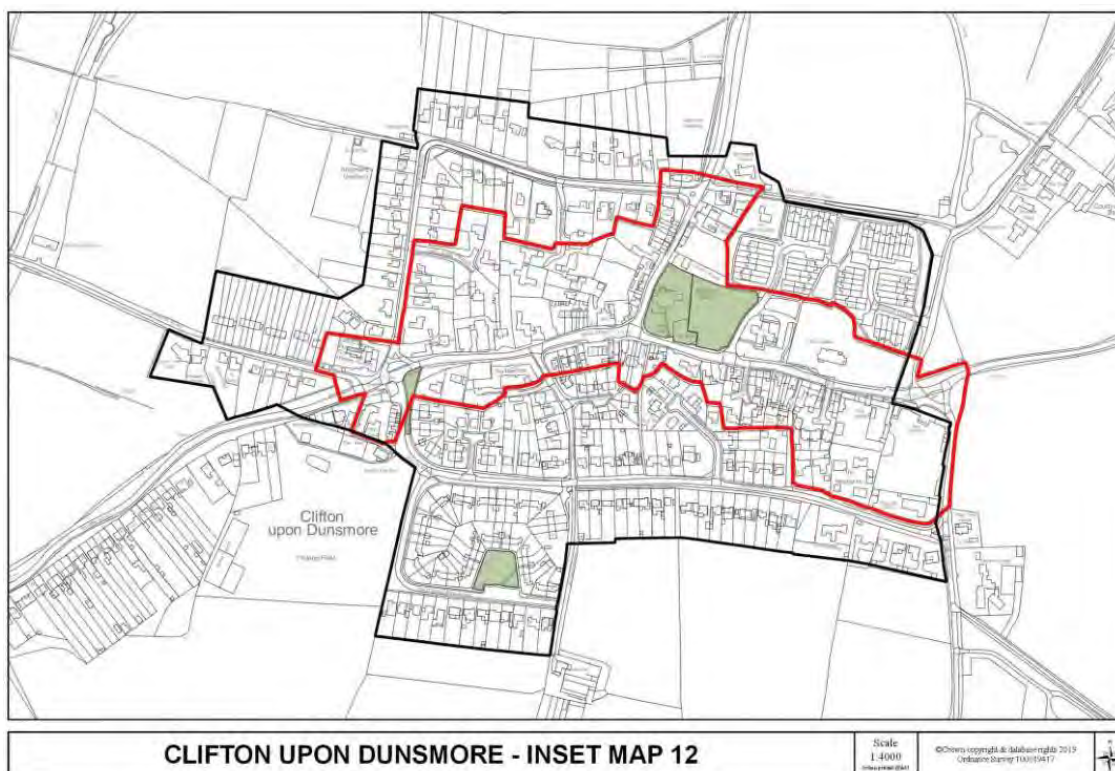
- Shutterworth Road within close range of the Site
- Rugby Road passing the western edge of the Site within close range
- Rugby Road passing through the wider village
- Newall Close within close range distance of the Site
- Vicarage Hil travelling from Houlton Way to meet Rugby Road close to medium range distance of the Site
- Newton Road north of the village
- Hillmorton Lane travelling between Lilbourne Road and Houlton Way
- Houlton Way running between Brownsover and Houlton medium to long range distance of the Site
- Clifton Road heading south from Houlton Way medium to long range distance of the Site

6.0 THE PLANNING CONTEXT AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

The Planning Context of the Application Site

- 6.1. With consideration of the current adopted Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (June 2019), the Site is situated outside of the adopted Settlement Boundary; see Image 6.1:

Image 6.1: Extract from the Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 Rural Settlement Maps, Insert Map 12 (adopted June 2019)



- 6.2. With consideration of the current adopted Local Plan and its supporting Proposals Mapping, Landscape-related designations and policy considerations are as follows (see also Appendix BLA 1):

- **National landscape designations:** The site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a Nationally designated landscape such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Park. The site is not situated within the Green Belt.
- **Local landscape designations:** The site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a locally designated landscape, such as a Significant Gap or Green Space. The site is found within Countryside on the southwestern edge of the settlement overlooked by neighbouring residential development. It is judged that the Site has a peri-urban/urban edge context.

- 6.3. Consequently, given the foregoing the site is not afforded elevated protection under National and local planning policy in Landscape terms. The Site is not situated within the West Midlands Green Belt.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)²

- 6.4. The NPPF was updated on the 12th December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 6.5. The NPPF Paragraph 131 states that the 'creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'.
- 6.6. Paragraph. 136 states that 'new streets [should be] tree-lined', and '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'.
- 6.7. Paragraph 187 notes that the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital, with subsection a stating:
- '.....protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).'*
- 6.8. Paragraph 187 makes it clear that there is a hierarchy to the importance and value attributed to landscapes, and that the development plan should identify the quality of particular landscapes that are not subject to statutory protection, stating at subsection b:
- 'recognising 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.'*
- 6.9. Relevant Planning Policy Guidance that accompanies the NPPF includes that relating to Green Infrastructure, Landscape, and Design (including the National Design Guide).

Local Planning Policy

- 6.10. The Rugby Borough Council Local Plan outlines planning policies and proposals for new development to ensure that Rugby is a great place to live, work, and do business. The plan is prepared in consultation with residents and stakeholders, and councils must review their Local Plan every five years. The current Local Plan covers the period from 2011 to 2031 and includes strategic planning policies and detailed development management policies. Additionally, a recent 'issues and options' consultation was conducted to gather views on key issues and options for new policies.

² Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. (2024) NPPF. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

- 6.11. Their Local Plan was adopted in June 2019 with the aim of providing a clear vision for how new development can address challenges and identifies where, when, how much and how new development will take place in the district up to 2031, and these policies are afforded appropriate weight.

Policy NE3

- 6.12. The main Landscape-derived policy is the Policy NE3 which is entitled 'Landscape Protection and Enhancement.' The purpose of Policy NE3 is to ensure that *'significant landscape features are protected and enhanced and that landscape design is a key component in the design of new development'*.

- 6.13. This policy states the following:

'New development which positively contributes to landscape character will be permitted. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they:

- *Integrate landscape planning into the design of development at an early stage;*
- *Consider its landscape context, including the local distinctiveness of the different natural and historic landscapes and character, including tranquillity;*
- *Relate well to local topography and built form and enhance key landscape features, ensuring their long term management and maintenance;*
- *Identify likely visual impacts on the local landscape and townscape and its immediate setting and undertakes appropriate landscaping to reduce these impacts;*
- *Aim to either conserve, enhance or restore important landscape features in accordance with the latest local and national guidance;*
- *Address the importance of habitat biodiversity features, including aged and veteran trees, woodland and hedges and their contribution to landscape character, where possible enhancing and expanding these features through means such as buffering and reconnecting fragmented areas; and*
- *Are sensitive to an area's capacity to change, acknowledge cumulative effects and guard against the potential for coalescence between existing settlements.'*

- 6.14. Whilst this is in part a reserved matters point (through detailed design to discharge conditions), the undertaking of this LVA has been mindful to work iteratively with the Site Masterplanner and Engineering consultants to best integrate the proposed development and minimise the disturbances to the existing landform within the Site.

- 6.15. Through the iterative development of the Site Masterplan, ecological betterment and habitat creation has formed part of the proposed landscape mitigation and enhancement scheme. The drawn Illustrative Landscape Masterplan is contained within Appendix BLA 4.
- 6.16. The undertaking of this LVA provides an evidence based by which the Proposed Development at the Site can be judged for its appropriateness in order that the Decision-maker can determine a judgement for the approval of the scheme.
- 6.17. The planning application for the Proposed Development at the Site is supported by a site-specific Heritage Impact Assessment (prepared by Marrons). In Landscape terms, it is considered that the Site does not occupy or neighbour an historic landscape, and so the Proposed Development does not need to be considered (as directed by the LPA) against Policy SDC3 'Protecting and enhancing the Historic Environment' .
- 6.18. Consequently, Policy NE 3 is the main Landscape-derived policy by which the proposed development would be assessed against. Further pertinent policies include:

Policy NE 2

- 6.19. Policy NE2 is entitled ' Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure', and states the following:

'The Council will work with partners towards the creation of a comprehensive Borough wide Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Network which is inclusive of the Princethorpe Woodland Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (also known as the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape), as shown on the Green and Blue Infrastructure Policies Map. This will be achieved through the following:

- *The protection, restoration and enhancement of existing and potential Green and Blue Infrastructure assets within the network as shown on the Policies Map; and*
- *The introduction of appropriate multi-functional corridors between existing and potential Green and Blue infrastructure assets.*

Where appropriate new developments must provide suitable Green and Blue Infrastructure corridors throughout the development and link into adjacent strategic and local Green and Blue Infrastructure networks or assets where present.

Where such provision is made a framework plan should be produced as part of the planning application demonstrating the contribution to the overall achievements of the multi-functional strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure network. A management plan, based on delivering the framework plan and detailing how the infrastructure will be managed, may be required by condition.'

- 6.20. In support of this Policy, supplementary wording is provided by the LPA at paragraph 9.10 onwards of the adopted Local Plan, and states:

'Where new multi-functional corridors between existing Green and Blue Infrastructure (GI) assets are made from a development site a framework plan will be required which addresses how to achieve the balance of public access and the protection of the existing Green/Blue Infrastructure site's asset. The framework plan should be informed by the GI Study and factor in the following:

- Indicative buffers for the important Green and/or Blue Infrastructure corridors which form part of the strategic networks such as watercourse corridors and disused railway lines; • Retain sites of historic environmental value;*
- Indicative buffers where required to protect important Green/Blue Infrastructure against adjacent developments;*
- Retain valued semi natural habitats; and*
- Set out the local network of Green/Blue Infrastructure and how it will be managed and developed.'*

Policy SDC 2

6.21. Policy SDC2 is entitled 'Landscaping' and states the following:

'The landscape aspects of a development proposal will be required to form an integral part of the overall design. A high standard of appropriate hard and soft landscaping will be required. All proposals should ensure that:

- Important site features have been identified for retention through a detailed site survey;*
- Features of ecological, geological and archaeological significance are retained and protected and opportunities for enhancing these features are utilised (consideration will also be given to the requirements of policies NE1 and SDC3 where relevant);*
- Opportunities for utilising sustainable drainage methods are incorporated;*
- New planting comprises native species which are of ecological value appropriate to the area;*
- In appropriate cases, there is sufficient provision for planting within and around the perimeter of the site to minimise visual intrusion on neighbouring uses or the countryside; and*
- Detailed arrangements are incorporated for the long-term management and maintenance of landscape features.'*

6.22. The Applicant's development proposals have been developed iteratively through the undertaking of this LVA. As such, the scale, mass, height and layout of the site has been considered to best integrate the intended scheme within its setting through the retention and enhancement of existing landscape fabric, with the design of public open space and green infrastructure to offset and reduce the potential effect of the scheme.

- 6.23. Furthermore, the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan identifies the strategy for the retention and bolstering of existing landscape fabric, as well as the scope of opportunity for new landscaping and habitat creation as part of the Proposed Development. Whilst, the detailed landscape design for the scheme would come forward at the Reserved Matters stage, there is scope for this planting to be of native species of local importance and where possible local provenance, as well as contribute to an ecological and biodiversity betterment at the Site.

Neighbourhood Planning

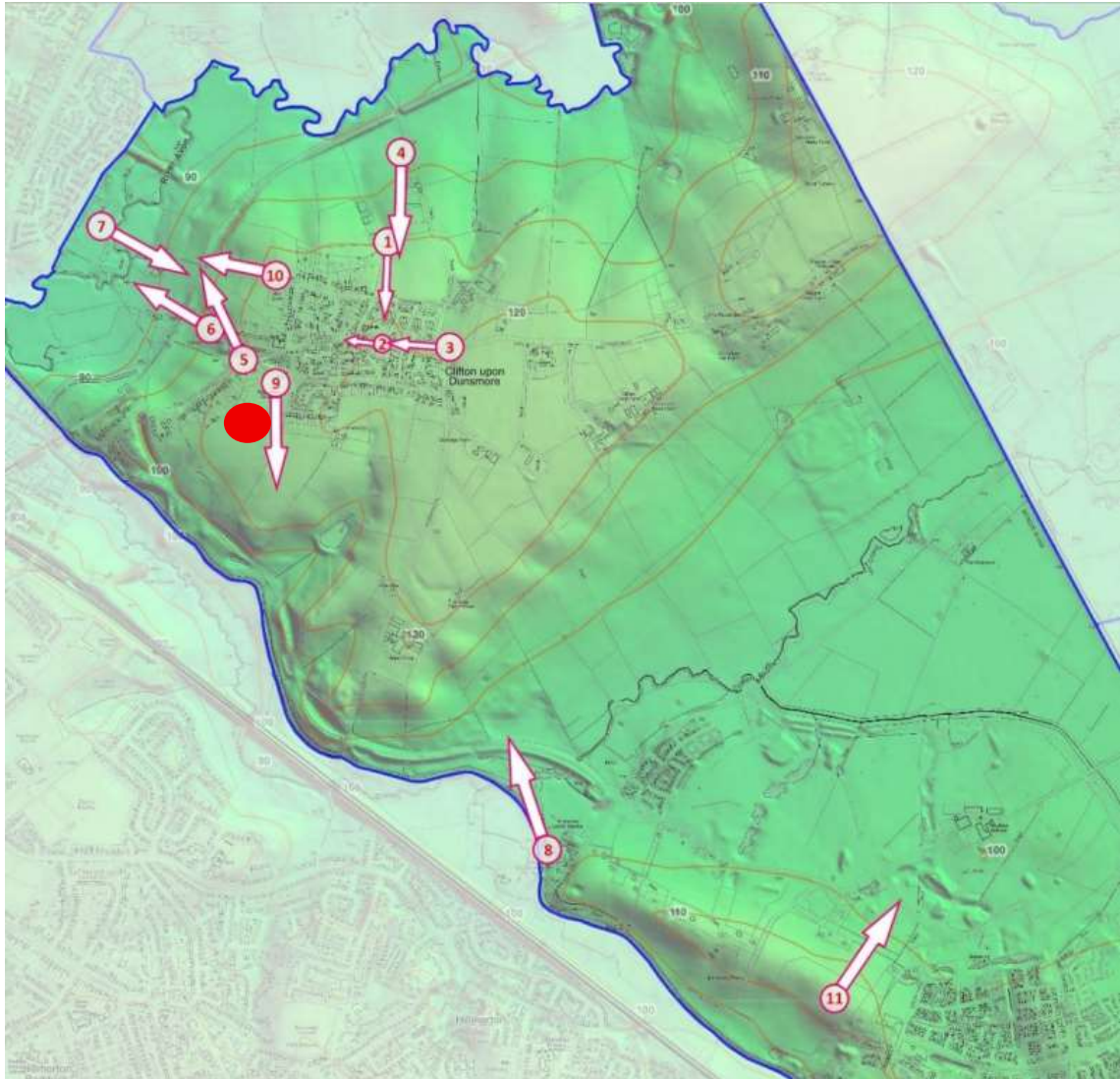
- 6.24. The Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan covers the parish area within the village is located. As of January 2025, this Neighbourhood Plan is at Draft stage, and is yet to be adopted (and 'Made'), and accordingly, its content can only be afforded limited weight.
- 6.25. Within Section 3 of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council identifies a 'Vision' for the future of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, amongst which the following is stated (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

'Any new development proposals should be shaped in such a way so that the village of Clifton upon Dunsmore can retain its independent, rural identity in its locality and its distinctiveness as a community. Houlton should develop alongside and in harmony with Clifton upon Dunsmore, whilst remaining a separate settlement. Key points for the vision are that:

- *Houlton, Rugby, and Clifton upon Dunsmore each have their own individual characteristics that will require a maintaining an appropriate level of separation, with the specific aim of avoiding each of the entities merging.*
- *Development will be high-quality, eco-friendly in design and operation and help to meet a local need.*
- *To link these communities, new walkways and cycle ways are needed between the village and Houlton, particularly along Hillmorton Lane and Lilbourne Road.*
- *Existing community facilities will be protected and new and enhanced facilities to meet the changing needs of the population supported.*
- *Hedgerows define the landscape and provide a valuable habitat for local flora and fauna along with open green spaces need to be preserved. These also must provide a clear separation from surrounding developments and provide essential space for recreation, for example walking the common land, Clifton upon Dunsmore Playing Field, the play areas at Houlton and fields along the river Avon.*
- *The vistas from Clifton upon Dunsmore are as important as are the outlooks within the village itself and which should be retained.'*

- 6.26. Important Views are indicated by the Parish Council in their Figure 11: Important views on page 47 of the neighbourhood Plan; see Image 6.2 below.

Image 6.2: Extract from the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (draft, January 2025). N.B. The approximate location of the Site is shown by BLADE with a solid red circle



6.27. These views are covered by Policy ENV 7 within the Neighbourhood Plan, which is entitled ‘Important Views’, and states the following (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

‘The following views (map figure 11, details Appendix 5) are important to the setting and character of the village. Development proposals should respect and whenever possible protect them. Development which would have an adverse impact on the identified views will not be supported.’

6.28. Given the foregoing, the discernibility of the Proposed Development is unlikely to effect the Parish Council’s View 1 and View 4 – ‘Gateway view (south) of Clifton upon Dunsmore village from Newton Road’ and ‘Distant view south from Newton Road of Clifton upon Dunsmore village and surrounding fields’ respectively; see Image 6.3.

6.29. This is demonstrated by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix BLA 3), whereby intervening landform, village related built form, mature tree groups and urban features restrict intervisibility with the Proposed Development.

6.30. View 9 is entitled 'From Clifton Recreation Ground, views south and southwest to Bluebell wood, Clifton Brook valley, the Oxford Canal (and Rugby)'; see Image 6.2 above. View 9 is appraised within this LVA; see Viewpoint 1 (Appendix BLA 5).

6.31. With consideration of View 8 situated 'From Hillmorton Locks northeast to Allan's Farm and (on skyline) Clifton upon Dunsmore village'; see Image 6.3 above. Paragraph 6.37 of the Neighbourhood Plan states the following:

'Hillmorton Locks is officially the busiest flight of locks in the country and lock number 2 is of particular interest as it retains the now rare cast-iron gates and is therefore Grade II Listed. Whilst the canal is used for leisure purposes the site is home to a 3,163 sq ft business centre that accommodates 11 units. The units range in size from 250sq ft to 1,000sq ft and are currently fully let. A list of the business can be seen in the supporting information.'

6.32. Relative to View 8, Policy CF3 is pertinent. This policy is entitled 'The Canal', and states the following (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

'Development proposals affecting the biodiversity, historic heritage or setting of the canal, including its business and leisure and recreational activities, will be required to protect or enhance those features.'

6.33. View 8 is appraised within this LVA; see Viewpoint 8,9 and 10. With consideration of Appendix BLA 3, the effect if intervening built form is sufficient to screen the Proposed Development at the Site, which is demonstrated further by Viewpoint 8,9 and 10 (Appendix BLA 5). None the less to respond to the draft Neighbourhood Plan, these viewpoints have been included for completeness.

6.34. With consideration of Policy G1 ('Settlement Boundaries') states the following (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

'Development proposals within the Neighbourhood Area will be supported on sites within the settlement boundaries as shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3 where the proposal complies with the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. Land outside the defined settlement boundaries will be treated as open countryside, where development will be carefully controlled in line with local and national strategic planning policies. Appropriate development in the countryside includes:

a) For the purposes of agriculture – including farm diversification and other land- based rural businesses;

b) For the provision of affordable housing through a rural exception site, where local need has been identified;

c) For the provision of formal recreation or sport use or for rural tourism that respects the character of the countryside.'

- 6.35. Policy ENV1 is entitled 'Local Green Space' and states the following (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

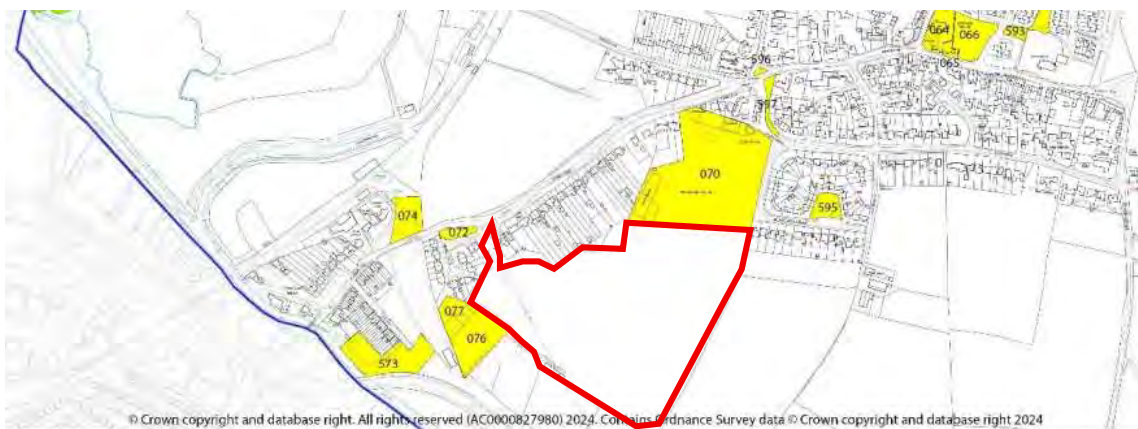
'Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the following Local Green Spaces (details Appendix 4; locations figures 5.1 and 5.2) will not be permitted other than in very special circumstances.'

- 6.36. With consideration of Figure 5.1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Site is located outside of, but neighbouring the Clifton Recreation Ground, which the Parish Council recognise as a Local Green Space.

- 6.37. This park is recognised by the Parish Council as a Local Green Space. The Proposed Development at the site would not directly impact the space, and provisional has been made within the scheme to marry the existing park with an extensive area of public open space within the development, and so extend the provision of the park further into the core of the new neighbourhood. This is beneficial measure and enhancement of the Local Green Space.

- 6.38. With consideration of Figure 6.1 ('Important Open Spaces, Clifton upon Dunsmore') of the Neighbourhood Plan, BLADE notes that the Site is not situated within, but neighbours 'Important Open Spaces'; see Image 6.4:

Image 6.4: Extract from the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (draft, January 2025). N.B. The approximate location of the Site is shown by BLADE with a solid red line



- 6.39. Policy ENV2 is entitled 'Important Open Space' and states the following (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

'Open Space, Sport & Recreation: the following open spaces (shaded yellow in figures 6.1 and 6.2) are of high value for recreation, sport and/or amenity. Development proposals that result in their loss, or have a significant adverse effect on them, will not be supported unless the open space is replaced by at least equivalent provision in an equally suitable location, or unless it can be demonstrated that the open space is no longer required by the community.

- 6.40. The Proposed Development is outside of this Local Green Space and would not directly impact the space.
- 6.41. With regard to Figure 8 ('Wildlife corridors') of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Site is situated outside but neighbouring a wildlife corridor running along the southern edge of the village; see Image 6.5:

Image 6.5: Extract from the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (draft, January 2025). N.B. The approximate location of the Site is shown by BLADE with a solid red line



- 6.42. Policy ENV4 is entitled 'Biodiversity across the Neighbourhood Area' and states the following (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

'a. All new development proposals in the Neighbourhood Area will be expected to safeguard habitats and species, including those of local significance, and to deliver biodiversity net gain. If significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided (through relocating to an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or dealt with through onsite or offsite enhancement (via biodiversity net gain at minimum 10%), planning permission should be refused, having regard for paragraph 180a of the National Planning Policy Framework.

'b. Notable trees (veteran, ancient, those with TPO designations, and those regarded as significant by the community) on sites proposed for development across the Neighbourhood Area should be protected from felling, uprooting or damage unless they have been independently judged by a qualified arboriculturist to present an unmanageable public safety risk.

Development proposals that would damage or result in the loss of woodland will not be supported unless the environmental and ecological harm is demonstrably outweighed by the benefits of the development. Development proposals affecting trees or woodland should be accompanied by a full tree Survey that establishes the health and longevity of all trees within the site. When fulfilment of biodiversity net gain involves replacement of trees or woodland, compensatory plantings should be of native or appropriate ornamental species and should take account of current best practice regarding plant disease control and aftercare.

c. Development proposals will only be supported if they do not adversely affect the habitat connectivity provided by the wildlife corridors identified in figure 8.'

6.43. With consideration of the Neighbourhood Plan, BLADE also notes the following:

Arboricultural Considerations

6.44. The proposed development has been appraised through an Arboriculture Assessment and Arboriculture Impact Assessment (conforming to BS 5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction).

6.45. The arborist confirmed that the National Planning Policy Framework states at section 193 c) that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

6.46. The Arborist confirmed that there are no ancient or veteran trees, and no ancient woodland on, or adjacent to the site. The hedges are of low quality around the site and any loss could be mitigated through the restoration of the retained sections to give a net gain in hedgerow quality.

Heritage Considerations

6.47. With consideration of the site-specific Heritage Impact Assessment (prepared by Marrons) in support of this Planning Application. There are no heritage assets within the Site, and the land is found outside of any Conservation Area. There are no Scheduled Monuments or Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields within, or in close proximity to the Site.

6.48. The Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Conservation Area is situated within circa 0.2km north of the Site, being separated by Clifton Recreation Ground. The Author of the assessment summarised:

'Whilst the proposed development will take up rural land adjacent to the settlement of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, the strength of the connection that the conservation area shares with its rural hinterland would not be viscerally diminished.

Accounting for modern development that near envelops the whole southern side of the conservation area, an absence of inter-visibility and the lack of the Site's contribution to western approaches into the conservation area, the proposed development will have a neutral impact upon the setting and significance of the conservation area.'

6.49. The Author of this assessment concluded:

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'The proposed development will have a neutral impact upon the setting and significance of the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Conservation Area.'

6.50. Regarding Heritage Landscape Character Areas, the Assessor for the assessment found the following:

'The Site lies across two different HLC Areas characterised by the Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (not reproduced). The majority of the Site lies within the HLC Type Other Large Rectilinear Fields, whereas the northwestern corner element lies within the HLC Type Post 1955 Semi-Detached.'

6.51. BLADE notes that the village may be surrounded on all sides by fields, however the Conservation Area itself is separated from surrounding countryside, except to the east and far north, by modern residential development and the large village park. However, the wider context of the village is not easily read once within the Conservation Area, and given the intervening topography and development, there is no inter-visibility between the village's historic core and the Site.

Summary

6.52. BLADE summaries the planning policy background for this site as follows:

- The NPPF shows a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- The site does not fall within, or adjoin, any National or Local landscape designation, and is not afforded any elevated protection under National or Local Planning Policy.
- There are no heritage assets within or adjoining the quantum of the site.
- The arboriculture and landscape resources of the site are restricted to the site boundaries and are of relative value as a landscape fabric. There are no Veteran trees on site or adjoining its boundaries.
- In the adopted Local Plan, the Local Planning Authority recognise a settlement boundary (built-up area boundary) as part of its adopted Policies Map. The site is located adjacent to the settlement boundary.

6.53. In summary, the Local Planning Policies contain a number of overarching policies of relevance to this study. The main themes of these policies, against which the proposed development could be tested, have been summarised here for convenience:

- Development proposals should consider the latest Landscape Character Assessment and its guidelines to retain and manage landscape features that contribute to wider landscape character and the setting of development;

- New development should seek to protect and restore the primary characteristics defined in character assessments and important features of the host landscape character area; and
- The location, materials, scale and use of any proposed development should be sympathetic to and complement local landscape character.

7.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Character

Existing Landscape Character Assessment

- 7.1. This section appraises the existing, or baseline conditions of the character of the Site, and its landscape context through consideration of published landscape assessments.
- 7.2. Such an assessment is worthwhile in enabling a better understanding of the site, and its context, but rarely delivers sufficiently site-specific or contemporary information to enable robust conclusions about the significance of any change through the proposed development. As such, BLADE has also undertaken its own field-based assessment of the site and its context, which is included later in this section.

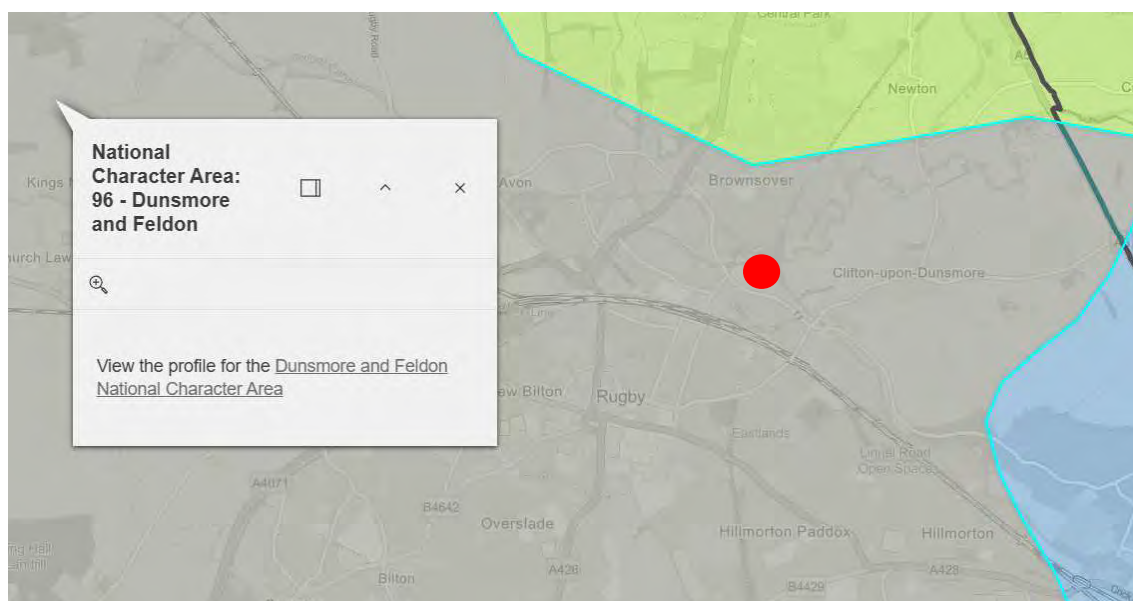
Background Published Evidence Base Documents

- 7.3. The following documents are relevant and will be discussed as appropriate later in this LVA:
- Natural England National Character Assessment (online resource);
 - Warwickshire County Council's Landscape Guidelines (published 1993); and
 - Rugby Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2025)

National Character Assessment

- 7.4. The landscape of England has been subject to a nationwide Landscape Character Assessment, 'The Character of England: Landscape, Wildlife and Natural Features' (Natural England). The site is located wholly within the National Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon; see Image BLA 7.1:

Image BLA 7.1: Extract from Natural England's NCA on-line map. N.B. The approximate location of the Site is shown by BLADE with a solid red circle



7.5. Natural England describe this national Character Areas as follows:

*'Dunsmore and Feldon is predominantly a rural, agricultural landscape, crossed by numerous small rivers and tributaries and varying between a more open character in the Feldon area and a wooded character in Dunsmore. The name Feldon refers to the old English term *feld* meaning 'open cleared land' and expresses the contrast, in medieval times, with the more wooded Arden area to the north-west. The area is mainly within Warwickshire, with the southern boundary delineated by the steep limestone escarpment of the Cotswolds, and the northern boundary by the Leicestershire Vales. To the west lie the well-wooded pastures of Arden, together with the Severn and Avon Vales, while the undulating pastures and low hills of the Northamptonshire Uplands form the eastern border.'*

7.6. Natural England recognises a number key characteristics for this National scale landscape area, including the following:

- *'The sense of a predominantly quiet, rural landscape is heightened by its close proximity to several urban areas, with a gently undulating landscape of low hills, heathland plateaux and clay vales separated by the occasional upstanding escarpment.'*
- *Generally low woodland cover across the area, although there are areas of well-wooded character and ancient woodlands, especially in the north, providing habitats for bluebells, molluscs and fritillary butterflies; these woodlands are linked with landscaped parklands and hedgerow trees.*
- *Narrow, meandering river valleys with pollarded willows, streamside alders and patches of scrub supporting dipper, kingfisher, otter and Atlantic stream crayfish.*
- *Canals, including the Grand Union Canal, and Draycote Reservoir provide important riparian habitats and a well-used recreational resource.*
- *Mainly large fields, with regular or rectilinear shapes, although some smaller fields also feature. Numerous areas of remnant ridge-and-furrow and earthwork remains of medieval settlements as found at Lower Tysoe, Radwell and Napton on the Hill.*
- *Predominantly nucleated settlement pattern with a low density of isolated farmsteads and some field barns sitting within a landscape of piecemeal and planned enclosure of the open fields which extended from the villages over large parts of this area. Many villages have recently expanded but the traditional buildings, constructed of red brick or Lias limestone, still retain their blue brick or ironstone details.'*

7.7. At over 70,000 Hectares, the National Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon covers a very extensive tract of land extending from Coventry and Rugby in its north-northeast across to Leamington Spa and Streford-upon-Avon in the southwest, and the edge of the Cotswold National Landscape in the south. It is a relatively narrow, linear and low-lying landscape, often clearly delineated at its edges by higher ground.

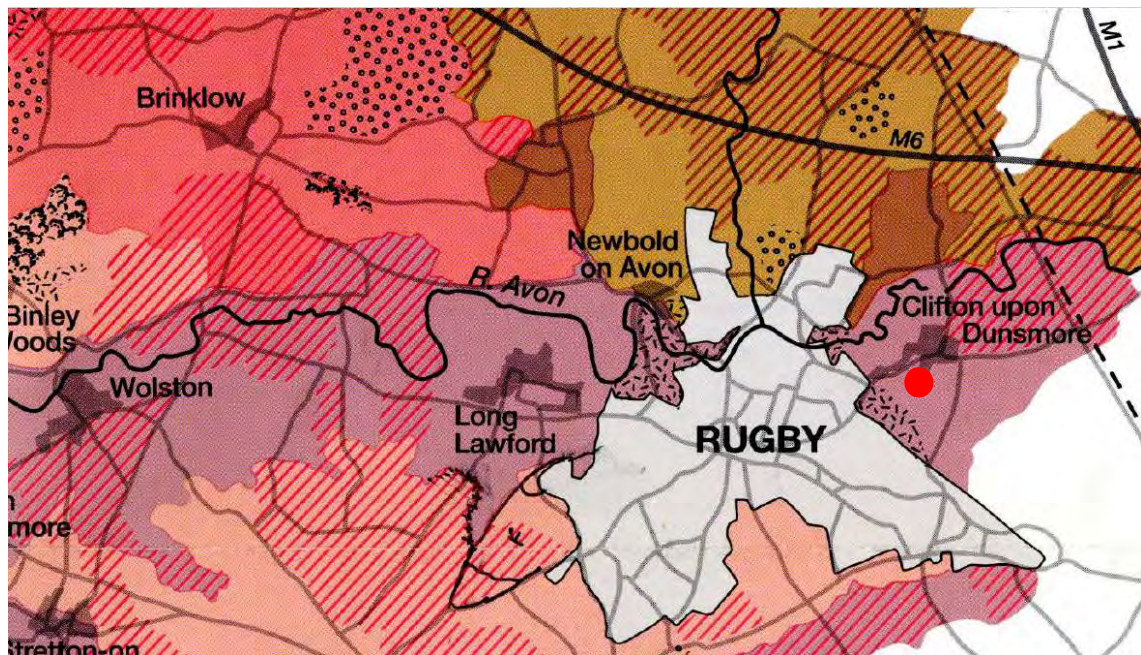
- 7.8. Given our field-based assessment, it is considered, that whilst Natural England’s descriptions are broadly representative of the wider landscape, it is too generic to provide specific characterisation of the Site.
- 7.9. For the scale of the Site and potential developable area the description of landscape character undertaken at a more localised level are more relevant in establishing the landscape resource baseline.

Warwickshire County Council’s Landscape Guidelines

- 7.10. At a county level a landscape character assessment was completed for Warwickshire in 1993. In this work the site falls within the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area; see Image 7.2. The Dunsmore Landscape Character Area is described as:

‘An Intensively farmed, and in places urbanised, region, with a varied rolling, dissected topography characterised by low glacial plateaux and incised, meandering river valleys.’

Image 7.2: Extract from the Warwickshire County Council’s Landscape Guidelines, Dunsmore Landscape Character Area map. N.B. The approximate location of the Site is shown by BLADE with a solid red circle



- 7.11. In 1993, the County Council recommended a general landscape strategy which would *‘enhance the identity and unity of the landscape by strengthening the wooded, heathy character of the region’*
- 7.12. In their 1993 study, the County Council divided this regional landscape character area into smaller landscape types, within which the Site is found within the Plateau Fringe Landscape Type; see Image 7.2 above. The Plateau Fringes Landscape Type is described by the County Council as follows:

‘A rather variable, often large scale farmed landscape with a varied undulating topography and characterised by a nucleated settlement pattern of small, often shrunken village.’

7.13. The County Council recognise the following key characteristics of this Landscape Type (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

- 'An undulating topography of low rounded hills and narrow meandering river valleys.
- Large, arable fields, often with poorly defined field pattern.
- Pockets of permanent pasture and smaller hedged fields, usually associated with more steeply sloping ground.
- A nucleated settlement pattern typically comprising loose clusters of dwellings.
- Isolated brick built farmsteads.'

7.14. The County Council details a management strategy for the long term continuity of the Landscape Character Area, which states:

'Enhance the overall; structure and key features within the farmed landscape.'

7.15. The County Council continues and states:

'The Plateau fringe is an intensively farmed agricultural landscape where the pattern of large hedged fields and woods is a key visual element. This is complemented by the pastoral river corridors of the Avon and Learn. Where this pattern has become fragmented, the overall structure of the landscape is in decline, emphasising the large scale nature of the underlying topography. The priority in such areas should be to enhance the structure and unity of the landscape by restoring or strengthening primary linear features, combined with a programme of large scale woodland planting.'

7.16. For this Landscape Character Area, The County Council number of strategic/headline landscape guidelines for the Plateau Fringe Landscape Type, with an overall management strategy recommended which states:

7.17. For this Landscape Type, the County Council provide a number of strategic/headline landscape guidelines, for which the following have been pertinent in the iterative development of the Development Proposals for the Site:

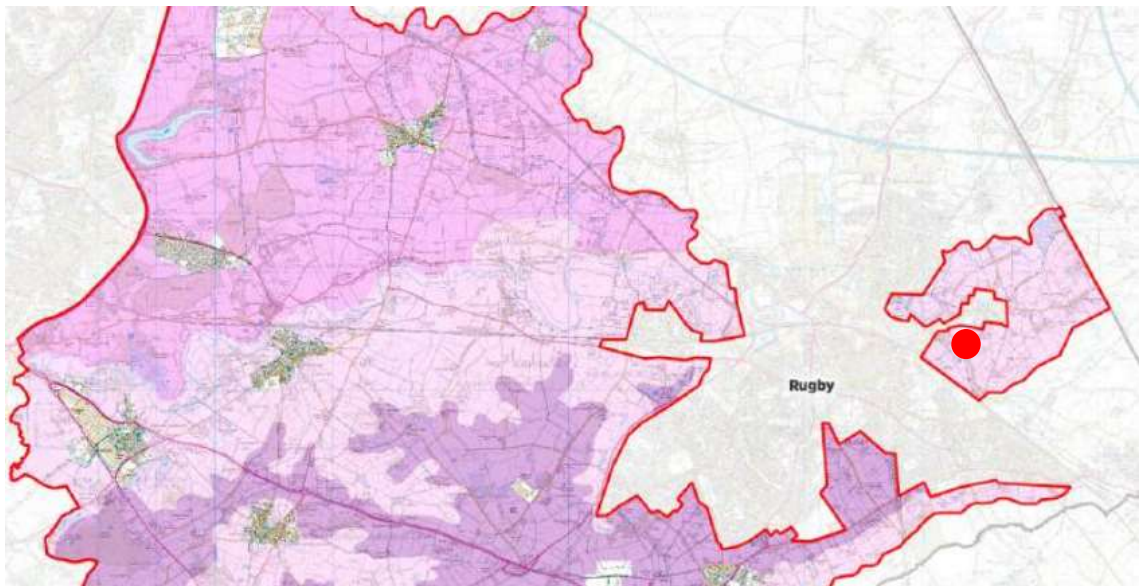
- *'Conserve and restore all primary hedge lines and manage them more positively as landscape features.*
- *Conserve the visual and ecological continuity of the river corridors.*
- *Encourage the development of wide field margins along streamline and woodland edges.*
- *Encourage the continuity and wooded character of river corridors and stream corridors.*

- *Conserve and enhance the tree cover within and around rural settlements.*
- *Enhance tree cover through large scale planting on rising ground.'*

Rugby Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2025)

- 7.18. The Local Planning Authority's borough wide landscape character assessment was recently published in January 2025. The LPA finds the Site within the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area; albeit on its peripheral eastern edge; see Image 7.3:

Image 7.3: Extract from the Rugby Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2025). N.B. The approximate location of the Site is shown by BLADE with a solid red circle



- 7.19. The LPA describes the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area as follows (N.B. BLADE has underlined those landscape features common to the site's surrounding context within the open countryside):

'This area, with its intensively farmed and partially urbanised landscape, is marked by varied rolling topography and characterised by low glacial plateau and meandering river valleys. The widespread presence of glacial sands and gravels has contributed to its historical association with heathland and common land, despite little of the heath remaining today. However, remnant heathy vegetation and frequent 'Heath' place names reflect the area's strong regional identity. Semi-natural habitats are limited to small pockets of unimproved grassland, wetland areas and flood meadows along river corridors, as well as ancient woodland complexes to the west. These ancient woodlands, mature hedgerow oaks and historic parklands, give the region a well-wooded appearance.'

- 7.20. Further to this, the LPA lists a number of key characteristics of this landscape character area, some of which include the following (N.B. BLADE has underlined those landscape features common to the site's surrounding context within the open countryside):

- **‘Land cover/flora & fauna:** Woodland cover is low, and primarily concentrated to the west, with areas of ancient woodland which support Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides nonscripta*), Molluscs (*Mollusca*) and Fritillary butterflies (*Argynnis*). The Princethorpe Woodlands are the most important cluster of ancient woodlands in Warwickshire and an outstanding example of a large area of semi-natural habitat.
- **Landform:** The Dunsmore Plateau stretches ten miles to the west of Rugby and reaches 120m AOD near Dunchurch.
- **Settlement:** Settlements including Leamington Spa, Coventry and Rugby have a strong influence on the area, met with key transport infrastructure and large warehousing units. Traditional villages within the borough are constructed from local materials such as red brick and Lias limestone.
- **Land use:** Predominantly nucleated settlement pattern with a low density of isolated farmsteads and barns. The landscape is intensively farmed.
- **Enclosure:** The landscape features large fields with regular or rectilinear shapes, although some smaller fields also feature.
- **Sounds:** Key transport infrastructure, urban development and large warehousing units have a strong influence on the aural quality of Dunsmore.
- **Sights:** The landscape features arable fields alongside urban development.’

7.21. The LPA further divide this landscape character area into smaller landscape types, for which the Site is located within the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type; see Image 7.3. The LPA describes the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type as follows (N.B. BLADE has underlined those landscape features common to the site’s surrounding context within the open countryside):

‘Plateau Fringe is a variable, farmed landscape with a gently undulating topography of low rounded hills and narrow meandering river valleys of the Avon and Leam. The Plateau Fringe is characterised by its large arable fields and poorly defined field patterns, interspersed with pockets of permanent pasture, river meadowland and small hedged fields. Small, nucleated villages are a characteristic feature, comprising of loose clusters of dwellings and isolated, brick built farmsteads.’

7.22. Under the sub-heading ‘Forces for Change’, the LPA highlights the following factors in the long term integrity and continuity of this host landscape:

- *‘Inappropriate development bordering woodlands, causing habitat fragmentation and species isolation.*
- *Loss of mature trees remnant from the 1970s epidemic has exacerbated habitat fragmentation.*

- *Loss of hedgerows due to urban development and agricultural intensification. The creation of larger fields has exacerbated habitat fragmentation. In addition, there has been a general decline in the practice of hedge laying and an increase in annual trimming, resulting in gaps and loss of structure.*
- *Sensitive design is lacking in some new residential developments, particularly around historic villages and Rugby's peri-urban areas. A high number of converted redundant farm buildings for residential and holiday use are not in line with the landscape character.*
- *Significant decrease in the number of dairy farms and mixed farming in the area.*
- *Ridge and furrow and other historical earthworks continue to be lost as a result of ploughing, reseeding and the conversion to arable land.'*

7.23. As discussed earlier in Section 4 of this LVA, this host landscape has an overall management strategy which seeks to *'plan, manage and protect the distinctiveness of the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area'*. This strategy would retain existing landscape fabric, and ensure it is bolstered and enhanced with similar native planting as well as providing new green infrastructure for the scheme. The LPA's guidance for the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area includes:

- *Protect hedgerows and hedgerow trees, many of which are Oak trees (Quercus robur).*
- *Maintaining and enhancing the enclosed wooded character of the landscape. This is especially important in Dunsmore Parklands which is generally in decline.*
- *Maintaining and enhancing the distinctive character of the landscape. This is especially important in Plateau Farmlands where a large area between Cawston Spinney and the Coventry Road is in decline.*
- *Enhance the structure and key features of the farmed landscape. This is especially important in the Plateau Fringe which is generally in decline.*
- *Planting of woodlands should be encouraged where appropriate. The mosaic of habitats including woodlands, hedgerows and heathlands, alongside the sustainable management of agricultural land will enhance the character of the landscape.*
- *Protect and manage the historic character and settlement pattern, including the deserted settlements, ancient settlements, veteran trees, farmsteads, country houses and landscaped parklands. This will enhance the educational and recreational experience for urban and rural communities.'*

7.24. BLADE considers that the description of the Landscape Character Area and the smaller Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type is broadly consistent with the landscape character and typical features of the Site's receiving environment.

- 7.25. The Site is situated as running along the village's southwestern edge. The village of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore is located on a topographical plateau, and the Site is found between the built up village edge and the incised sloped land at the edge of the plateau. Locally to the Site, this plateau edge is not an unbreeched 'watershed' – development already lines the northern boundary to the Site to create an established collection of dwellings with domestic curtilages aligned to the roadways of the village, as well as a community park neighbouring the Site,
- 7.26. In a landscape and village character sense, this built form, and the wider village environment which can be seen from the site area, reinforces the peri-urban/village edge location. This is particularly the case, when one considers the limited visual envelope (or zone of principle visibility) for the land. The site is enclosed by this residential development from the southwest to the northeast, which has an open aspect along the southern edge which is experienced as very broad with open views. This greater scale and sense of openness is a contrast and reinforces the site's village edge location.
- 7.27. This perception is further reinforced through the landscape fabric at the site being impoverished as a result of several decades of intensive arable farming. Whilst there are a number of mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees, neither the condition of the site, or its character, are unique or rare locally.
- 7.28. Consequently, it is considered, that the published analysis and assessment of landscape character provides a contextual appreciation of the wider landscape. When on site, especially during winter-time months, one is aware of the presence of the surrounding village related land uses, albeit on the edge of the village, rather than feeling divorced from it in open countryside. Given this the Site is experienced as within the 'built limits' of the southwestern village edge.

Site Specific Landscape Character and Landscape Sensitivity

- 7.29. To independently assess the likely level of landscape and visual effects which the development proposals might incur will require an appropriately detailed assessment of the Site itself and its immediate surroundings.
- 7.30. Recognising that 'landscape' is a multi-dimensional concept embracing 'what we see', its time-depth and physical attributes, this LVA reviews and assesses change to landscape character in terms of the physical landscape and the Site's character. The Site context has been described in Section 2, and earlier in this section.

Landscape Susceptibility

- 7.31. Landscape sensitivity, the susceptibility of the landscape to change, is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation.
- 7.32. With consideration of the published Landscape Character Assessment for the Rugby Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2025), this assessment notes that the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type is generally 'intensively farmed and partially urbanised landscape, is marked by varied rolling topography' with its low woodland cover with 'large fields with regular or rectilinear shapes' and 'arable fields alongside urban development.'

- 7.33. The LPA highlights the need to 'plan, manage and protect the distinctiveness of the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area' seeking to 'protect hedgerows and hedgerow trees, many of which are Oak trees (*Quercus robur*), and to 'enhance the structure and key features of the farmed landscape; this is especially important in the Plateau Fringe which is generally in decline', and where it 'sensitive design is lacking in some new residential developments, particularly around historic villages and Rugby's peri-urban areas.
- 7.34. It is clear that the nature of the Proposed Development is consistent with the existing scale, pattern and land use of the prevailing character within the wider village of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, and the immediate built up area along Vicarage Hill and Rugby Road, and the roadways thereof. There is scope for mitigation which would be in keeping with the local landscape character, as well as proposing new landscaping to reduce the long term concerns for landscape surrounding the Site's location, and the current detracting features. The overall susceptibility of the Site is medium.

Landscape Value

- 7.35. As set out within GLVIA version 3, when analysing the landscape baseline, it is necessary to establish the relative value of the potentially affected landscape. Para. 5.19 of the GLVIA version 3 states 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.'
- 7.36. The Site does not lie within a designated landscape. TGN 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations identifies a range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value. Table 3 is derived from TGN 02/21 and provides a description as to the extent the valued factors are present within the Site based upon both the published landscape character and Site specific character; see Table BLA 7.1:

Table BLA 7.1 - Site Specific Landscape Appraisal by BLADE

Aspect	Definition	Observations
Natural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	<p>As set out in the Preliminary Ecological Assessment for the Site, the Site consists of a range of habitats including scrub, native hedgerow and scattered hedgerow trees. However, the majority of the Site is managed for arable crop production.</p> <p>Trees are situated within the boundaries rather than within the Site's interior. There are no trees within the Site's interior, and there are no Veteran trees within the site, or adjoining its quantum. Hedgerows are of native species commonly found locally to the Site, although the eastern boundary hedgerow is degraded and outgrown. In places, hedgerows have declined and lacking scattered hedgerow trees, given parts of the site an impoverished feel.</p> <p>The natural heritage of the Site is therefore considered to be medium to low.</p>
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	<p>There are no designated heritage assets within the Site, the Site is not situated within a Conservation Area, Registered Park or Garden, Registered Battlefield or World Heritage Site.</p> <p>The cultural heritage of the Site is therefore considered to be low to none.</p>
Landscape Condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure.	<p>The Site is managed for arable crops and enclosed with linear hedgerows and scattered occasional hedge line trees. Hedgerows are of native species commonly found locally to the Site, although the eastern boundary hedgerow is degraded and outgrown. In places, hedgerows have declined and lacking scattered hedgerow trees, given parts of the site an impoverished feel.</p> <p>The Site is reflective of its 'intensively farmed and partially urbanised landscape, is marked by varied rolling topography' with its low woodland cover with 'large fields with regular or rectilinear shapes' and 'arable fields alongside urban development.'</p> <p>The Site is bounded by residential development to the north and western edge of the village, which overlooks the site and this Settlement edge is readily discernible. This gives the site a peri-urban setting.</p> <p>The condition of the Site is therefore considered to be medium.</p>
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.	<p>The Site itself has no known notable cultural associations with art, literature or events in history.</p> <p>Associations are therefore considered to be low to none.</p>

Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity and whether it contains rare character or features which are considered particularly important examples.	The Site contains some features consistent with the Plateau Fringes Landscape Type (Warwickshire County Council's Landscape Guidelines, a993) including 'an Intensively farmed, and in places urbanised, region, with a varied rolling, dissected topography characterised by low glacial plateaux and incised, meandering river valleys', 'undulating topography of low rounded hills and narrow meandering river valleys' and 'large, arable fields, often with poorly defined field pattern.' For the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area and the smaller Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type (Rugby Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2025) the Site demonstrates common features including 'its 'intensively farmed and partially urbanised landscape, is marked by varied rolling topography' with its low woodland cover with 'large fields with regular or rectilinear shapes' and 'arable fields alongside urban development.' The distinctiveness of the Site is therefore considered to be medium .
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.	There is no Public Access to the site or a Public Right of Way ('PRoW') within or passing immediately along the Site's boundaries. There is a limited network of PRoW routes within the setting of the Site, especially within the initial 1 km distance of the site's location. There is a small number of PRoW passing along the village edge nearest to the site's location; see Appendix BLA 1. A National Trail Long Distance Walking Route passes along the Oxford Canal as well as the Shakespeare's Avon Way National Trail which links Clifton-upon-Dunsmore to the wider open countryside. Beyond this, PRoW pass through the wider open countryside and are generally linear in their route and limited in frequency possibly reflecting the large agricultural field pattern beyond the village. The recreational value of the Site is therefore considered to be low .
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.	The character of the Site is influenced by its surrounding context, being a location on the edge of existing dwellings and the village edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. Development already lines Rugby Road and residential streets thereof around the periphery of the Site to create an established collection of large, detached dwellings with domestic curtilages aligned to this roadway. There are limited locations (particularly within the wider landscape to the northeast to the southeast) and from within lower lying landform to the southeast to southwest where the Site is visible in public views given the existing vegetation and landform feature which slopes incisely from the plateau around Clifton-upon-Dunsmore down to the Oxford Canal and the urban edge of Rugby. The perceptual quality of the Site is therefore considered to be medium .

- 7.37. Overall, the Site is considered to be of medium landscape value. When combined with the susceptibility of the landscape (medium), the Site is considered to exhibit and medium landscape sensitivity.

8.0 POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Potential Effect on the Site's Landscape Resources

- 8.1. The construction of the Proposed Development would have a degree of adverse effects, but these would be for a temporary time period and would cease on completion of the construction phase. However, this effect would not be detrimental to the enjoyment and appreciation of the wider landscape, and should not, in and of itself, be a reason to raise an objection either by the Local Planning Authority or consultees.
- 8.2. The construction works will result in changes to the landscape of the site by way of the site clearance, including removal of pasture, sections of hedgerow plus topsoil stripping. This will be followed by the construction work including the bulk earthworks required to accommodate the proposed development platforms and access roads, plus the construction of the new buildings themselves.
- 8.3. Boundary hedgerows and trees will be protected in accordance with BS 5837:2012 – Trees in relation to de-sign, demolition and construction – Recommendations, prior to commencement and retained throughout the construction phase. A proposed landscape scheme, indicated by the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) will be implemented during the first available planting season, with the emphasis on achieving ecological enhancement and integration into the surrounding landscape, which would have a beneficial effect on landscape resources as well as visual amenity.

Potential Effects during the Construction Stage

- 8.4. During construction, the principal effects as a result of the proposed scheme will be the transition of the site from an agricultural landscape ('arable fields alongside urban development') to a new residential development (prior to the maturation of mitigation planting). For the purposes of this assessment, activities that could cause landscape and visual effects include:
- Clearance of vegetation within the construction area, where appropriate;
 - Erection of site hoarding and fencing around vegetation (tree protection scheme);
 - Earthworks and temporary storage of topsoil;
 - Removal of unwanted waste from the site;
 - Erection of temporary structures within the main contractor's construction compound, plus materials stockpiling and lay-down areas;
 - Potential lighting of the works (particularly during winter months);
 - Erection of scaffold structures;

- Movement of construction vehicles, including mobile cranes;
- Improvements to access points to the western boundary (pedestrian and vehicular) and construction of the internal access/road circulation routes;
- Formation of SUDs drainage system including excavation for open-air attenuation.
- Works associated with the implementation of the landscape scheme; and
- Removal of temporary construction facilities.

Changes to the landscape character of the Site (Direct Effects)

- 8.5. Construction activities, movement of site traffic, lighting, noise, and sound would be present during the construction process. This would be carefully controlled by a conditioned construction method statement. Recommendations for protection of the retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with relevant British Standards such as BS 5837: 2012, would ensure the rooting areas of the trees and hedge-rows are not adversely affected by the construction process.
- 8.6. The construction stage is a temporary phase, and the effects generated through the buildings out of this new housing would cease after the development has been completed. The development proposed would change the character of the site from a green field and later the landscape fabric at the site.
- 8.7. Within the Site, construction activity will inevitably result in a high magnitude of change on the existing nature of the agricultural field, however this is a discrete geographical unit of the wider landscape. The existing field boundary vegetation and hedge line trees would be retained with the exception of those sections removed to accommodate the Site access off Banbury Road. .
- 8.8. Given the presence of construction activities (including movement of site traffic, lighting, noise and sounds), and the conversion of the Site from agricultural to new houses, a noticeable adverse change upon the perceptual and sensory dimension of the Site's character is not surprising during the construction stage.
- 8.9. The sensitivity of the landscape character of the Site is considered to be medium. The magnitude of change is considered to be very high. Therefore, there are likely to be direct, temporary, short-term, adverse effects which are considered to be Major/-moderate adverse. Effects are adverse and significant. These are direct effects within the quantum of the Site area only and experienced on a temporary base during the construction stage.
- 8.10. The impacts identified above at the construction stage will be carefully controlled by the Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) which will form as part of the additional mitigation strategy.

Changes to the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type during the Construction Stage ('Indirect Effects')

- 8.11. During the temporary construction period, construction activities (including movement of Site traffic, lighting, noise and sounds) will be ever-present during the construction process.

- 8.12. During construction, the proposed scheme will not directly affect the wider landscape context as the physical effects of construction (i.e. changes to fabric and character) will be contained within the Site (a 'direct effect').
- 8.13. There will be localised excavation of land, ground remodelling and the storage of topsoil, and removal of vegetation where required to facilitate the Site access. Additionally, movement and machinery associated with the site operations will introduce additional localised activity. In the wider context, higher-level construction activities may be visible, and experienced.
- 8.14. The sensitivity of the landscape character of the immediate Site context within the host landscape character area is considered to be medium. The key sensitivities and values published for this Landscape type are largely not relevant to the immediate context of the Site which is 'arable fields alongside urban development' and nestled within the wider village built up area along the southwestern edge of the village, and separated from the wider open countryside by the incised plateau landform and also Oxford Canal.
- 8.15. The magnitude of change is considered to be high . Therefore, there is likely to be a direct, temporary, short-term, adverse effect which is considered to be Moderate adverse and will extend for only the duration of the construction stage.

Changes to the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area (Regional)

- 8.16. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; Negligible/Imperceptible.

Changes to the National Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon (National)

- 8.17. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; Negligible/Imperceptible.

Potential Effects at Year 1 Operation

- 8.18. The main changes to the Site which would influence the landscape resources and visual amenity at the Operation Stage (Year 1) are as follows:
- New buildings and structures engaged in a non-agricultural land use;
 - car vehicle movement into and out of the site.
 - Juvenile landscaping (prior to establishment and maturation);
 - Flood attenuation and habitat areas.

Changes to the landscape character of the Site (Direct Effects)

- 8.19. Following construction and the establishment of the landscape strategy, existing landscape fabric and new landscaping will be managed in accordance with an appropriate landscape management plan, or similar, to ensure the longevity of the green infrastructure as part of the development.

- 8.20. The implementation of the proposed development would become part of the built settlement along the southwestern edge of the village, and the scheme would adopt similar characteristics of built form within the residential street adjoining the Site. The scheme would retain and bolster the existing field pattern and would not physically extend beyond these limits which are defined by the existing field hedgerows and scattered hedge line trees.
- 8.21. The development would retain the general landform trend through the Site and so would still enable the perception of the typically gently rolling landform across the site from the northwest to the southeastern edge of the site, and the landform experienced along this southwestern periphery of the village, within which the scheme would be located.
- 8.22. The scheme would retain and bolster the existing hedgerows, and through a careful and considered landscape/green structure strategy create new soft landscape edges to the Site. These landscape areas would set development well within the site's boundary and have been deliberately restrained to retain extensive areas of the Site as open and undeveloped, and realise green corridors through the scheme to the extensive public open space along the southern Site edge.
- 8.23. The intended scheme proposes to bolster existing hedgerows and trees to the Site's edges, and would re-establish weak hedgerow lines and plant new hedge lines and plant native trees, grassland and fruit tree orchard planting of local species.
- 8.24. The masterplan of the site has devised a new access from Newhall Close/Rugby Road, where there are a number of semi-detached and detached dwellings. Masonry walls, timber close board fencing, formal pathways, private driveways and garages can be seen to these houses, with pedestrian footpaths and street lighting along the formal highways.
- 8.25. From a landscape and village character perspective, these domestic curtilages contribute to the village edge character and define a transition from open countryside (in a landscape sense) to the built core of the village.
- 8.26. The landscape mitigation measures integrated within the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) would establish new landscape infrastructure across the wider site area enhancing existing weak fabric, enhancing existing hedgerow and tree planting and providing new tree planting and open space areas of semi-natural and natural green space through the scheme. However, this new planting would be too juvenile to offset and reduce effects, with the character of the Proposed Development at Year 1 being a recently built collection houses with associated infrastructure.
- 8.27. Overall, the change in land use would result in a high magnitude of change on the sensory and perceptual dimensions of the landscape character. However, it is important to remember, this is not a reflection on the quality of the design for the new neighbourhood, but of the process that requires an assumption to be made that most people would see the visual and sensory change, from greenfield to development, as adverse. The resulting level of effect would be Moderate, adverse.

Changes to the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type ('Indirect Effects')

8.28. At Year 1, the magnitude of change across the site would be tempered by the following considerations:

- The development optimises the retention of the existing landform and be set back within the open space corridors within the wider Site area with strong tree lines which enclose the Site – especially through the Site and along its southern and western boundaries.
- The scheme is not experienced as prominent within views from the open countryside setting, especially when one considers the Site's peri urban location with the backdrop of village-related built form surrounding the Site's southwestern to northeastern edge.
- The scheme is designed to be of limited scale and density to integrate within the core of the Site area, retaining significant part of the site as new green corridors and spatial buffers for green infrastructure within which the intended built form would be integrated.
- The scheme would retain and enhance areas of the existing green fields, including significant areas retained as open and landscaped with natural and semi-natural vegetation which has a native focus. These spaces would act as buffers to the proposed development and contribute to the greening up of the scheme to offset and reduce the direct effects of the new built form.
- The proposed development would be consistent – in land use terms – with the neighbouring residential development overlooking the site from the southwest to northeast. This would not constitute a land use that is either un-neighbourly or incongruous in the settlement context. This is demonstrated by our field-based assessment (Section 5), whereby, BLADE determined that the site have a minor Zone of Primary, seen on the approach into/out of the village primarily.

8.29. This existing and new landscape fabric would be appropriately maintained for longevity to conserve and enhance the local landscape character and facilitate bio-diversity improvements, retain the Site's 'large fields with regular or rectilinear shapes', 'partially urbanised landscape' and 'varied rolling topography' (a typical feature of the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type).

8.30. The focus of these measures is less about screening and filtering views, rather, the enhancement of the local landscape and habitat value, as well as the best integration of development at the Site. This is done through new landscaping and the conservation and enhancement of the local landscape character, and the creation of new planting of hedgerows and trees as part of the green infrastructure at the Site.

8.31. The Site is situated on the southwestern edge of the village and is overlooked by houses and a public park within the village. It is judged that the land of the Site has a peri-urban location on the settlement edge of the village, with this land being experienced inside extensive physical features, including the site's hedgerows and sloped terrain to the edge of the plateau landform, with the Oxford Canal below. Beyond, this, the open countryside is seen as visually open and located within a distinctive lower lying landform.

- 8.32. The wider urban area of Rugby seen to the south on rising land within its extensive, dense residential built form. In a landscape and village character sense, this built form, and the wider village environment which can be seen from within the site area, reinforces the peri-urban/village edge location. The site is experienced as part of a hinterland, and the transition between the village environment and the open countryside beyond the plateau landforms. This landscape type is judged to be of moderate overall sensitivity to housing development. This is due to the ability of the landscape's topography and its enclosure (as aforementioned) to accommodate a collection of new housing within.
- 8.33. Given the nature of the scheme proposed, the character of the site's interior would change from a greenfield to that of a residential development. Such a change of landscape character should not be a detriment to the enjoyment and appreciation of the wider landscape, and should not, in and of itself, be a reason to raise an objection either by the Local Planning Authority or consultees.
- 8.34. The proposed development would retain and protect native, valuable landscape components where practicable including the trees and hedges to the boundaries. The proposal would make allowance for new tree planting to strengthen the boundary along all of the site's edges, as well as re-establish hedgerows currently degraded or lost within the Site's interior and forming an extensive green corridor through the scheme buffering along the site's edge.
- 8.35. New native tree planting is proposed within the public open spaces and green corridors throughout the scheme with particular focus on the northern and western site areas, and the expansive green corridor with spaces also used for planting new community orchards (incorporating local fruit varieties) and forming green corridors for habitat creation and pedestrian friendly movement.
- 8.36. New street tree planting has been incorporated throughout the development parcel and ornamental planting to the plots themselves. The existing and new landscape fabric would be appropriately maintained for longevity to conserve and enhance the local landscape character and facilitate biodiversity improvements.
- 8.37. Outside of the confines of the Site, the area immediately surrounding the site would be subject to the greatest change to the defined host landscape character types. The site has an edge setting to a large village settlement and the predicted effect of the proposed scheme is expected to diminish considerably just a short distance into the surrounding area.
- 8.38. Whilst the scheme has been designed to be an open scheme with extensive public open space and green infrastructure. Whilst the non-developed part of the site would be extensive and would remain open, buffer enhancement planting and new planting would be too juvenile to substantially alter the landscape effect from the Construction Stage by Year 1.
- 8.39. This would lead to a medium magnitude of change and a Moderate, adverse effect at Year 1 where neighbouring the site, but this level of effect would diminish rapidly with distance from the site, and the establishment and maturation of new landscaping.

Changes to the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area (Regional)

- 8.40. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; Negligible/Imperceptible.

Changes to the National Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon (National)

- 8.41. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; Negligible/Imperceptible.

Residual Effects on Landscape Character

Changes to the landscape character of the Site (Direct Effects)

- 8.42. On completion and in the short and medium-term (between 0 and 15 years), the LEMP, referred to above, would assist in ensuring a strong landscape framework and appropriate setting for the proposed development, which would assist in minimising the adverse impacts of proposed development on local landscape character and on views from the surrounding landscape.
- 8.43. Between 0 and 15 years, with good maintenance and longer term management, bolster/enhancement planting as well as new hedgerow and tree planting and ecological enhancements would be establishing, providing a greater degree of filtering and screening of built development overtime.
- 8.44. This would result in a reduction of the perceived magnitude of change to medium and the residual significance of effect to direct, permanent, long-term, Moderate/Minor adverse by Year 15.

Changes to the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type ('Indirect Effects')

- 8.45. Maturation of landscape buffer mitigation planting and new characteristic tree and hedgerow planting will further enclose the Site and aid in filtering views of the Proposed Development by Year 15.
- 8.46. After 15 years, new tree planting shown on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) would reach a height of up to 12m. This planting would comprise deciduous trees and understorey, compatible with the existing local landscape character of hedge line trees and occasional woodland blocks in the wider open countryside.
- 8.47. This planting also would bolster the existing hedgerow lines, as well as create a well tree'd environmental internally within the site (with streetscape and on-plot landscaping) and would connect with the existing field hedgerows, tree groups and small woodland plantations off-site reinforcing the landscape framework for the proposed development.
- 8.48. Given the two storey built form being proposed, it is not possible to mitigate entirely the landscape effects of the proposed development. However, the existing boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained, buffered, strengthened and appropriately managed for longevity. Additional tree planting around and within the proposed development will add to the landscape fabric and biodiversity value
- 8.49. The careful street alignment and the considered siting of the new public open spaces and green corridors will maintain a strong visual and sensory link with the Site's village edge setting, as was the main routes oriented east to west would also diminish the overall discernibility of the scheme across the wider receiving environment, and so reflecting the urban morphology of the existing layout at the village.

- 8.50. The benefits offered by the embedded landscape proposals once established, and managed through the implementation of the LEMP, will reduce the significance of effect on landscape character to Minor, adverse within the receiving environment of the host landscape type, which would reduce expediently distance from the Site.
- 8.51. This residual effect is judged to diminishing rapidly with distance from the site. The proposed development would be set within an established landscape framework, the significance of effect would continue to be less significantly adverse or negligible on the wider landscape, where the proposed development would continue to represent no greater than a low scale of change on the landscape.

Changes to the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area (Regional)

- 8.52. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; Negligible/Imperceptible.

Changes to the National Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon (National)

- 8.53. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; Negligible/Imperceptible.

9.0 POTENTIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

Potential Effects on Visual Amenity

- 9.1. An assessment of effects on each representative viewpoint carried forward to this analysis has been undertaken, and a summary of the result contained in Table BLA 9.1; and the representative viewpoints are contained in Appendix BLA 5. A

- 9.2. Analysis of the predicted visual effects during the Construction Stage is provided in Appendix BLA 6, and at the time of first occupation (Year 1) and the long term, residual effect at Year 15 is detailed in Appendix BLA 6. This section is to be read in combination with these three appendices.

Table BLA 9.1 - Summary of Visual Effects on Representative Viewpoints

View - point	Location	Visual Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect
1	View from Clifton Recreation Ground situated to the north of the Site looking south (N.B. 'Important View' within Neighbourhood Plan (2025))	View from public park neighbouring the Site within Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. Park users would, have a medium visual amenity. Medium susceptibility to change Medium visual sensitivity	High (Con) High (Yr1) Medium (Yr15)	Moderate, adverse Moderate, adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse
2	View from Shutterworth Road within the neighbouring residential area of Clifton upon Dunsmore, with views looking southwest towards the Site	Village setting for neighbouring residential area (residential receptors). Road users would, have a medium visual amenity. Medium susceptibility to change Medium visual sensitivity	Medium (Con) Low (Yr1) Negligible (Yr15)	Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse Minor/-negligible, adverse
3	View from Shutterworth Road within the neighbouring residential area of Clifton upon Dunsmore, with views looking west towards the Site	Village setting for neighbouring residential area (residential receptors). Road users would, have a medium visual amenity. Medium susceptibility to change Medium visual sensitivity	Low (Con) Low (Yr1) Negligible (Yr15)	Minor, adverse Minor, adverse Minor/-negligible, adverse
4	View from PRoW (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore looking southwest across intervening fields towards the Site	Open on the village edge. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Route walked through open countryside on the edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. Route not in a National or locally designated landscape. High susceptibility to change High visual sensitivity	Low (Con) Low (Yr1) Negligible (Yr15)	Moderate/-minor, adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse
5	View from PRoW (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore looking northwest across intervening fields towards the Site	Open countryside setting. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Route walked through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. Route not in a National or locally designated landscape. High susceptibility to change High visual sensitivity	Medium (Con) Low (Yr1) Negligible (Yr15)	Moderate, adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse

6	View from PRoW (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside nearest to Hillmorton Lane looking across intervening fields west towards the Site	Open countryside setting. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Route walked through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. Route not in a National or locally designated landscape. High susceptibility to change High visual sensitivity	Low (Con) Low (Yr1) Negligible (Yr15)	Moderate/-minor, adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse
7	View from Hillmorton Lane looking across northwest across intervening fields towards the Site	Open countryside setting. Road approaching Clifton-upon-Dunsmore passing within the intervening countryside between the village and Rugby. Route not in a National or locally designated landscape. Road users would have a medium visual amenity. Medium susceptibility to change Medium Visual Sensitivity	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
8	View from Permissive Route on the edge of Houlton leading to Hillmorton Locks looking northwest across a very long range distance towards the Site	Permissive Route linking recently completed residential areas with Normandy Hill and the Hillmorton Locks and the PRoW thereof. Route not in a National or locally designated landscape. Users of the route would have a medium susceptibility to change (given ongoing development and urban edge) and a medium visual sensitivity. Medium visual sensitivity	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
9	View from Permissive Route passing across Normandy Hill looking northwest across a very long range distance towards the Site (N.B. 'Important View' within Neighbourhood Plan (2025))	Permissive Route across Normandy Hill. Open countryside setting. Route not in a National or locally designated landscape. Users of the route would have a medium to high expectation of visual amenity (local landmark hill) and a high susceptibility to change. High visual sensitivity	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
10	View from Hillmorton Locks looking northwest across a very long range distance towards the Site (N.B. 'Important View' within	Open countryside setting. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Route walked along Canalside on National Trail. Routes passes through countryside which is not nationally or local designated for landscape. High	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible

	Neighbourhood Plan (2025))	visual sensitivity and susceptibility to change. High visual sensitivity	Indiscernible (Yr15)	
11	View from the PRow National Trail Oxford Canal Long Distance Walking Route situated south-southeast of the Site passing along the edge of Rugby with the Site situated on elevated landform beyond the slope	Open countryside setting. PRow users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Route walked along Canalside on National Trail. Routes passes through countryside which is not nationally or local designated for landscape. High visual sensitivity and susceptibility to change. High visual sensitivity	Low (Con) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse Imperceptible
12	View from Whinfield Park Public Open Space situated off Butlin Road, Hillmorton, Rugby looking north east across the intervening urban area	View from public park within the urban area of Rugby, Viewpoint selected to demonstrate the ability to see the Site given surrounding residential development, mature landscape fabric and mature trees. Park users would, have a medium visual amenity. Medium susceptibility to change Medium visual sensitivity	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
13	View from PRow (LPA ref: 333/Rb48/1) passing wooded open space near to Whinfield Park Public Open Space looking northwest towards the Site across the intervening urban area of Hillmorton, Rugby	View from PRow passes within the urban area of Rugby. Viewpoint selected to demonstrate the ability to see the Site given the wooded setting and the surrounding residential development. PRow users would, have a medium visual amenity. Medium susceptibility to change Medium visual sensitivity	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
14	View from the PRow LPA ref: 333/R114/1 National Trail Shakespeare's Avon Way Long Distance Walking Route passing along the urban edge of Brownsover	Open countryside setting. PRow users would have high expectation of visual amenity. This viewpoints demonstrates the deniability of the Site from the countryside between Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Brownsover. High visual sensitivity and susceptibility to change.	Negligible (Con) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Minor, adverse Minor, adverse Imperceptible

	connecting Brownsover with Clifton-upon-Dunsmore	High visual sensitivity		
15	View from the PRoW LPA ref: 333/R114/1 National Trail Shakespeare's Avon Way Long Distance Walking Route approaching Clifton-upon-Dunsmore	Open countryside setting. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. This viewpoints demonstrates the deniability of the Site from the countryside between Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Brownsover. High visual sensitivity and susceptibility to change. High visual sensitivity	Negligible (Con) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Minor, adverse Minor, adverse Imperceptible
16	View from Vicarage Hill/Rugby Road passing through the southwestern edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore looking east across the proposed access to the Site	Village setting heading into and out of a settlement. Non-promoted route/minor B road used for travelling between settlements. Users would not have a high expectation of visual amenity. Medium susceptibility to change Medium visual sensitivity	High (Con) Medium (Yr1) Medium (Yr15)	Moderate, adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse

PRoW Users

- 9.3. There is no public access to the Site as it is privately managed, and no PRoW crosses the Site or passes its boundary. These are the locations where the greatest sense of change would be experienced.
- 9.4. There is a limited network of PRoW surrounding the Site's location; in particular, within close to medium range of the Site's location. The National Trail Shakespeare's Avon Way Long Distance Walking Route passes from the northeast of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, and as demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (appendix BLA 3), there would be no discernibility of the Proposed Development for PRoW users passing along this route from as far away as 2km approaching the village.
- 9.5. As this National Trail passes through the village, the effect of intervening village-related built form and mature tree components would restrict views of the scheme. Given this, there may be a moderate increase in rooflines of newly built homes which may be seen. However, this change may not be discernible to the casual observer as these features would not appear as out of context, unexpected or experienced in any great quantum.
- 9.6. This National Trail continues west towards Brownsover, and as demonstrated by Viewpoint 14 and 15, the Site is not seen wholesale and there would be very limited opportunity to see the new built form at the Site to any great extent. This is due to the effect of the intervening built form seen outside of

the Site along Rugby Road. For PRoW Users waling between the western edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Brownsover, the residual effect of the scheme would be imperceptible in the long term.

- 9.7. As PRoW Users walk along PRoW (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore; see Appendix BLA 3. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 4,5 and 6, the discernibility of the Proposed Development is limited in geographical terms to the southeast and southern portion of the Site. New built form stepped back from eastern boundary with POS and new tree planting to afford vertical heights features to offset and reduce during maturation. The residual effect on the visual amenity of PRoW Users passing along this route would be minor, adverse and less than significant in the long term.
- 9.8. There would be a very limited visual effect upon users of the PRoW within the wider LVA study area, due to screening provided by vegetation and built form combined with undulating topography; see Viewpoint 7 to the southeast.
- 9.9. To the south beyond the Oxford Railway Canal and the landform plateau beyond the Site, there are a small number of PRoW running through the urban area of Hillmorton within Rugby. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 13, there is no discernibility of the Site, and there is unlikely to be any discernible change to the character of the visual amenity for PRoW users walking within the urban area, and progressing outwards to the Oxford Canal.
- 9.10. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 11, which is representative of the visual amenity for PRoW users walking along the National Trail Oxford Canal Long Distance Walking Route. This route passes close to the urban edge of Rugby, and is situated within lower topography that plateau landform beyond the Site area.
- 9.11. There would be limited extent of new built form that could be seen by PRoW users passing along this National Trail. This is due to the combined effect of intervening landform (rising to the plateau) combined with then stepping back of new built form well within the Site area to provide substantive public open space. The proposed landscape strategy is demonstrated on the illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) within which there would be extensive new tree planting providing vertical height to offset and reduce the discernibility of the scheme during maturation. The residual effect of the Proposed Development on PRoW Users passing along the National Trail Oxford Canal Long Distance Walking Route would be imperceptible in the long term; see Appendix BLA 5 and 7.

Residential Dwellings

- 9.12. Given our field based assessment, it is considered that the construction stage would lead to an adverse effects to the properties near the Site due to noise, dust and vibration, movement of plant, machinery, deliveries and general construction activities. This is not a permanent effect and would cease on the completion of this short-term construction stage.
- 9.13. Following completion of the construction phase at Year 1, the scheme would be experienced as a new development forming an extension to the existing residential built edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, and seen against the wider village's residential development.

- 9.14. At this stage, the proposed landscape strategy would be juvenile. Existing trees to Site boundaries would be retained offering some filtering effect to views of the proposed development from day 1 for properties adjacent to the Site.
- 9.15. The development would not be wholly incongruous given the wider settled context of the Site and that the proposed dwellings would be in keeping with the local built character in terms of form, scale and materials. The resulting level of effect at year 1 will be moderate to minor adverse.
- 9.16. By Year 15, the long term visual effect would be reduced following the weathering of materials and maturation of the landscape strategy which includes the enhancement of the existing boundaries by creating new landscaped edges where they do not currently exist as well as the maturation of the existing recent tree planting on site. Views of the proposed development would be filtered, reducing the visual intrusion of the proposed dwellings, assimilating them further into the settled context.
- 9.17. For those residential dwellings situated nearest to the proposed Site access point on Newall Close, there is likely to be a higher level of change during the construction stage and Year 1. This largely down to the combined vehicle and pedestrian access been built out resulting in Major/-moderate, adverse effects during construction, and similarly adverse at Year 1 where the scheme would be experienced as a newly built out housing development. Through the maturation of the proposed landscaping the scheme would be filtered and views softened in time results by Year 15 is a Moderate, adverse level of effect.

Road Users including Roadside Pedestrians

- 9.18. Given BLADE's field-based assessment, a number of roads were identified as those likely to experience the effect of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of the Road Users. However, as appraised within Appendix BLA 6 and 7, the residual effect of the scheme is unlikely to lead to any significant effects.

10.0 SUMMARY

10.1. As can be seen, this is a site with relatively few intrinsic landscape constraints, especially given its proximity to the neighbouring village edge:

- The site is not designated at a local or national level for its landscape or scenic qualities. No such designation falls within 5km of the site.
- Through BLADE's own site-specific assessment, it is considered that the site does not qualify as a Valued Landscape.
- There is no Open Access Land within the site or along its boundaries. There are no Public Rights of Way crossing the site and no public access onto the site indicating that it does not have a community function for access.
- There are no Veteran trees within the site or affecting its boundaries.
- There are no listed buildings on the site.
- The site is not located within any conservation area.
- No part of the site lies within or close to any parks or gardens listed on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest.
- The landscape fabric has been impoverished because of several decades of intensive arable farming. Whilst there are several mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees, neither the condition of the site, or its character, are unique or rare locally.

Physical and Visual Containment

10.2. The main determinants of visibility to the site can be summarised as follows:

- BLADE finds the Zone of Primary Visibility to be extensively limited to the immediate setting of the Site, the adjacent urban setting, along the main route into the village from limited areas of elevated landform to the east.
- Generally, the site is not seen wholesale, and is not prominent in views, and where seen it is experienced against the wider village related built form, mature tree components and urban features within Clifton-upon-Dunsmore situated beyond the Site to the north, up to circa 120m AOD, and marginally higher than the landform of the Site.
- The Site is most likely to be seen from its immediate setting from the adjacent park the residential dwellings which in combination bound the Site's north and western edge to the wider village.

10.3. On this basis, the principal messages in terms of the site's intrinsic suitability to accommodate a new residential development.

- 10.4. This report has summarised the findings of a comprehensive landscape data trawl and field appraisal undertaken by BLADE's landscape team examining the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development at the Site having regard to the above and based on a combination of the thresholds set out in BLADE's Methodology (Appendix BLA 8) coupled with professional judgement.
- 10.5. This report finds that the Site relates well to the adjacent village-related built form, yet is detached from the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Conservation Area, whereby there is not likely to be any intervisibility between then Site and the new housing development and the Conservation Area. consequently, it is considered that there would be no discernible residual effect on the Conservation Area and the core developed area of the village.
- 10.6. The draft Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (January 2025) raises a number of Important Views; see Section 6 Image BLA 6.2. How the Proposed Development at the Site might impact these views is considered as part of this appraisal. From reviewing the draft Neighbourhood Plan, the following views were considered pertinent in the assessment of the Proposed Development, for which we raised the following critique:
- **View 1** - *'Gateway view (south) of Clifton upon Dunsmore village from Newton Road'*: The plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility demonstrates that views of the Proposed Development would be restricted and screened by the intervening landform and village-related built form. There would be no residual effect from the Proposed Scheme on this view; see Appendix BLA 3.
 - **View 4** - *'Distant view south from Newton Road of Clifton upon Dunsmore village and surrounding fields'*: The plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility demonstrates that views of the Proposed Development would be restricted and screened by the intervening landform and village-related built form. There would be no residual effect from the Proposed Scheme on this view; see Appendix BLA 3.
 - **View 8** - *'From Hillmorton Locks northeast to Allan's Farm and (on skyline) Clifton upon Dunsmore village'*: With consideration of Appendix BLA 3 the effect of intervening landform, field hedgerows, hedge line trees and built form is sufficient to screen the Proposed Development at the Site. This is demonstrated by The plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix BLA 3), as well as Viewpoint 8, 9 and 10 within Appendix BLA 5. There would be no residual effect from the Proposed Scheme on this view; see Appendix BLA 3.
 - **View 9** - *'From Clifton Recreation Ground, views south and southwest to Bluebell wood, Clifton Brook valley, the Oxford Canal (and Rugby)'*: This view is represented by Viewpoint 1 of this appraisal (Appendix BLA 5), and is assessed above and within Appendix BLA 6 and 7. Residually, views of the new residential built form would be discernible from within the Clifton Recreation Ground. Views of the new built form would be restricted to the northern portion of the scheme where it is situated nearest to the park. However, this new built form would be stepped back into the scheme beyond a sizeable area of public open space which would effectively extend the area of the Clifton Park into the core of the scheme. There is scope of extensive new tree planting within this park type landscape which would filter views and soften the appearance of the new housing scheme. The residual effect of the proposed Development is assessed as Moderate/-minor, adverse; see Appendix BLA 7.

- 10.7. Given this, and specifically in relation to Viewpoint 8,9 and 10 (Appendix BLA 5), there would be no discernibility of the Proposed Development at the Site from the area around Hillsmorton Locks and from the settlement of Houlton. Consequently, it is clear that there would be no physical, actual coalescence and no perceived, visual coalescence between the expansion of the village through the Proposed Development and Houlton. Therefore, through the Proposed Development at the Site, the identities of Houlton and Clifton-upon-Dunsmore can be retained and an appropriate physical separation can be retained avoiding these settlements merging.
- 10.8. Similarly, as demonstrated by the representative viewpoints from within wide public open spaces within the Hillmorton area of Rugby, as well as PRoW passing through the eastern edge of Rugby town, there would be no physical, actual coalescence and no perceived, visual coalescence between Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Rugby, thus enabling the identity of each settlement carrying forward without any detrimental effect.
- 10.9. The site masterplan, together with the proposed green infrastructure and landscaping proposals were developed iteratively with the undertaking of this appraisal. As demonstrated through the Illustrative Landscape masterplan (Appendix BLA 4), the scheme affords an expansion of the existing public open space at Clifton Park into the core of the scheme. The Proposed Development would provide a high-quality, eco-friendly scheme fostering links to the existing communities providing new pedestrian and cycle friendly environment.
- 10.10. The Proposed development can be readily assimilated and integrated into this part of the landscape. The adverse harm, predicted to occur on the perceptual dimension of the landscape character of the Site, is considered to be outweighed by the beneficial landscape effects on landscape fabric through the implementation of the landscape strategy detailed in Appendix BLA 4.
- 10.11. For those residential dwellings situated nearest to the proposed Site access point on Newall Close, there is likely to be a higher level of change during the construction stage and Year 1. This largely down to the combined vehicle and pedestrian access been built out resulting in Major/-moderate, adverse effects during construction, and similarly adverse at Year 1 where the scheme would be experienced as a newly built out housing development. Through the maturation of the proposed landscaping the scheme would be filtered and views softened in time results by Year 15 is a Moderate, adverse level of effect.
- 10.12. There is some intervisibility experienced by PRoW users in medium proximity to the site to the southeast walking along PRoW (LPA ref: 154/R116/1) passing through open countryside south of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore (Viewpoint 4 to 6), or from the west to northwest along PRoW LPA ref: 333/R114/1 National Trail Shakespeare's Avon Way Long Distance Walking Route passing along the urban edge of Brownsover. However, PRoW Users would experience less than significant visual effects residually at minor, adverse, or less at an imperceptible level.
- 10.13. As such, the loss of an individual agricultural field to facilitate the development of a new housing for the village and its community would, inevitably, create a localised effect. When this effect is considered alongside the existing village-related built form within Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, with the perceptual and sensory dimension experiencing a worst-case moderate/minor adverse effect on the landscape character of the site, and a minor adverse effect on the surrounding landscape character type in the long term, it would not constitute an unacceptable impact on landscape fabric or character over this time frame.

- 10.14. Having taken into account, and assessed accordingly, the potential effects of the proposed scheme on the landscape and visual amenity within the study area, it is considered that the proposed development and landscape mitigation is consistent with the landscape character and settlement of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and the host landscape character type. Therefore, the proposed development would not result in any significant material landscape or visual effects.
- 10.15. For the reasons amplified within this appraisal – site’s peri-urban context on the village edge and the qualities of the new landscape proposed - the site is not intrinsically unsuited to accommodate new residential development should the needs of the current planning system so dictate. Indeed, in landscape terms, it is entirely well suited to such a purpose, subject of course to appropriate design and sensitive mitigation measures. Given this, I judge that there are no matters of such over-riding landscape importance that they outweigh the logic and suitability of this site.
- 10.16. As GLVIA reminds us, the landscape context for this proposal is not simply the open agricultural land of the site; it includes the peri-urban landscape of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore along its southwestern edge, and the wider built context of the village, which provides the setting for this proposal.
- 10.17. So while we are all inclined to value openness and ‘naturalness’ over built form (which we presume harmful where it replaces the former), that inclination should not be a blindfold to the prospects for its’ re-use in a different form which is sometimes a necessary and inevitable pressure on the landscape resource, subject of course to appropriately sensitive design.
- 10.18. It is not my role to undertake the overall planning balance, but from a strictly landscape perspective, my professional opinion is that the proposals as now formulated, will deliver a coherent and logical development of new homes on the southwestern edge of the village providing a high-quality new landscape with a new social landscape function.
- 10.19. The scheme implemented would preserve the distinctiveness of the village and thus not lead to no physical, actual coalescence and no perceived, visual coalescence between the expansion of the village and Houlton and Rugby.
- 10.20. The scheme will replace the site’s agricultural character, but a substantial degree of naturalness will remain, albeit in a different form to that which currently exists. Given our undertaking of this appraisal, BLADE believes this scheme represents a sustainable, well designed re-purposing of the site in landscape terms and one which is compliant with relevant guidance and policy when read as a whole.