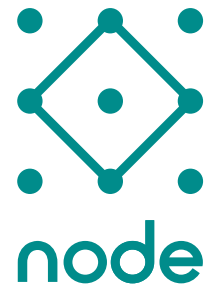


6003106



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Town and Country Planning Act

Appeal Ref: **6003106**

LPA Application No: R25/0565

Rugby Borough Council

**Land South East of Rugby Road, Clifton Upon Dunsmore**

## **Landscape Proof of Evidence**

**Nigel Wakefield BA (Hons) BTP/DIP LA DIP/MA UD MRTPI**

April 2026

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

### Personal Details

- 1.1 My name is Nigel Wakefield. I am managing director of Node Urban Design Ltd, an urban design, landscape and heritage practice. I am a qualified planner, landscape architect and urban designer.
- 1.2 I have over 35 years' experience of providing urban design, masterplanning and landscape services on an extensive range of residential and mixed-use developments across the UK. This has included production of masterplans, design and access statements, design codes, landscape/townscape visual impact assessments, and landscape and public realm design. I own and run an accredited Landscape Institute practice employing landscape architects, urban designers, and heritage consultants. I am a Built Environment Expert (BEE) for CABE/Design Council UK and sit on several design review panels. I am an experienced design and landscape witness.
- 1.3 Node acts as a consultant to public and private sector clients including local authorities, developers, house builders, universities, and landowners.

### 1.4 Scope of Evidence

- 1.5 The appeal seeks outline planning permission with some matters reserved for the demolition of all buildings and the residential development of up to 160 dwellings, and creation of associated vehicular access off Rugby Road, pedestrian/cycle access points, parking, landscaping, drainage features, open space, children's play area and associated infrastructure (all matters reserved except for vehicular access off Rugby Road).
- 1.6 At the time of submission of the appeal the Local Planning Authority had not yet determined the application as it had not received the relevant information to allow an informed decision-making process to be undertaken. The matters identified by the appellant that they have yet to evidence include landscape, highways and ecology. The Council's statement of case set out the basis of the refusal of planning permission if the Council had been in such a position to make the decision.
- 1.7 This consists of the following four putative reasons for refusal:

#### REASON FOR REFUSAL 1:

- 1.8 The proposed development will have an adverse impact on the physical, visual and perceptual separation of, and contribute towards the coalescence of, Rugby and Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. It would have a significant urbanising impact on Clifton-upon-Dunsmore's individual settlement identity and character. The development is therefore contrary to

policies SDC1 and NE3 of the adopted Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031, policy EN4 of the emerging Rugby Borough Local Plan 2025-2042 and paragraph 135c of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

**REASON FOR REFUSAL 2:**

- 1.9 The proposed development will cause unacceptable harm to landscape character and visual impact due to urbanisation of the site, truncation of important views and will not relate well to local topography, built form and the existing settlement. As a result, it will be contrary to policy NE3 of the adopted Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 and Policy ENV7 of the Emerging Clifton-Upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (2011-2041).

**REASON FOR REFUSAL 3:**

- 1.10 There are three alternative sites at Clifton-upon-Dunsmore (North of Lilbourne Road, at Newton Road, and at North Road) identified as being suitable to deliver a total of 150 dwellings in the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Local Plan. The development of these alternative sites is acceptable in planning terms and is less harmful than the proposed development. The availability and suitability of these alternative sites is a material consideration which counts against the approval of the proposed development.

**REASON FOR REFUSAL 4:**

- 1.11 The proposed development is contrary to the adopted development plan taken as a whole. The adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in National Planning Policy Framework (2024) taken as a whole. There are no material considerations which indicate a determination of the appeal other than in accordance with the development plan.
- 1.12 Node were appointed by Rugby Borough Council in February 2026 to prepare a landscape proof of evidence in respect of the appeal against refusal of permission.
- 1.13 My evidence addresses the landscape reason for refusal. It is primarily concerned with Reason for Refusal 2 but also contributes to Reason for Refusal 1 and Reason for Refusal 3.
- 1.14 I am familiar with the site in question, having reviewed all relevant background information and undertaken field surveys in February and March 2026.
- 1.15 Mr Jonathan Weekes provides evidence on all planning matters, including development plan and the planning balance. Ms Abigail Murphy provides supporting evidence on character of the settlement and other design issues.
- 1.16 My evidence is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 – Policy Framework
- Chapter 3 – The Proposed Site: Local Context and Character
- Chapter 4 – Planning History and Application
- Chapter 5 – Landscape Baseline Appraisal
- Chapter 6 – Appraisal of Landscape Effects
- Chapter 7 – Appraisal of Visual Effects
- Chapter 8 – Comparison with Allocated Sites
- Chapter 9 – Summary and Conclusions

1.17 Supporting plans, background documents and visual assessments are included in a separate appendix, as follows:

- Appendix 1 - Aerial Plan
- Appendix 2 - Historic Plans, Topography and Settlement Morphology
- Appendix 3 - Landscape Character Areas
- Appendix 4 - Neighbourhood Plan – Important Views
- Appendix 5 - Parameter Plan and Illustrative Masterplan
- Appendix 6 - Viewpoint Location Plan Appeal Site
- Appendix 7 - Visual impact Assessment Appeal Site
- Appendix 8 - Proposed Residential Allocation Sites – Clifton Upon Dunsmore
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- Appendix 9 - Landscape Methodology

1.18 The landscape proof of evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

## 2.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK

### The National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (CD5.32) (revised December 2024) is entitled 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.'. Paragraph 187 provides (so far as relevant):

*Para 187. 'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) 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);*
- 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. '*

Paragraph 135 further provides (again so far as relevant):

*'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout, and appropriate and effective landscaping.*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).*

### Rugby Borough Local Plan (RBLP) 2011-2031 (CD5.1)

2.2 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan in this instance consists of the adopted Rugby Borough Local Plan (RBLP)

2011-2031.

2.3 The relevant policies are set out below

2.4 Rugby Borough Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted June 2019

- Policy NE1: Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets
- Policy NE2: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Policy NE3: Landscape Protection and Enhancement
- Policy SDC1: Sustainable Design

**Rugby Borough Local Plan 2025-2042 (CD 5.25)**

2.5 On 27 January 2026 Rugby Borough Council resolved to publish the emerging Rugby Borough Local Plan 2025-2042 for 6-weeks public consultation under Regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012 and thereafter submit the plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The consultation ended on 13 March 2026 and it is anticipated that the plan will be submitted for examination in late April 2026. “Issues and Options” and “Preferred Options” consultations under Regulation 18 of the 2021 Regulations were undertaken in 2023 and 2025. Proposed Submission Rugby Borough Local Plan 2025-2042 (Regulation 19 Consultation)

- Policy EN2: Landscape protection
- Policy EN4: Areas of Separation

2.6 **Clifton upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2041 (Referendum) (CD 5.27)**

2.7 At the time of writing the Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Parish Neighbourhood Plan referendum will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

2.8 Relevant landscape policies include

- Policy ENV1: Local Green Fields
- Policy ENV2: Import Open Spaces
- Policy ENV3: Sites & Features of Natural Environment Significance
- Policy ENV4: Biodiversity across neighbourhood area
- Policy ENV5: Historical Environment
- Policy ENV7: Important Views

- 2.9 Consideration of the conflict associated with the above policies is explored in more detail in Chapter 5, 6 and 7 of this proof of evidence.

## **3.0 THE PROPOSED SITE: LOCAL CONTEXT AND CHARACTER**

### **Context and Land Use**

- 3.1 The site is accessed from Newall Close off Rugby Road in Clifton-upon-Dunsmore however other than the vehicular access the site is in land designated as countryside outside the defined settlement boundary.
- 3.2 The site comprises 9.21 hectares of greenfield land and includes highway land associated with Rugby Road and Newall Close required to access the site. There are residential properties to the west and north west of the site located on Rugby Road and Newall Close. To the north of the site is the existing playing field/recreation ground in the ownership of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Parish Council. This section of the site is boarded by metal mesh fencing. The Clifton Recreation Ground boundary is lined with trees. To the north east are further residential properties located on Shuttleworth Road. The remainder of the site to the east and south is surrounded by further fields and allotment gardens adjacent to Newall Close.
- 3.3 The majority of the proposal site is a large agricultural field bounded by fencing, hedgerows and trees. The agricultural land includes Grade 2 agricultural land. To the south east an adjacent field is proposed for drainage purposes.

### **Topography**

- 3.4 There is a fall of 10-13 metres across the site sloping from the north east to south west across the site from a high point of 118m AOD to a low point of 105m AOD.

### **Vegetation and water features**

- 3.5 The site is generally open agricultural open fields. A line of mature trees sits outside the boundary of the site as part of Clifton Recreation Ground.
- 3.6 The site is bounded by hedgerows apart from the northern boundary with the recreation boundary which is bounded by a metal open mesh. A few hedgerow trees are located within the boundary, but the site is generally free from vegetation and trees.

### **3.7 Intervisibility/ Coalescence**

- 3.8 Although the site boundary to the recreation ground has mature trees the height of the canopy allows views across the open countryside including the important view 9 identified within the Clifton upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan.

- 3.9 The introduction of the proposed development would expand the village towards Rugby town and would not guard against the potential for coalescence between existing settlements as required by Policy NE3 of the Local Plan and Policy SDC1 which require all development to respond to the character of the areas in which they are situated.
- 3.10 The valued character and identities of the Borough's villages are derived, at least in part, from the degree to which they are physically and visually separated from the town. Development within areas that could diminish this degree of separation or contribute to the eventual coalescence of settlements shall be guarded against and resisted. Due to the location of the application site and its relationship to the existing settlement and that of the town of Rugby would diminish the degree of actual and perceived separation which could have a significant adverse impact on the identity and distinctiveness of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore.

### **Designations**

- 3.11 The landscape is not designated at a national or local level. The site is not in Green Belt.
- 3.12 However, it has been identified in the new Rugby Local Plan Policy EN4 as an Area of separation. (See Node Appendix 3)
- 3.13 The conservation area of the village of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore is approximately within circa 0.2km north of the Site, being separated by Clifton Recreation Ground.

### **Public Footpaths**

- 3.14 There are no public footpaths (PRoWs) across the site. The nearest PRoWs are to the east of the site.
- 3.15 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. (See Node Appendix 1)

## 4.0 PLANNING APPLICATION

4.1 This section considers relevant planning history, planning application submission, consultation responses and the statement of case in brief.

### 4.2 Relevant Planning History

4.3 R25/0230 EIA screening request for up to 160no. dwellings – EIA Screening Opinion issued 14th March 2025.

#### **Planning Submission**

4.4 As set out in the council's statement of case, planning permission is sought for outline planning permission for with some matters reserved for the demolition of all buildings and the residential development of up to 160 dwellings, and creation of associated vehicular access off Rugby Road, pedestrian/cycle access points, parking, landscaping, drainage features, open space, children's play area and associated infrastructure (all matters reserved except for vehicular access off Rugby Road).

4.5 Vehicular access into the development is proposed to be taken from Newall Close. This is the only access point proposed for the development and would incorporate vehicular and pedestrian access.

4.6 The proposal is for market and 30% affordable housing however the mix is unknown at this stage.

4.7 The proposed development land use parameters include 4.60hectares of proposed residential development (including roads, footpaths, private drives, amenity and incidental open space and other associated infrastructure) and 4.38hectares of open space (including amenity green space, children's play provision, landscaping, footpaths, potential sports pitches, car parking, drainage and other associated infrastructure, Biodiversity Net Gain mitigation).

#### **Consultation Responses**

#### **Rugby Borough Council – Clifton upon Dunsmore Parish Council (CD4.16) and Landscape & Tree Officer. (CD4.27)**

4.8 Objections to the application were received for several reasons, including landscape, highways, and existing services from Clifton upon Dunsmore Parish Council.

#### 4.9 **Landscape Tree Officer Response**

- 4.10 'The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (CD 1.35& 1.36) that has been submitted to support the application refers to the Landscape Character Assessment of Rugby in its appraisal and states a number of Landscape Mitigation Measures to offset and/or reduce landscape and visual effects in response to the Landscape guidelines to include retention of existing landscape features and introduction of wide buffers with tree planting to "reduce the overall discernibility of the newly built form". This is shown in the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan with final details to be confirmed at reserved matters stage. However, no rationale is provided with regard depth of buffer especially to east and level/depth of planting required to mitigate the negative effects. Planting appears to be sporadic. There is no provision of tree planting to north to enhance the existing tree line to the north (within the Clifton Recreation ground).'
- 4.11 'In section on 5.0 of the LVA "Finds of the baseline appraisal" the report examines the "Zone of Theoretical Visibility" ('ZTV') visiting publicly accessible locations.'
- 4.12 'Para 5.5. states that "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 on including a dense tree belt along a portion on 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." This doesn't relate to the application site. The eastern side of the site isn't enclosed by vegetation. There isn't a railway to the east. There isn't a Green Lane.'
- 4.13 'There are a number of Viewpoints assessed in within the report of particular sensitivity being 1 - 6 which have views across the Dunsmore Plateau fringe. 8.45 states that at year 15 "landscape buffer mitigation planting and new characteristic tree and hedgerow planting will further enclose the site". The photographic viewpoints do not include photomontages within the LVA creating a representation of potential changes to any view across that 15-year period therefore it is not clear how this conclusion has been reached? Giving the undulating and broadly open nature of the terrain there are far reaching views especially from the PROW to the east and from the recreation ground to the north. Therefore, it is not clear how the Illustrative landscape masterplan relates to the setting and how it mitigates the adverse landscape and visual effects.'
- 4.14 'Section 6.46 states that "The Arborist confirmed that there are no ancient or veteran trees". This is incorrect. The Arboricultural report talks at length about a Veteran Ash tree (T51).

Whilst the tree is highlighted for retention and inclusion within the scheme and is sufficiently set back from the development line, it is unclear why this statement has been made?’

- 4.15 ‘Therefore, I would object to the application I believe the scheme will be contrary to the recommendations of Rugby Borough Landscape Character Assessment. 6.6.1 talks about the general decline of the Plateau fringe and the structure and key features of the farmed landscape should be enhanced. The scheme will replace the sites agricultural character and also be contrary to the Policy NE3: Landscape protection and enhancement.’

**Statement of Case (CD6.1) – Landscape and visual impact conclusions**

- 4.16 Policy NE3 of the Local Plan on landscape protection and enhancement states that new development which positively contributes to landscape character will be permitted.
- 4.17 The Landscape Character Assessment of Rugby (January 2025) details the site is located with the “Dunsmore Plateau Fringe”.
- 4.18 A landscape visual appraisal was submitted with the application and an Illustrative Landscape Masterplan.
- 4.19 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal that has been submitted to support the application refers to the Landscape Character Assessment of Rugby in its appraisal and states a number of Landscape Mitigation Measures to offset and/or reduce landscape and visual effects in response to the Landscape guidelines to include retention of existing landscape features and introduction of wide buffers with tree planting to "reduce the overall discernibility of the newly built form". This is shown in the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan with final details to be confirmed at reserved matter stage. However, no rationale is provided with regard to depth of buffer especially to the east and level/depth of planting required to mitigate the negative effects. Planting appears to be sporadic, and woodland planting has not been incorporated. There is no provision of tree planting north to enhance the existing tree line (within the Clifton Recreation Ground).
- 4.20 There are a number of viewpoints assessed within the report of particular sensitivity across the Dunsmore Plateau fringe. The photographic viewpoints presented do not include any wirelines or photomontages creating a representation of potential changes to any view across a 15year period therefore it is not clear how landscape visual impacts can be fully assessed and the conclusion is reached in the report that at year 15 “landscape buffer mitigation planting and new characteristic tree and hedgerow planting will further enclose the site”. Additionally, there are viewpoints identified as missing including from the Rugby Golf Club house and golf

course, near to the road bridge to the south of the site on Houlton Way and from Rugby Road including properties that back onto the site from Newall Close.

- 4.21 Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan in Policy ENV7 Important views identifies the views important to the setting and character of the village. This includes important viewpoint 9 from Clifton Recreation Ground, views south and southwest to Bluebell Wood, Clifton Brook Valley, the Oxford Canal (and Rugby). This proposal will impact significantly and truncate this important view from Clifton Recreation Ground.
- 4.22 Paragraph 135c of the Framework sets out that developments should 'be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting'.
- 4.23 The site is located within the strategic green infrastructure network as identified in the Green and Blue Infrastructure policies map in the adopted Local Plan. Approximately 80% of the site is within the existing green infrastructure network. 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 in line with Policy NE2. 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. The Land Use and Access Parameter Plan does not address this.

## 5.0 LANDSCAPE/SETTLEMENT BASELINE APPRAISAL

5.1 This section considers the site in the context of national, regional and local landscape character assessments. It will set out the baseline context against which I have reviewed the development design presented in the Appellant's application documents.

### **National Landscape Character Assessment**

5.2 The site lies within the National Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon. (CD 5.56)

5.3 Natural England describe this national Character Areas as follows:

5.4 '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.'

5.5 Natural England recognises a number of 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.'

5.6 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.

5.7 Following a site 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.

5.8 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 (CD 5.57)**

5.9 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. The Dunsmore Landscape Character Area is described as:

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

5.11 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;. The Plateau Fringes Landscape Type is described by the County Council as follows:

5.12 '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.'

5.13 The County Council recognise the following key characteristics of this Landscape Type

- ‘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.’

#### 5.14 **Rugby Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2025) (CD 5.46)**

5.15 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;

5.16 The LPA describes the Dunsmore Landscape Character Area as follows:

5.17 ‘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 health 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.’

5.18 Further to this, the LPA lists a number of key characteristics of this landscape character area, some of which include the following

- **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 (*Argynni*). 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.'

5.19 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

5.20 '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.'

#### 5.21 **Areas of Separation**

5.22 As previously highlighted in the policy section Rugby Local Plan 2025-2042 (CD 5.25) is proposing Policy EN 4 - Areas of separation between Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Rugby. The appeal sits clearly in this area of separation whereas the proposed allocated sites in Clifton-upon-Dunsmore do not.

5.23 The purpose of this policy is to protect the valued character and identities of the borough's villages are, at least in part, derived from the degree to which they are physically and visually separated from the town. Development within areas between settlements could diminish this degree of separation or contribute to the eventual coalescence of settlements. To protect against these risks, Areas of Separation have been defined between Rugby town and several of the villages that are in close proximity to it.

#### 5.24 **Policy EN4 Areas of Separation**

5.25 It states:

- a. Areas of Separation are defined on the policies map between Rugby town and the settlements of Clifton upon Dunsmore, Dunchurch and Thurlaston.

- b. Development will only be permitted in these areas when it will not have a significant adverse impact, either alone or in combination with other existing or proposed development, on the effectiveness of an Area of Separation in protecting the identity and distinctiveness of settlements and preventing their coalescence.
- c. Developments that diminish physical and visual separation, have an urbanising influence, or which adversely impact settlement identity should be deemed as having an adverse impact on the effectiveness of an Area of Separation.
- d. Applicants proposing development that may have an adverse impact on an Area of Separation must demonstrate that they have considered this impact and have incorporated appropriate mitigatory measures into their proposal.

5.26 The proposed appeal site will have a significant adverse impact on the area of separation between Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Rugby for the following reasons

- The landscape character of the area is associated with compact nucleated villages separated from large urban areas
- The landscape/ settlement morphological pattern of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore is one of a compact nucleated settlement which is largely a separate entity surrounded by large rural gaps between Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Rugby
- It will reduce the gap between the settlement of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Rugby which result in both physical and perceptual coalescence
- It will change what is a rural agricultural landscape in the area of separation to one with built form creating increased intervisibility between Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and Rugby

5.27 It will also undermine the intended purpose and aim of Policy EN 4 and the emerging 2025-2042 Local Plan which wishes to see growth to Clifton-upon-Dunsmore but not in the identified area of separation.

5.28 It should be noted that Allocated Sites 129, 202 and 307 in Clifton-upon-Dunsmore will provide the same quantum of development as the appeal site but in locations which preserve both the area of separation and also the compact nucleated morphology of the settlement itself. It will also allow for development to have connected street pattern allowing for connectivity and ease of movement unlike the appeal site which in effect is a dead-end cul-de-sac which is not good urban design of characterful of the settlement pattern of the village and the surrounding landscape.

- 5.29 **Clifton Upon Dunsmore – Landscape/ Settlement Morphology**
- 5.30 Clifton-upon-Dunsmore landscape and settlement morphology can be seen in the evolution of the settlement through looking at map regression (See Node Appendix 2)
- 5.31 The development of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore as a settlement grew from the intersection of Church Street and Main Street. Between 1886 and 1951 the settlement remained very compact with a close relationship with the agricultural landscape and farms surrounding the settlement. The appeal site shown in red shows it sits some distance from the historic core of the village.
- 5.32 The village itself sits on an escarpment of higher ground with the River Avon Valley dropping down to the west to and with the Oxford Canal to the south. To the east a slightly more formal landscape associated with Clifton Old Hall which is now farmland.
- 5.33 It is not until approximately 1951 and 1965 does the settlement start to grow but generally in a compact form and a limited amount of linear development along the Rugby Road. However, the settlement pattern sits on the higher ground of the escarpment with little or no development moving down to the lower slopes or onto the more open rural landscape.
- 5.34 The proposed appeal site is not consistent with the morphological pattern of the settlement itself, and its compact nucleated form. The pattern of the proposed development feels separate from the village and juts out in to open countryside and is exacerbated by green buffers which results in a weird finger of development sticking out into an area of separation and rural landscape not consistent with either landscape character or the pattern of the settlement itself.
- 5.35 It would introduce an incongruous form of development which would relate poorly to and significantly compromise the morphological integrity of the contained hill top settlement of Clifton upon Dunsmore.
- 5.36 It would replace open countryside and merge two distinct settlement forms physically ( See Node Appendix 3 fig 2.2 and 2,3) and visually see viewpoints 7, 17 and 18 (See Node Appendix 6, 7)

## 6.0 APPRAISAL OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

6.1 This section will consider firstly the overall landscape characteristics of the site and landscape value followed by a review of landscape effects as presented in the Appellant's LVIA. I shall set out my own conclusions on landscape effects, and where applicable to my disagreement with the Appellant's conclusions in their LVIA.

### Overall Landscape Characteristics

6.2 The character of the site itself has many of the typical qualities of both the national and regional and local character areas as follows:

- Generally low woodland cover across the area,
- 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.

6.3 Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby: Sensitivity and Condition Study (2006) was undertaken to examine the character of the landscape around the town, its sensitivity to change, the condition of the countryside abutting Rugby's urban fringe and beyond, and to demonstrate how the outcomes could be used as a decision tool in the development planning process. This assessment had the following findings about the Dunsmore High LCA:

6.4 **Sensitivity – Fragility:** Cultural sensitivity is moderate due to the historic, coherent pattern within this LCT. Ecological sensitivity is low with the exception of: the **moderately sensitive** steeper slopes of southern escarpment which fall towards Feldon; and the highly sensitive River Avon.

6.5 **Sensitivity – Visibility:** Visibility is generally **moderate** due to the presence of small woods and trees superimposed over a rolling topography. On the slopes of the southern escarpment, however, visibility is high.

6.6 **Overall sensitivity:** With the exception of the southern escarpment and the River Avon, overall sensitivity is **moderate**, with visibility being the limiting factor.

6.7 **Condition:** To the north, the Plateau Fringe is generally in decline with the exception of an area of parkland between the River Avon and Long Lawford, and land around Church Lawford and King's Newnham, where the condition is strong. The southern fringe or escarpment on

the other hand, is not only highly sensitive, but also largely in strong condition, making this an important feature to the south of the town.

### **Landscape Value**

6.8 GLVIA identifies that a landscape does not have to be designated nationally or locally to be valued (para 5.26).

6.9 GLVIA 3 (CD5.58 - table 5.1 (p.84) identifies a range of factors that can help in the identification of a valued landscape. These are as follows:

- Landscape quality (condition): the intactness of the landscape and condition of individual elements;
- Scenic quality;
- Rarity;
- Representativeness (whether the landscape contains a particular character or feature which are considered as important examples.);
- Conservation interests (specific heritage interests e.g. ecology, archaeological, historical, geological);
- Recreational value (where landscape is valued for recreational activity with a specific focus on the landscape.)
- Perceptual aspects (notably wildness or tranquillity);
- Associations (artistic, literary, historical or cultural).

6.10 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.

6.11 Within the Appellant's LVA (CD1.35 & 1.36) these are referred to in table BLA 7.1 p. 43

6.12 I have considered all these factors in relation to the proposed appeal site to address the landscape value and ascertain whether I generally agree with the assessment within the LVA. That the site has medium landscape value.

### **Landscape Value Conclusion**

6.13 In my assessment, the landscape value is **Ordinary** but does have a clear pattern of characteristic elements of the Dunsmore LCA taking into Considering all of GLVIA factors identified in Box 5.1. (see Node Appendix 9, p.71 for definition of ordinary landscape value).

- 6.14 The landscape of the site is not considered to be valued in terms of the NPPF, paragraph 187, as the site is not covered by any statutory designations or identified as having high quality in any of the development plan documents or published evidence landscape character study documents.
- 6.15 **Landscape Susceptibility and Sensitivity**
- 6.16 Susceptibility to change is defined in the GLVIA as: "*the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall landscape quality or condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and or feature, or a perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and or the achievement of landscape policies and strategies*" (P. 89 GLVIA).
- 6.17 The sensitivity to change of the key landscape characteristics and the ability of a particular type of landscape to accommodate change without material effects upon its integrity, reflects key aspects of landscape character including scale and complexity of the landscape and degree of 'wildness' or 'remoteness'.
- 6.18 I disagree with the LVA that the site's susceptibility to is **Medium** and assess the sites susceptibility is **Medium / High** due to the sites rural character and location in an area of separation.
- 6.19 When correlated with an **ordinary** landscape value, a medium/high susceptibility results in my view a **medium sensitivity**. (See methodology in Node Appendix 9 – Table 9.4)

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

- 6.20 The LVA sets out in para 8.9 the effects at construction as follows:
- '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.'
- 6.21 Although temporary **major / moderate effects** are significant.
- 6.22 The LVA sets out in para 8.27 the effects at year 1 as follows:

- 6.23 '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**.
- 6.24 The LVA sets out in para 8.44 the effects at year 15 as follows:
- 6.25 '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.'
- 6.26 '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.'
- 6.27 My view is that I agree effects on the site will be **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at Construction and are significant. Due to the permanent change to the rural and open character of the site my view is that the impacts of the proposed development will remain **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at year 1 which is significant and not **Moderate Adverse** as stated within the LVA as mitigation planting will not have had chance to establish. The magnitude of change at construction and year 1 will be large and the landscape sensitivity is medium results in **Major/ Moderate Adverse impacts**. (See Node Appendix 9, Table 9.6)
- 6.28 In relation to residual landscape impacts on the site at year 15 my view is that impacts will be **Moderate Adverse** mainly due to the magnitude of change being medium rather than large due to the softening effect of mitigation planting. However, will still be a significant change to the baseline landscape position. (See Node Appendix 9, Table 9.6)
- 6.29 **Changes to the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Type ('Indirect Effects')**
- 6.30 The LVA sets out in para 8.15 the effects at construction and year 1 are as follows:
- 6.31 '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.'

- 6.32 My view is that magnitude of change will be high and landscape sensitivity will be medium which would result in a **Major/ Moderate Adverse** (See Node Appendix 9, Table 9.6) in close proximity to the site.
- 6.33 The LVA sets out in para 8.39 the effects at year 1 are as follows:
- 6.34 '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.'
- 6.35 My view is that magnitude of change will be high and landscape sensitivity will be medium which would result in a **Major/ Moderate Adverse** (See Node Appendix 9, Table 9.6) in close proximity to the site at year 1 but accept impacts would diminish the further away you are from the site.
- 6.36 The LVA sets out in para 8.52 the effects at year 15 are as follows:
- 6.37 'The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; **Negligible/Imperceptible.**'
- 6.38 My view is that the magnitude of change on the wider character area will be small after 15 years which would result in a **Minor Adverse** impact in close proximity to the site and a **Minor/Negligible Adverse** impact on the wider character area. (See Node Appendix 9, Table 9.6)
- 6.39 **Changes to the National Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon (National) (CD 5.56)**
- 6.40 The LVA sets out in para 8.17,8.4, 8.53 the effects at construction, year 1 and 15 as follows:
- 6.41 The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development; **Negligible/Imperceptible.**
- 6.42 My view is that I generally agree with the LVA in relation to effects on the National Character Area 96 due to its size.

### **Summary of Landscape Effects**

- 6.43 A summary of landscape effects is as follows:
- The character of the site has many typical qualities of both national and local character areas.

- The site has a very open rural character with views afforded across the valley towards the Oxford Canal and Rugby Golf Course.
- The site has clear scenic quality which is appreciated as you look east from the recreation ground across the site to the wider rural landscape.
- In my assessment, the landscape value is **ordinary** and has a clear pattern of characteristic elements of the Dunsmore LCA. Considering all of GLVIA factors as set out in Box 5.1.
- I disagree with the LVA that the site's susceptibility to change to this residential development is **medium**. My view is that the landscape susceptibility of the site is **Medium to High** for reason stated in this chapter.
- However, when correlated with an **ordinary** landscape value, this results in a **medium sensitivity** which is similar to LVA.
- The LVA identifies there are likely to be direct, temporary, short-term, adverse effects on the site which are considered to be **Major/Moderate Adverse**. Effects are adverse and significant.
- The impacts of the proposed development on the site will remain **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at year 1 which is significant and not **Moderate Adverse** as stated within the LVA as mitigation planting will not have had the chance to establish. The magnitude of change at construction and year 1 will be large, and the landscape's sensitivity is medium results in **Major Moderate Adverse impacts**.
- In relation to indirect impacts on Changes to Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape on the magnitude of change will be high and landscape sensitivity will be medium which would result in a **Major/ Moderate Adverse** in close proximity to the site at construction and year 1.
- The LVA that the effects on the landscape character of the Dunsmore LCA 96 will be **Negligible/ Imperceptible** at completion. My assessment is that it will be **Minor / Negligible Adverse** due to the size of the landscape character area.

## 7.0 APPRAISAL OF VISUAL EFFECTS

7.1 This section considers the assessment of visual impact of proposals by considering the following factors:

- 1) The size, scale, mass and orientation of development
- 2) Impact on important View 9 identified in the neighbourhood plan
- 3) Impact of mitigation on both visibility across the landscape and field of view
- 4) The approach to the assessment and findings within the LVIA

### **The size, scale, mass and orientation of development**

7.2 The size and scale of development need to be considered in relation to the existing settlement and its offset from the village.

7.3 The parameter plan (Node Appendix 5) which clearly shows that development rather than integrating with the settlement pattern stick out into open countryside and does not relate to existing development edges.

7.4 The proposed sports pitches and green space isolate the development further from the village. This results in effectively a bulbous development sticking out into open countryside and an area identified as an 'Area of Separation' protected by Policy EN4 within the Proposed Submission Rugby Local Plan which does not relate well to the morphology of the settlement and the landscape character of the area.

7.5 The illustrative plan (Node Appendix 5) clearly shows a cul de sac layout which does not allow visual penetration through the development.

### **Impact on important view 9 identified in the Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (CD 5.27)**

7.6 The Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan identifies several important views in Clifton Upon Dunsmore. This proposed development will impact on important view 9. The description of this view is as follows

7.7 'View from Clifton Recreation Ground, views south and southwest to Bluebell wood, Clifton Brook valley, the oxford canal (and Rugby) (CD 5.27 p. 48 Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan.)

7.8 Policy EN7: Important Views states

'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.'

7.9 It is also clear from the supporting text within the neighbourhood plan that the importance of protecting views as it states:

'Consultation during the neighbourhood plan's preparation identified a widely held wish to protect the largely rural settings of Clifton upon Dunsmore and Houlton, in particular their visual relationship with the surrounding countryside, including the distinctive landscapes of National Character Areas *95 Northamptonshire Uplands* and *96 Dunsmore and Feldon*. One of the main ways in which residents expressed this wish was by describing several highly valued views within and around Clifton and Houlton, and toward the surrounding countryside. These consultation findings were supported by the fieldwork for this chapter of the Plan, which although principally aimed at identifying sites of environmental significance also confirmed the sightlines of the suggested views and mapped them (figure 11). ' p.47

7.10 The proposed development has not been designed in a way to

- i) Protect the largely rural setting and character of the village
- ii) Protect long distance views across the valley

7.11 The development does not protect the largely rural setting and character of the village on its southern edge. It replaces what is open rural countryside with housing and formal playing fields.

7.12 The proposed development has not taken into consideration protection of important long-distance views from Clifton Recreation Ground as described in the description of the view south and southwest to Bluebell wood, Clifton Brook valley, the oxford canal (and Rugby).

7.13 What the parameter plan and illustrative layout plan show is effectively a wall of development with no viewing corridors of green space aligned to allow views across the wider landscape from the recreation ground.

7.14 Effectively what the development does is truncate any long-distance views from the recreation ground across open rural landscape to one of formal playing pitches and housing.

7.15 The appeal site also sits adjacent to important open space 070 Clifton Recreational Ground and although not building on it does have a significant adverse impact on it as it's surrounding the recreation ground with development rather than having a recreation ground which afford views across open countryside.

#### **The approach to the assessment and findings within the LVA**

7.16 Having reviewed the appellant's LVA, visited the site, taken panoramas and undertaken my own visual impact assessment, I have identified several findings:

- i) Missing viewpoints
- ii) Lack of verified views and photomontages to assess proposals
- iii) Photomontages that are not realistic in colour and treatment
- iv) Viewpoints not at locations that consider all worse case scenarios
- v) Assessment underestimates visual impacts

#### **Missing Viewpoints**

7.17 Missing viewpoints were identified as follows:

- Viewpoint 17 – View from Houlton way looking north east
- Viewpoint 18 – View from Rugby Golf Course and Clubhouse looking north east
- Viewpoint 19 – View from Rugby Road Bridge looking east
- Viewpoint 20 – View from boundary of Clifton Recreation Ground looking south
- Viewpoint 21 – View from western boundary looking into the site
- Viewpoint 22 – View from residential properties on Newhall Close

7.18 These missing viewpoints have been included within my assessment and within Node Appendix 7.

7.19 What is significant about these missing viewpoints are that proposed impacts include **Major Adverse, Major/ Moderate Adverse** and **Moderate Adverse** impacts which have not been factored into the conclusions of the LVA.

7.20 A number of additional viewpoints have been requested from the applicant including realistic photo montages. These were provided on the 27<sup>th</sup> March and do help illustrate the impacts of proposed development (See Node Appendix 7 for viewpoints and panoramas)

### **Lack of verified views and photomontages to assess proposals**

- 7.21 Six verified views photomontages had previously been provided. A request was made on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026 for the existing renders to be more representative of the views and for viewpoints 9, 17, 18, 19, and 20. These have now been provided which is helpful.

### **Photomontages that are not realistic in colour and treatment**

- 7.22 For the six verified views photomontages that have been provided to date they have been coloured grey against a grey sky and are therefore not very representative of what the development will look like in reality. More realistic renders have been requested for both the existing ones provided and for viewpoints indicated above. The new ones have now been provided but they are also grey.

### **Viewpoints not at locations that consider all worse case scenarios**

- 7.23 The impact of missing viewpoints is that some location which represent worse case scenarios have not been considered as part of the landscape visual assessment within the LVA. These include viewpoints 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 which apart from viewpoint 19 have **Major Adverse/ Major/ Moderate Adverse** and **Moderate Adverse** visual impacts.

### **Assessment of residential properties as a visual receptor**

- 7.24 A separate assessment of the impact on residential properties has been undertaken within LVA (CD 1.35, 1.36 table B6. This does identify **Moderate Adverse** residual visual impacts on properties close to the site. In my view the residual impacts on properties is likely to be **Major / Moderate Adverse and Moderate Adverse** for properties on Newhall Close and Rugby Road.

### **7.25 Landscape visual assessment comparison**

- 7.26 The following table provides a comparison of a number of visual receptors between my assessment and that of the LVA to help summarise where the main differences lie and where agreement exists to narrow the focus of discussion on visual impacts.

- 7.27 This table should be read in conjunction with viewpoint locations, panoramas, and visual assessment in Node appendix 7 to this proof of evidence which sets out my assessment of 22 viewpoints.

- 7.28 To provide greater clarity the LVA assessment are in black, and my assessment is in red. To highlight where the largest impacts are I have made bold any impacts that are **Major Adverse, Major/ Moderate Adverse or Moderate Adverse**

7.29 Table 1 – Visual Effects Assessments – Comparison Table

Visual	Cons LVA	Cons Node	Year 1 LVA	Year 1 Node	Year 15 LVA	Year 15 Node
View 1	Moderate Adverse	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate Adverse
View 2	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Minor/ Negligible Adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse
View 3	Minor Adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Minor Adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Minor/ Negligible Adverse	Minor Adverse
View 4	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
View 5	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
View 6	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Moderate/ minor adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
View 7	Imperceptible	Minor Adverse	Imperceptible	Minor Adverse	Imperceptible	Minor Adverse/ None
View 8	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None
View 9	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None
View 10	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None

View 11	Moderate/ minor adverse	Minor Adverse/ None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse/ None	Imperceptible	Minor Adverse/ None
View 12	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None
View 13	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None	Imperceptible	None
View 14	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Imperceptible	Minor Adverse/ None
View 15	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Imperceptible	Minor Adverse/ None
View 16	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>
View 17	No Assessment	<b>Major Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>
View 18	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>
View 19	No Assessment	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	No Assessment	minor adverse/ none
View 20	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>
View 21	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>

View 22	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>
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**LVA Visual Assessment**

7.30 In summary the LVA identified **adverse** landscape impacts from a number of viewpoints including viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 14, 15, 16. No assessment has been made in relation to viewpoints 17-22 in LVA.

7.31 The LVA identifies the largest adverse impacts to viewpoints 1, 5 and 16 with impacts **Moderate Adverse** for viewpoints 1, 5 and 16 at construction. **Moderate Adverse** for Viewpoint 1 at year 1 and **Moderate/ Minor adverse** for viewpoints 5, and 16. Residual impacts at year 15 are Moderate Adverse for viewpoint 1 and **Moderate/ Minor adverse** for viewpoints 5, and 16.

7.32 The LVA identifies Imperceptible impacts to viewpoint 7, 8,9, 10, 12 and 13 for construction, year 1 and year 15.

7.33 Other viewpoints as outlined in the table above are generally **Moderate/ Minor Adverse** or **Minor Adverse** at construction and year 1 with some assessed as **Minor/ Negligible Adverse or imperceptible** by year 15.

**7.34 Node Visual Assessment**

7.35 In my view the LVA assessment underestimates the visual impacts of proposals for the following reasons

- Missing viewpoints not considering worst case scenarios
- Underestimation of the magnitude of change and or susceptibility or sensitivity of view
- Over estimation of the impacts of mitigation planting

7.36 However, there is generally agreement of the landscape visual impact on a number of views particularly where development is unlikely to be visible or potentially partially visible and from location some distance from the site.

7.37 These viewpoints are where I generally agree with the LVA assessment of visual effects and are as follows:

- Viewpoint 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,10, 12, 13, 14, 15

- 7.38 These comparisons can be seen in the table 1 and are not discussed in detail here.
- 7.39 Viewpoints are where I disagree with the LVA assessment of visual effects and are as follows:
- Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 11, 16
- 7.40 These comparisons can be seen in table 1 above. The biggest differences of opinion relate to viewpoints 1, 2 and 16.
- 7.41 My assessment for viewpoint 1 is that Impacts will be **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at construction and Year 1 as Susceptibility is high, sensitivity is medium and the magnitude of change will be large. Whereas the LVA assesses the impact as **Moderate Adverse** at construction and Year 1. At year 15 I assess the residual impact will be **Moderate Adverse** based on a medium magnitude of change as mitigation planting helps to soften development rather than **Moderate/ Minor Adverse** as stated in the LVA.
- 7.42 My assessment for viewpoint 2 is that impacts will be **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at construction and Year 1 as Susceptibility is high, sensitivity is medium and the magnitude of change will be medium. Whereas the LVA assesses the impact as **Moderate/ Minor Adverse** at construction and Year 1. At year 15 I assess the residual impact will be **Moderate/ Minor Adverse** based on a small magnitude of change rather than **Minor/ Negligible Adverse** as stated in the LVA.
- 7.43 My assessment for viewpoint 16 is that Impacts will be **Major/Moderate Adverse** at construction and **Moderate Adverse** at Year 1 as Susceptibility is medium, sensitivity is medium and the magnitude of change will be large. Whereas the LVA assesses the impact as **Moderate Adverse** at construction and **Moderate/ Minor Adverse** Year 1. At year 15 I assess the residual impact will be **Moderate/ Minor Adverse** based on a medium magnitude of change as mitigation planting helps to soften development. This is consistent with the residual impacts identified in the LVA.
- 7.44 I have also assessed an additional six views over and above the LVA. These viewpoints 17-22 can be seen in table 1 and Node Appendix 6 & 7. These identify **Major Adverse/ Major/ Moderate Adverse** impacts for construction and **Major/ Moderate Adverse** and **Moderate Adverse** impacts for year 1 and year 15 apart from viewpoint 19 which has impacts at year of **Minor adverse/ none**.

#### **Approach to layout and mitigation planting**

- 7.45 Having considered additional mitigation in relation to the original application it does not change my assessment of visual impacts.

- 7.46 Although it is accepted that proposed mitigation will have some benefits, it will not completely screen proposals; particularly before mitigation establishes, during winter, at key access points and where changes in topography exist. (see for example viewpoint 17 and 18 – Node Appendix 7)
- 7.47 The LVA places a great deal of emphasis on mitigation helping to reduce visual impacts of the proposed development, but what it does not consider is the impact on truncated views across the site.
- 7.48 Although mitigation does have some benefits in the long term in helping screen development, it results in blocking key views across the landscape.
- 7.49 Mitigation will have the following impacts:
- It will achieve relatively little in the short term
  - It has the impact of changing the open characteristic or the arable landscape and views across the Valley and towards Rugby
  - The approach to mitigation appears to be trying to hide and screen development rather than reflect the openness of the landscape character and agricultural nature of the landscape.
- 7.50 The parameter plan shows no mitigation planting to the eastern edge of the site, a 30 m buffer should be considered as green space to help mitigate proposal but this is not the case with the proposed application.
- 7.51 The development has not allowed green corridors or view lines across the development to help protect important long-distance views from viewpoint 9 – Clifton recreational ground
- 7.52 **Conclusion**
- 7.53 In my view the LVA underestimates the landscape visual impacts of the proposed development for the reasons set out below
- Missing viewpoints that identify **Major Adverse, Major/ Moderate Adverse** impacts at Construction and Year 1 and residual **Major Moderate Adverse** and **Moderate adverse** impacts at year 15
  - **Major / Moderate adverse** impacts for viewpoint 1 at Construction and Year 1 and residual **Moderate adverse** impacts at year 15
  - **Major Adverse** impacts for viewpoint 17, at Construction

- **Major / Moderate Adverse** impacts for viewpoint 17 and 20 at Year 1 and residual **Major / Moderate Adverse /Moderate Adverse** impacts at year 15
- **Moderate Adverse** impacts for viewpoints 18, 21 and 22 at year 1 and year 15
- Has not considered views through and across the site to wider countryside
- Has not take into account Important view 9 within the neighbourhood plan
- Has not taken into consideration 'Area of Separation' and Policy EN4 of the emerging Local Plan.
- Location of sports pitches makes the development stick out and be detached from the urban morphology of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore
- Lack of mitigation planting that will not screen the development
- Cul de sac layout with a lack of connectivity

7.54 The visual impacts of proposals are greater than those set out in the LVA based on the reasons given above.

## 8.0 COMPARSION WITH ALLOCATED SITES

8.1 Node was appointed by Rugby Borough Council to consider the relative merits of the appeal site in relation to the proposed allocated sites from a landscape and landscape visual perspective.

8.2 Key Findings include:

- The allocated sites do not sit in an 'Area of Separation' protected by Policy EN 4 of the emerging Local Plan unlike the appeal site
- They do not impact on any important views as identified in the Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan in the same way as the appeal site does
- The allocated sites sit on higher ground similar to the rest of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and unlike the appeal site
- The allocated sites allow for a connected network of streets to be provided allowing good legibility, access and ease of movement unlike the appeal site which will be a dead-end cul-de-sac
- The allocated sites are more sensitive to the urban morphology of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and will create a compact nucleated urban form unlike the appeal site
- The allocated sites are more sensitive to the village and landscape character as they do not allocate all the housing on one site but spread it across three sites
- The proposed three allocated sites can provide a similar number of residential units as the appeal site and is plan led with the appeal site having been discounted due to landscape and strategic sensitivity

8.3 Consideration is now given to each of the allocated sites in relation to potential landscape and landscape visual impacts. As no layout or parameter exist at present then a full landscape and visual impact assessment cannot be undertaken of each of the allocated sites, but the key landscape and visuals can be identified and the difference with the appeal site can be highlighted.

8.4 In February 2026 Rugby Borough Council produced a Site information pack for Clifton-upon-Dunsmore (CD 5.59) as part of its evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. This considered the following sites:

- Site 129 – Land North of Lilbourne Road (Circa 60 dwellings)
- Site 202 – Newton Road (Circa 80 dwellings)
- Site 307 – North Road (Circa 10 dwellings)
- Site 335 – Appeal Site – Land off Rugby Road (Circa 150 dwellings)

8.5 The location of these sites and photographs of each of the sites including some key views can be seen in Node Appendix 8.

8.6 In addition, further assessment work was undertaken by Lepus landscape consultants on the landscape and visual sensitivity of the above sites in the following reports

- i) Rugby Borough Landscape Sensitivity Assessments March 2025 (Updated November 2025) (CD 5.47)
- ii) Rugby Borough Landscape Sensitivity Assessments of small sites - Final Report - December 2025 (CD5.49)

8.7 I now consider each of the allocated sites in comparison with the appeal site from a landscape, visual and design perspective.

### **Site 129 – Land North of Lilbourne Road (2.31 ha - Circa 60 dwellings)**

#### **Site location and landscape characteristics**

8.8 This site is located on land to the north of Lilbourne Road on the eastern edge of the village. This is a relatively small site composed of a single field and currently used as a paddock. The landscape value has little value and is well enclosed. The only sensitivities that arise are from proximity to the conservation area and the natural value of the existing field boundaries.

8.9 Properties exist to the north, east and west of the site and a new property is being built on the southwest corner of the site at the junction of Buckwell Lane and Lilbourne Road which provide a buffer to the conservation area.

8.10 The site's topography sits at approximately 120m AOD is generally flat with a small fall northwest towards Buckwell Lane. This is in line with the settlement generally with Clifton-upon-Dunsmore which sits on higher ground mainly on the 120 m contour.

- 8.11 The site has two adjacent roads which allow the potential for a connected street pattern to integrate with the village.
- 8.12 The site does not sit within green belt or an 'Area of Separation' protected by Policy EN4 of the Proposed Submission Local Plan.
- 8.13 **Landscape Character**
- 8.14 The landscape character of the site and its value is ordinary as a paddock on the edge of the village. The site is commonplace, has no know historical value, no recreational value, and little natural value (limited to the field boundaries). There is no public access. The site provides a rural approach to Clifton and to the conservation area.
- 8.15 The overall landscape sensitivity of the site has been identified in Rugby Sensitivity Assessment 2025 as Medium/ Low landscape sensitivity which I would agree with.
- 8.16 **Landscape Visual**
- 8.17 To the northwest there are views of the Coton Park warehouses in the distance. Otherwise, the skyline is primarily made up of short-distance views of field boundary trees and shrubs. The conservation area appraisal references the approach to the village on Lilbourne Road
- 8.18 The site is not visible from most of the village due to the screening of trees and shrubs. The only views into the site are from the residential dwellings at the junction of Hillmorton Lane and Lilbourne Road, from part of Buckwell Lane itself and the dwellings directly to the north and east.
- 8.19 Neighbourhood Plan Important View 3 is located on Lilbourne road to the southwest of the site looking west towards the village green and Old Hall Cottage away from the site. Development on this site is unlikely to significantly impact on important view 3.
- 8.20 Landscape visual impacts can be mitigated and are likely to be **Moderate Adverse** in the short term and reducing to **Minor Adverse or Negligible** in the longer term.

### **Site 202 – Newton Road (3.58 hectares -Circa 80 dwellings)**

#### **Site location and landscape characteristics**

- 8.21 A relatively large site that is the southern part of a field on the northern edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore to the east of Newton Road. The northern side is open (to the rest of the field). The eastern side is enclosed by a hedgerow, and the south and west are enclosed by fencing, trees and shrubs which are sparse in parts.

- 8.22 The site's topography sits at approximately 110 -120m AOD and is generally flat with some undulation with a small fall towards the north of the site. This is in line at the southern part of the site with Clifton-upon-Dunsmore which sits on higher ground mainly on the 120 m contour.
- 8.23 The site does not sit within green belt or an 'Area of Separation' protected by Policy EN4 of the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

### **Landscape Character**

- 8.24 The site is entirely greenfield/pastureland, except for the small, corrugated metal barn which is located in the southeastern corner of the site. The mature trees in the southern and western boundaries have natural value, but these are on the boundary or outside of the site and could be retained.
- 8.25 The only man-made influence within the site is a small, corrugated metal barn in the southeastern corner. To the south, beyond a track are residential properties, and immediately to the west is Newton Road. Just beyond the eastern boundary is a pond, residential dwellings, farm buildings, and above ground telephone lines.
- 8.26 The site has a rural, edge of village character, although the prominence of the Coton Park warehouses in the distance detracts from this somewhat.
- 8.27 The site is somewhat tranquil, especially on the eastern side, but less so to the west where the noise of traffic from Newton Road is prominent. The site does not feel remote due to the proximity of dwellings.
- 8.28 The overall landscape sensitivity of the site has been identified in Rugby Sensitivity Assessment 2025 as Medium/ Low landscape sensitivity which I would agree with.

### **Landscape Visual**

- 8.29 Long-distance views to the north, featuring undulating countryside, Coton Park industrial estate to the northwest, and wind turbines to the northeast. Views to the south are of a short-distance, featuring the trees of the southern boundary and some views of residential dwellings.
- 8.30 The site is screened by woodland to the north of the site as you travel south along Newton Road, but views do open up as you get closer to site.
- 8.31 Neighbourhood Plan Important View 1 and 4 are located to the north of the site on Newton Road and adjacent fields looking south. View 1 is largely screened by existing vegetation apart from when you get close to the site.

- 8.32 Mitigation along this edge could be provided to reduce any potential visual impact to Newton Road and on the eastern edge to help screen visual impacts from the public right of way.
- 8.33 Landscape visual impacts can be mitigated and are likely to be **Moderate/ Major Adverse** in the short term and reducing to **Minor Adverse or Negligible** in the longer term.

### **Site 307 – North Road (0.94 ha, Circa 10 dwellings)**

#### **Site location and landscape characteristics**

- 8.34 This site is located off North Road on the northwestern edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. The site is ordinary and has low landscape value.
- 8.35 The sites topography is relatively flat and the site sits at approx. 115m and is on a similar contour the adjacent residential development.
- 8.36 The site does not sit within green belt or an ‘Area of Separation’ protected by Policy EN4 of the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

#### **Landscape Character**

- 8.37 A small site that is only a section of a larger field used as pastureland on the edge of the village of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. It is totally open to the north and west (towards the rest of the field). To the south it enclosed by tall hedges and trees. To the east it is partly enclosed by fences and shrubs.
- 8.38 The site is entirely covered by grass (used as pastureland), barring the livestock pen which is located at its entrance onto North Road.
- 8.39 The only man-made influence within the site is a livestock pen. Immediately to the east and south of the site are residential dwellings and above ground telephone lines.
- 8.40 The overall landscape sensitivity of the site has been identified in Rugby Sensitivity Assessment 2025 as Medium/ Low landscape sensitivity which I would agree with.

#### **Landscape Visual**

- 8.41 To the north and west there are panoramic views of the north of Rugby town, including the residential areas of Brownsover and Coton Park, as well as the warehouses of Swift Valley and Coton Park industrial estates. Views to the south and east are limited to short distances and feature the field boundaries of the site and residential dwellings.

- 8.42 Visibility of the site from the village is restricted to what can be seen through the entrance at North Road, and what can be seen from the gardens of properties immediately to the east of the site. The site is highly visible from the north and west due to its elevated nature.
- 8.43 Although the views of Rugby town are expansive, there are no notable cultural heritage features in sight.
- 8.44 Neighbourhood Plan Important View 10 – View from Cow Field, off North Road Clifton , west across open countryside to the parish boundary is situated down the lane to the allotments to the south of the site. It will be possible to maintain this view with a small development of dwellings to the north.
- 8.45 Looking back towards the site Neighbourhood Plan Important View 7 looks southeast to the northwestern edge of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. This view towards the site from the location of the important view is screened by a belt of woodland planting. Some glimpsed views maybe possible from the River Avon Corridor but from some distance from the site against a backdrop of built form on the skyline.
- 8.46 Landscape visual impacts can be mitigated **and are likely to be Moderate Adverse** in the short term and reducing to **Minor Adverse or Negligible** in the longer term.
- 8.47 The development because of its small scale can be integrated both into the surrounding landscape character as well as the character of the village itself.

**Allocated Sites - Landscape Comparison with Appeal Site 335 – Land off Rugby Road (Circa 150 dwellings)**

- 8.48 The main difference between the proposed allocated sites and the appeal site are as follows:
- 8.49 **Area of separation**
- 8.50 As previously highlighted in the policy section Rugby Local Plan 2025-2042 is proposing Policy EN 4 - Areas of separation between Clifton Upon Dunsmore and Rugby. The appeal sits clearly in this area of separation whereas the proposed allocated sites in Clifton-upon-Dunsmore do not.
- 8.51 The purpose of this policy is to protect the valued character and identities of the borough's villages are, at least in part, derived from the degree to which they are physically and visually separated from the town. Development within areas between settlements could diminish this degree of separation or contribute to the eventual coalescence of settlements. To protect against these risks, Areas of Separation have been defined between Rugby town and several of the villages that are in close proximity to it.

### **Neighbourhood Plan - Important Views**

- 8.52 The appeal site is the only site that will significantly impact on an important view identified within the Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan. It will truncate long distance views across open countryside that cannot be mitigated and replace with a view of housing.

### **Location and topography of development**

- 8.53 All of the allocated sites are situated on higher ground associated with most of the settlement at between 115- 120 m A.O.D. The appeal site is located on a site generally between 100m - 115 m A.O.D which is lower than any of the proposed allocated sites, The site slopes down to Houlton Way which sits at 95 -100m. This topography of this site is much more noticeable than those of the other allocated sites which are generally much flatter. With development on the slope and higher ground it will break the skyline as can be seen in viewpoint 17. (See Node Appendix 7)

### **8.54 Landscape sensitivity**

- 8.55 The landscape sensitivity of the allocated sites is **Medium to Low** whereas as the landscape sensitivity of the appeal site is **Medium** which has a bearing on over landscape character effects which are higher for the appeal site than the proposed allocated sites.

### **Landscape character and Integration with character of landscape and village**

- 8.56 Having a series of three small sites rather than one large site which sticks out into open countryside but provides a similar number of dwellings is a more sustainable and better design approach to protect both landscape character and settlement character by ensuring a more nucleated urban form which is characteristic of the morphology of the village itself.
- 8.57 The relationship with the settlement edge and open countryside is much more satisfactory with the proposed allocated sites than the appeal site.

### **Landscape Visual Impacts**

- 8.58 The landscape visual impacts of the proposed allocated sites are likely to be less adverse than the appeal site. Residual Impact of the proposed allocated sites are likely to be **Minor adverse / Negligible** whereas the residual impacts of the appeal site for some viewpoints will still remain **Moderate/ Major Adverse and Moderate Adverse**.

### **Conclusion**

- 8.59 A plan led approach to the allocation of sites which considers the pros and cons of each site to determine which sites have the least landscape and visual harm rather than a speculative planning application which has not undertaken that process is better placed to reduce

landscape and visual harms at the same time ensuring housing needs are met. It also allows for a more sensitive approach to settlement integration from a design, townscape and landscape perspective.

## 9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

9.1 This Chapter summarises my conclusions and serves as my Summary Proof of Evidence.

### 9.2 **Scope of Evidence**

9.3 The appeal seeks outline planning permission with some matters reserved for the demolition of all buildings and the residential development of up to 160 dwellings, and creation of associated vehicular access off Rugby Road, pedestrian/cycle access points, parking, landscaping, drainage features, open space, children's play area and associated infrastructure (all matters reserved except for vehicular access off Rugby Road).

9.4 At the time of submission of the appeal the Local Planning Authority had not yet determined the application as it had not received the relevant information to allow an informed decision-making process to be undertaken. The matters identified by the appellant that they have yet to evidence include landscape, highways and ecology. The Council's statement of case set out the basis of the refusal of planning permission if the Council had been in such a position to make the decision.

9.5 This consists of the following four putative reasons for refusal:

### 9.6 **REASON FOR REFUSAL 1:**

9.7 The proposed development will have an adverse impact on the physical, visual and perceptual separation of, and contribute towards the coalescence of, Rugby and Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. It would have a significant urbanising impact on Clifton-upon-Dunsmore's individual settlement identity and character. The development is therefore contrary to policies SDC1 and NE3 of the adopted Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031, policy EN4 of the emerging Rugby Borough Local Plan 2025-2042 and paragraph 135c of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

### 9.8 **REASON FOR REFUSAL 2:**

9.9 The proposed development will cause unacceptable harm to landscape character and visual impact due to urbanisation of the site, truncation of important views and will not relate well to local topography, built form and the existing settlement. As a result, it will be contrary to policy NE3 of the adopted Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 and Policy ENV7 of the Emerging Clifton-Upon-Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (2011-2041).

### 9.10 **REASON FOR REFUSAL 3:**

9.11 There are three alternative sites at Clifton-upon-Dunsmore (North of Lilbourne Road, at Newton Road, and at North Road) identified as being suitable to deliver a total of 150 dwellings in the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Local Plan. The development of these alternative sites is acceptable in planning terms and is less harmful than the proposed development. The

availability and suitability of these alternative sites is a material consideration which counts against the approval of the proposed development.

9.12 **REASON FOR REFUSAL 4:**

9.13 The proposed development is contrary to the adopted development plan taken as a whole. The adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in National Planning Policy Framework (2024) taken as a whole. There are no material considerations which indicate a determination of the appeal other than in accordance with the development plan.

9.14 Node were appointed by Rugby Borough Council in February 2026 to prepare a landscape proof of evidence in respect of the appeal against refusal of permission.

9.15 My evidence addresses the landscape reason for refusal primarily Reason for Refusal 2 and contributes to Reason for Refusal 1 and Reason for Refusal 3.

9.16 I am familiar with the site in question, having reviewed all relevant background information and undertaken field surveys in February and March 2026.

9.17 Mr Jonathan Weekes provides evidence on all planning matters, including development plan and the planning balance. Ms Abigail Murphy provides supporting evidence on character of the settlement and other design issues.

9.18 **The Site and Context**

9.19 The site is accessed from Newall Close off Rugby Road in Clifton-upon-Dunsmore however other than the vehicular access the site is in land designated as countryside outside the defined settlement boundary.

9.20 The site comprises 9.21 hectares of greenfield land and includes highway land associated with Rugby Road and Newall Close required to access the site. There are residential properties to the west and north west of the site located on Rugby Road and Newall Close. To the north of the site is the existing playing field/recreation ground in the ownership of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore Parish Council. This section of the site is boarded by metal mesh fencing. The Clifton Recreation Ground boundary is lined with trees. To the north east are further residential properties located on Shuttleworth Road. The remainder of the site to the east and south is surrounded by further fields and allotment gardens adjacent to Newall Close.

9.21 The proposed appeal site is not consistent with the morphological pattern of the settlement itself, and its compact nucleated form. The pattern of the proposed development feels separate from the village and juts out in to open countryside and is exacerbated by green buffers which results in a weird finger of development sticking out into an area of separation and rural landscape not consistent with either landscape character of the pattern of the settlement itself.

## 9.22 **Topography**

9.23 There is a fall of 10-13 metres across the site sloping from the north east to south west across the site from a high point of 118m AOD to a low point of 105m AOD.

## 9.24 **Vegetation and water features**

9.25 The site is generally open agricultural open fields. A line of mature trees sits outside the boundary of the site as part of Clifton Recreation Ground.

9.26 The site is bounded by hedgerows apart from the northern boundary with the recreation boundary which is bounded by a metal open mesh. A few hedgerow trees are located within the boundary, but the site is generally free from vegetation and trees.

## **Intervisibility/ Coalescence**

9.27 Although the site boundary to the recreation ground has mature trees the height of the canopy allows views across the open countryside including the important view 9 identified within the Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood plan.

9.28 The introduction of the proposed development would expand the village towards Rugby town and would not guard against the potential for coalescence between existing settlements as required by Policy NE3 and SDC1 of the Adopted Rugby Local Plan 2011-2031 which require all development to respond to the character of the areas in which they are situated. It will also be contrary to Policy EN 4 Areas of Separation in the Proposed Submission Rugby Local Plan 2025-2042.

9.29 The valued character and identities of the Borough's villages are derived, at least in part, from the degree to which they are physically and visually separated from the town. Development within areas that could diminish this degree of separation or contribute to the eventual coalescence of settlements shall be guarded against and resisted. Due to the location of the application site and its relationship to the existing settlement and that of the town of Rugby would diminish the degree of actual and perceived separation which could have a significant adverse impact on the identity and distinctiveness of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore.

## **Landscape Effects**

### 9.30 **Landscape Susceptibility and Sensitivity**

9.31 I disagree with the LVA that the site's susceptibility to is **Medium** and assess the sites susceptibility is **Medium / High** due to the sites rural character and location in an area of separation.

9.32 When correlated with an **ordinary** landscape value, a medium/ high susceptibility results in my view a **medium sensitivity**. (See methodology in Node Appendix 9 – Table 9.4)

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

- 9.33 The LVA sets out in para 8.9 the effects at construction as follows:
- 9.34 '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.'
- 9.35 Although temporary **major / moderate effects** are significant.
- 9.36 The LVA sets out in para 8.27 the effects at year 1 as follows:
- 9.37 '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**.
- 9.38 The LVA sets out in para 8.44 the effects at year 15 as follows:
- 9.39 '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.'
- 9.40 '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.'
- 9.41 My view is that I agree effects on the site will be **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at Construction and are significant. Due to the permanent change to the rural and open character of the site my view is that the impacts of the proposed development will remain **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at year 1 which is significant and not **Moderate Adverse** as stated within the LVA as mitigation planting will not have had chance to establish. The magnitude of change at construction and year 1 will be large and the landscape sensitivity is medium results in **Major/ Moderate Adverse impacts**. (See Node Appendix 9, Table 9.6)
- 9.42 In relation to residual landscape impacts on the site at year 15 my view is that impacts will be **Moderate Adverse** mainly due to the magnitude of change being medium rather than large due to the softening effect of mitigation planting. However, will still be a significant change to the baseline landscape position. (See Node Appendix 9, Table 9.6)

### Summary of Landscape Effects

9.43 A summary of landscape effects is as follows:

- The character of the site has many typical qualities of both national and local character areas.
- The site has a very open rural character with views afforded across the valley towards the Oxford Canal and Rugby Golf Course.
- The site has clear scenic quality which is appreciated as you look east from the recreation ground across the site to the wider rural landscape.
- In my assessment, the landscape value is **ordinary** and has a clear pattern of characteristic elements of the Dunsmore LCA. Considering all of GLVIA factors as set out in Box 5.1.
- I disagree agree with the LVA that the site's susceptibility to change to this residential development is **medium**. My view is that the landscape susceptibility of the site is **Medium to High** for reason stated in this chapter.
- However, when correlated with an **ordinary** landscape value, this results in a **medium sensitivity** which is similar to LVA.
- The LVA identifies there are likely to be direct, temporary, short-term, adverse effects on the site which are considered to be **Major/Moderate adverse**. Effects are adverse and significant.
- The impacts of the proposed development on the site will remain **Major/ Moderate Adverse** at year 1 which is significant and not **Moderate Adverse** as stated within the LVA as mitigation planting will not have had chance to establish. The magnitude of change at construction and year 1 will be large and the landscape sensitivity is medium results in **Major Moderate Adverse impacts**.
- In relation to indirect impacts on Changes to Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape on the magnitude of change will be high and landscape sensitivity will be medium which would result in a **Major/ Moderate Adverse** in close proximity to the site at construction and year 1.
- The LVA that the effects on the landscape character of the Dunsmore LCA 96 will be **Negligible/ Imperceptible** at completion. My assessment is that it will be **Minor / Negligible Adverse** due to the size of the landscape character area.

## Visual Effects

### Impact on important view 9 identified in the Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan (CD5.27)

- 9.44 The Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan identifies several important views in Clifton-upon-Dunsmore. This proposed development will impact on important view 9. The description of this view is as follows
- 9.45 'View from Clifton Recreation Ground, views south and southwest to Bluebell wood, Clifton Brook valley, the oxford canal (and Rugby) (CD 5.27 p. 48 Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan.)
- 9.46 Policy EN7: Important Views states
- 9.47 '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.'
- 9.48 The proposed development has not been designed in a way to
- Protect the largely rural setting and character of the village
  - Protect long distance views across the valley
- 9.49 The development does not protect the largely rural setting and character of the village on its southern edge. It replaces what is open rural countryside with housing and formal playing fields.
- 9.50 The proposed development has not taken into consideration protection of long-distance views from Clifton Recreation Ground as described in the description of the view south and southwest to Bluebell wood, Clifton Brook valley, the oxford canal (and Rugby)
- 9.51 What the parameter plan and illustrative layout plan show is effectively a wall of development with no viewing corridors of green space aligned to allow views across the wider landscape from the recreation ground.
- 9.52 Effectively what the development does is truncate any long-distance views from the recreation ground across open rural landscape to one of formal playing pitches and housing.
- 9.53 The appeal site also sits adjacent to important open space 070 Clifton Recreational Ground and although not building on it does have a significant adverse impact on it as it surroundings the recreation ground with development rather than having a recreation ground which afford views across open countryside.

**The approach to the assessment and findings within the LVA**

9.54 Having reviewed the appellant’s LVA, visited the site, taken panoramas and undertaken my own visual impact assessment, I have identified several findings:

- i) Missing viewpoints
- ii) Lack of verified views and photomontages to assess proposals
- iii) Photomontages that are not realistic in colour and treatment
- iv) Viewpoints not at locations that consider all worse case scenarios
- v) Assessment underestimates visual impacts.

**Landscape visual assessment comparison**

9.55 The following table provides a comparison of a number of visual receptors between my assessment and that of the LVIA to summarise where the main differences lie and where agreement exists to narrow the focus of discussion on visual impacts.

9.56 This table should be read in conjunction with viewpoint locations, panoramas, and visual assessment in appendix 7 to this proof of evidence which sets out my assessment of 22 viewpoints.

9.57

<b>Visual</b>	<b>Cons LVA</b>	<b>Cons Node</b>	<b>Year 1 LVA</b>	<b>Year 1 Node</b>	<b>Year 15 LVA</b>	<b>Year 15 Node</b>
View 1	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>
View 2	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	Minor/ Negligible Adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>
View 3	Minor Adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Minor/ Negligible Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>
View 4	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>

View 5	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>
View 6	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>
View 7	Imperceptible	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	Imperceptible	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	Imperceptible	<b>Minor Adverse/ None</b>
View 8	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>
View 9	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>
View 10	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>
View 11	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Minor Adverse/ None</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse/ None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>Minor Adverse/ None</b>
View 12	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>
View 13	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>	Imperceptible	<b>None</b>
View 14	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	Imperceptible	<b>Minor Adverse/ None</b>
View 15	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	Minor Adverse	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	Imperceptible	<b>Minor Adverse/ None</b>
View 16	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	Moderate/ minor adverse	<b>Moderate/ minor adverse</b>
View 17	No Assessment	<b>Major Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>

View 18	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>
View 19	No Assessment	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Minor Adverse</b>	No Assessment	minor adverse/ none
View 20	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>
View 21	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>
View 22	No Assessment	<b>Major/ Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>	No Assessment	<b>Moderate Adverse</b>

### Summary of Visual Effects

9.58 In my view the LVA underestimates the landscape visual impacts of the proposed development for the reasons set out below

- Missing viewpoints that identify **Major Adverse, Major/ Moderate Adverse** impacts at Construction and Year 1 and residual **Major Moderate Adverse** and **Moderate adverse** impacts at year 15
- **Major / Moderate adverse** impacts for viewpoint 1 at Construction and Year 1 and residual **Moderate adverse** impacts at year 15
- **Major Adverse** impacts for viewpoint 17, at Construction
- **Major / Moderate Adverse** impacts for viewpoint 17 and 20 at Year 1 and residual **Major / Moderate Adverse /Moderate Adverse** impacts at year 15
- **Moderate Adverse** impacts for viewpoints 18, 21 and 22 ay year 1 and year 15
- Has not considered views through and across the site to wider countryside
- Has not take into account Important view 9 within the neighbourhood plan

- Has not taken into consideration 'Area of Separation' and Policy EN4 of the emerging Local Plan.
- Location of sports pitches makes the development stick out and be detached from the urban morphology of Clifton Upon Dunsmore
- Lack of mitigation planting that will not screen the development
- Cul de sac layout with a lack of connectivity

9.59 The visual impacts of proposals are greater than those as set out in the LVA based on the reasons given above.

### **Comparison with Allocated sites**

9.60 Node was appointed by Rugby Borough Council to consider the relative merits of the appeal site in relation to the proposed allocated sites from a landscape and landscape visual perspective

9.61 Key Findings include:

- The allocated sites do not sit in an 'Area of Separation' protected by Policy EN 4 of the emerging Local Plan 2025-2042 unlike the appeal site
- They do not impact on any important views as identified in the Clifton Upon Dunsmore Neighbourhood Plan in the same way as the appeal site does
- The allocated sites sit on higher ground similar to the rest of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and unlike the appeal site
- The allocated sites allow for a connected network of streets to be provided allowing good legibility, access and ease of movement unlike the appeal site which will be a dead-end cul-de-sac
- The allocated sites are more sensitive to the urban morphology of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore and will create a compact nucleated urban form unlike the appeal site
- The allocated sites are more sensitive to the village and landscape character as they do not allocate all the housing on one site but spread it across three sites
- The proposed three allocated sites can provide a similar number of residential units as the appeal site and its plan led with the appeal site having been discounted due to landscape and strategic sensitivity

### **Conclusion**

- 9.62 Having considered both landscape effects and landscape visual impacts of proposals, I conclude the following:
- Proposals are contrary to the following policies in the Rugby Local Plan, Adopted June 2019 as follows:
    - Policy NE3: Landscape Protection and Enhancement
    - Policy SDC1: Sustainable Design
  - Proposals are contrary to the following policies of the emerging Rugby Borough Local Plan 2025-2042
    - Policy EN2: Landscape protection
    - Policy EN4: Areas of Separation
  - Proposals are contrary to Clifton Upon Dunsmore Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2041
    - Policy ENV7: Important Views
- 9.63 The weight to this harm and the applicable planning policy conflicts are addressed in the Planning Proof of Evidence.