

Burroughs Road Recreation Ground, Ratby,
Leicestershire

**Review of landscape and visual aspects
of planning application 24/00914/OUT**

for

Hinkley & Bosworth Borough Council

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the review

1.1.1 Lagan Homes England has applied to Hinkley & Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC), the Council, for outline planning permission for a mixed use development, comprising around 450 residential units, a care home/extra care facility, a community hub, a primary school, and associated infrastructure, on land either side of Burroughs Road, Ratby, Leicestershire (App ref: 24/00914/OUT).

1.1.2 The full description of the proposed development is as follows:

Outline planning application (with all four matters reserved apart from access) for a phased mixed-use development comprising about 470 dwellings (Use Class C3) or, in the alternative, about 450 dwellings and care home/extra care facility (Use Class C2/C3). Provision of a community hub (Use Class F2); 1FE primary school (Use Class F1); and associated operations and infrastructure including but not limited to site re-profiling works, sustainable urban drainage system, public open space, landscaping, habitat creation, internal roads/routes, and upgrades to the public highway. | Burroughs Road Recreation Ground Burroughs Road Ratby Leicester Leicestershire LE6 0XZ

1.2 Landscape context

1.2.1 The village of Ratby is situated within the county of Leicestershire, some 7.5km from the centre of the city of Leicester. The intervening land comprises various settlements, separated by tracts of undeveloped land and transport corridors (including the M1 to the immediate east of the village) that make up the wider conurbation of Leicester.

1.2.2 The application site is located within a tract of open countryside that extends out from the western edge of the village of Ratby, either side of Burroughs Road, on the south and south-west facing valley sides of the Little Burrough Brook, which flows southwards from Ratby Burroughs, crossing Burroughs Road via a ford with a footbridge, to join the eastward flowing Rothley Brook that takes a course around the south of Ratby village.

1.2.3 These watercourses have produced an undulating landscape of deeply cut valleys separated by higher lands. Rothley Brook and Burrough Brook have informed the south-western and southern edge of the village, before meandering north-eastward towards the River Soar, which they meet at Rothley, north of Leicester. The Soar then flows northward past Loughborough to meet the River Trent at the county boundary.

1.2.4 The area west of Ratby is described in the Village Design Statement as follows:

Much of the area west of Ratby is a uniquely valuable local heritage site. It includes: the Celtic-Romano Bury Camp, a 13th century moated farm site at Old Hays, the mediaeval Burgh Deer Park, the site of a holy well at Holywell Farm, the deserted village at Whittington, the mediaeval boundary at Dumble Dykes and well preserved 13th century enclosures (Bondman Hays and Old Hays), 16th century enclosures (Ratby Burroughs) and 18th century enclosures (e.g. between Burroughs Road and Desford Lane). These features should be given special design consideration in any future developments.

1.2.5 To the north and west of Ratby, the landscape rises gently up to the well wooded Ratby Burroughs. Here evidence of ridge and furrow farming is a feature of the landscape. Martinshaw Wood, Pear Tree Wood and Burroughs Wood serve to provide a vegetated backdrop to many longer distance views from the south. This elevated and hilly landscape, which extends northward and eastwards between Leicester, Loughborough and Coalville, is known as Charnwood Forest. Over half of the Charnwood Forest area is included in the National Forest, an initiative to create a new national forest between Leicester and Burton upon Trent by planting new areas of woodland that blend with the existing ancient woodlands.

1.2.6 Ratby has developed on the higher ground above the watercourses. To the east of the village, farmland within the Rothley Brook Meadows flood plains provides a green space between Ratby and the M1 motorway. The motorway cuts a broadly northward swathe through the landscape and separates Ratby and Kirby Muxloe from the city and other urban areas beyond.

1.2.7 The north-western edge of the site is adjacent to planning permission 20/00462/FUL, which has been built out. It is also adjacent to outline consent 22/00648/OUT, which has yet to commence on site.

1.2.8 There are a number of public rights of way that cross the site and in its immediate vicinity, including:

- Public Footpath R48, that follows a line south-west from Stanford Street, Ratby, across the site, north-westwards along Burroughs Road, and on to Cow Lane.
- Public Footpath R50, that extends north-west from Stanford Street to meet Markfield Road, taking a course across the northern-most part of the application site.
- Public Footpath R55, from Stanford Street, south across the site to the Plough Inn, Burroughs Road, Ratby.
- Public Footpath R44, that follows a line south from Burroughs Road, across the site, to meet to meet Bridleway R42 to the east of Holywell Farm.
- Bridleway R42 to the south of the site that takes a course west and then north from Desford Lane, Ratby to Ratby Burroughs.
- Bridleway R121 that follows a line to the west of the site from Burroughs Road to Markfield Road and on to Martinshaw Wood.

1.2.9 In the vicinity of the site, the National Forest Way promoted long-distance route follows the line of Bridleway R121 through Ratby Burroughs and Martinshaw Wood.

1.2.10 The application site comprises three fields and the greater portion of a fourth field, a recreation ground and a block of woodland to the north of Burroughs Road and a block of five fields to the south.

1.2.11 The fields to the north of Burroughs Road are in arable use, and the fields to the south are in pastoral use. The site is contained to the north by existing development and woodland but is more open to the south.

1.3 The planning application

1.3.1 The planning application was received and validated by the Council on the 30th September 2024, when it was given the planning reference 24/00914/OUT.

1.3.2 The planning application is accompanied by a number of supporting documents, including:

- Dwg No. 10783-FPCR-XX-XX-DR-L-0015 P02: Site Location Plan, FPRC, dated 02.08.2024
- Dwg No. 10783-FPCR-XX-XX-DR-L-0013 P04: Illustrative Masterplan, FPRC, dated 10.07.2024
- Dwg No. 10783-FPCR-XX-XX-DR-L-0007 P13: Framework Plan, FPRC, dated 10.07.2024
- Planning Statement, Marrons, dated 10.09.2024
- Design and Access Statement, FPRC
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal, FPRC, dated 03.09.2024
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, FPRC, dated 03.07.2024

1.3.3 The planning application has yet to be determined.

1.4 Pre-application advice

1.4.1 No pre-application advice was sought prior to the submission of the planning application.

1.5 Screening

1.5.1 Following submission of the planning application, and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, the Council undertook an exercise to determine whether the proposed development constituted EIA Development and so whether the application would need to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment, in the form of an Environmental Statement.

1.5.2 In its completed EIA Analysis and Screening Proforma, dated 7th October 2024, the Council concluded that the proposed development did constitute Schedule 2 Development, but that it was not EIA Development. As such, no ES was required.

1.5.3 Regarding sensitive landscape receptors, it was noted that development would be controlled via the planning process and that an LVIA would be submitted as part of the application process.

1.5.4 Regarding visual receptors, it was noted that "*the site is visible from many viewpoints in surrounding area including Public Right of Ways*" and that impacts would be assessed via LVIA.

1.6 Commission and brief

1.6.1 In November 2024, The Landscape Partnership (TLP) was instructed by Hinkley & Bosworth Borough Council to undertake an independent review of the landscape and visual-related components of planning application 24/00914/OUT, including the accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) . The purpose of the review was to provide advice and commentary on the accuracy and reliability of the documents, to help the Council determine the application.

1.6.2 The objectives of the review are to:

- review the methodology used for the LVA

- assess whether the LVA considers the full, relevant, baseline information, and identifies the key sensitive landscape and visual receptors
- review the judgements made about the effects of the proposed development on sensitive landscape and visual receptors
- identify any further work that should be undertaken to enable the council to make an informed judgement on the likely effects of the proposed development on landscape and visual receptors

1.7 Statement of competency

1.7.1 The Landscape Partnership is a long-established and well-regarded environmental consultancy with specialisms in Landscape Architecture, Environmental Planning, Ecology and Arboriculture. Founded in 1986, the company is registered with the Landscape Institute and is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA).

1.7.2 The practice has a team of experienced and professionally qualified Chartered Landscape Architects with a recognised expertise in both Landscape Characterisation, and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for a wide range of developments. The Landscape Partnership's experience includes undertaking Landscape and Visual Assessments for a range of developments, as well as reviewing assessments undertaken by others (on behalf of local planning authorities and other organisations). This has included the preparation of standalone assessments and writing Environmental Statement chapters as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. A number of the practice's senior team are also experienced Expert Witnesses on landscape and visual related matters.

1.7.3 The review of the LVA was led by Simon Neesam, a Director of The Landscape Partnership. Simon Neesam is a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 30 years' experience. He holds a degree and a postgraduate diploma in Landscape Architecture and became a fully qualified Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute in 1994. Simon has a wide range of experience in landscape architecture and landscape planning, and has undertaken projects for private clients as well as national, regional, and local public sector bodies throughout the UK. He has carried out landscape assessments, visual impact assessments, and acted as expert witness for a variety of projects including major out-of-town retail facilities, highway schemes, renewable energy developments, landfill and mineral schemes, flood alleviations schemes, and new housing, often within sensitive landscapes or at potentially contentious locations.

1.7.4 Simon was supported by Simon Murdoch, Senior Landscape Architect at The Landscape Partnership, who is also a Chartered Landscape Architect. Simon has over 15 years of experience and has worked for some of the leading practices in the field, gaining experience in both landscape design and landscape planning work. In recent years he has primarily focused on landscape planning which has included Landscape Assessment, Townscape Assessment, Landscape Character Assessment, Sensitivity Assessment, and Green Belt Appraisal, as well as contributions to Proofs of Evidence. Clients have included local planning authorities, parish councils, and interested third parties, as well as planning consultants, property developers and private individuals.

2 Independent review

2.1 Methodology for the review

2.1.1 This review has been prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 1/20 - Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and (LVIA) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs), published in 2020.

2.1.2 The review considers only the landscape and visual aspects of the application.

2.1.3 It should be noted that The Landscape Partnership has not undertaken its own LVA, and that any comments made regarding the judgements within the assessment are made following a site visit and on the basis of the submitted information.

2.1.4 In undertaking the review, The Landscape Partnership took account of the various documentation accompanying the planning application, including the scheme drawings and reports and, in particular, the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) prepared by FPRC.

2.1.5 A site visit was undertaken on the 8th January 2025, when the visibility was good. During this site visit the application site was viewed from adjacent land, local public rights of way, and other public locations. At the time of the site visit the deciduous vegetation on the site and in the surrounding landscape was out of leaf, and ephemeral vegetation had died back. As such, it presented a worst-case scenario in terms of its screening properties and the site was at its most visible. At other times of year it can reasonably be assumed that the existing trees and woodland would be more effective in blocking or filtering views.

2.2 Structure of the review

2.2.1 The findings of the Review are presented in this report. The structure of the report is based on the recommendations set out in the TGN 1/20:

- Section 1 is a confirmation of the brief setting out the scope of the review
- Section 2 summarises how the review was undertaken
- Section 3 summarises the review of the methodology which was used for the LVA
- Section 4 summarises the review of the scope of the assessment
- Section 5 summarises the review of the assessment of effects
- Section 6 summarises the review of the presentation of the assessment
- Section 7 is a statement by the reviewer in respect of the appropriateness, quality, comprehensiveness, compliance and conformity of the LVA with relevant guidance and regulations
- Section 8 recommends any further information to be sought (as necessary)
- Section 9 is an overall conclusion on the adequacy of the assessment and whether it is sufficient to support an informed planning decision

3 Review of methodology

- 3.1.1 The assessment method is described in Section 2.0 of the LVA, while the full methodology is provided in Appendix A. The methodology makes reference to relevant guidance documents including the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition and Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations.
- 3.1.2 The methodology makes a clear distinction between landscape and visual effects, and the accompanying LVA addresses them separately.
- 3.1.3 The judgements made in respect of both landscape and visual effects are a combination of an assessment of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the effect. The criteria for assessing sensitivity and magnitude are clearly defined. How these are combined is not explicitly stated within the LVA.
- 3.1.4 The LVA reports the effects in the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 15.
- 3.1.5 The LVA reports on the sensitivity of the receptors, the magnitude of the effect, and the level of effect (described as Major, Moderate, Minor, or Negligible). As a Landscape Appraisal it does not state which effects are considered to be significant in EIA terms.

4 Review of the scope of the assessment

Study area

- 4.1.1 The size of the study area is not stated within the LVA.

Landscape context

- 4.1.2 Published landscape character assessments are referenced in Section 4.0 of the LVA. The LVA references:
 - National Character Area Profiles
 - East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment
 - Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment
 - Hinkley & Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment
- 4.1.3 At the district level the site is found within the *Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills LCA*. The settlement of Ratby is described separately in the Hinkley & Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment as an Urban Character Area. The published key characteristics, key sensitivities and values, and strategies have been referenced within the LVA.
- 4.1.4 A Landscape Sensitivity Study has also been prepared for Hinkley & Bosworth which was published in 2017. The LVA reports the findings of the Landscape Sensitivity Study in relation to the relevant Assessment Area (13: Ratby).
- 4.1.5 The baseline also makes reference to The National Forest Strategy (2014-2024) & National Forest Developer Contributions: Guide for Developers and Planners.

Baseline landscape character

4.1.6 The baseline landscape character is described in Section 5.0 of the LVA.

4.1.7 The site comprises 32.7ha of predominantly agricultural land that extends from the western edge of Ratby (at Stamford Street) to Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood. The site is bisected by Burroughs Road.

4.1.8 The boundaries of the site and adjacent land uses are described within the LVA.

4.1.9 The baseline appraisal includes an accurate description of the site features and site context, which includes a description of the local public rights of way.

4.1.10 The landform is illustrated on Figure 4 and is described within the LVA (para 5.17). it is noted that the landform is shaped by the Rothley Brook and its tributaries.

4.1.11 The site is found within the Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills LCA as defined within the Hinkley & Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment 2017.

4.1.12 One of the key characteristics of Ratby is the *"Church of St. Phillip and St. James surrounded by prominent open green space at the top of a low hill forms a clear focal point, visible from several important vantage points within and around the settlement."* The church is notably visible from certain points within and beyond the site (e.g. Photo Viewpoint 1D). Views and vistas of the Church are also identified as a key sensitivity of Ratby.

4.1.13 The LVA includes a detailed discussion of Landscape Value which is based on the factors which have been established by the Landscape Institute.

4.1.14 It is stated that the site *"does not exude any strong sense of identity in that it does not lie within a rare Landscape Character Area or Type at either a national or local level, and nor does it not contain any rare, unusual or irreplaceable landscape features."* The ridge and furrow which is found within the site is, however, an increasingly rare and irreplaceable feature. It is suggested that strongly nucleated villages surrounded by areas of ridge and furrow are distinctive to the Midlands, and especially to Leicestershire. The site is divided by Burroughs Road, and there is a ford just beyond the site boundary. The site is seen against the wooded backdrop of the National Forest and Charnwood, and the undulating topography, combined with views to the church, create a distinctive sense of place.

4.1.15 In terms of functional value the site clearly has a role in food provision and contributes to a number of ecosystem services. Woodland and pasture within the site contribute to flood management and erosion control, and the site (i.e. the recreation ground) and the adjacent woodland offer recreational opportunities and space for wildlife. Considering the site and its context there is a good level of recreational provision (including car parking and benches) and a range of complementary habitats, and it is considered therefore that the local area has functional value.

4.1.16 The judgement of medium landscape value accords with the findings of the Hinkley & Bosworth Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, but the ridge and furrow is a relatively rare feature which should perhaps be accorded higher value. The site also provides a setting to the Conservation Area, while views to the church are sensitive. Pear Tree Wood (immediately to the west of the site) is a Woodland Trust site with visitor access, and the site does therefore have identifiable value.

4.1.17 The susceptibility of the national, regional, county and district landscape character areas to change is assessed in the LVA as Medium. Although it could be argued that the susceptibility to this scale of development is higher than Medium the location of the site adjacent to the settlement edge could justify this assessment.

Visual Receptors

4.1.18 Visual receptors are clearly identified on Figure 7 and the representative viewpoints are shown on Figure 6.

4.1.19 The visual envelope shown on Figure 7 has been determined through fieldwork analysis. Whilst the actual visibility of the site does depend on landform and woodland as stated in the text, these features are capable of being modelled, and a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) would provide more certainty regarding the visibility of the site.

4.1.20 The visual envelope extends over a wider area than is indicated on Figure 7. The LVA acknowledges that parts of the site are visible from the northern edge of Kirby Muxloe (Visual receptor E) and the visual envelope should then include this area. From the site visit it was also found that parts of the site are visible from Burroughs Road in the vicinity of the Woodland Trust car park, from Footpath R43 (From Holywell Farm, Ratby to Botcheston) in the vicinity of Woodland Farm, from Byway R56 (From Desford Lane to Bridleway R42), and from Footpath S2 (From footpath S4 near Gullet Lane, Kirby Muxloe to Leicester Lane, Desford). Parts of the site are also visible from Desford Road, Kirby Muxloe and from St Bartholomew's churchyard, Kirby Muxloe.

4.1.21 The LVA has identified 15 visual receptors. Different types of visual receptor are distinguished (residents, rights of way users, highway users, other receptors) and descriptions of the views are provided. Cross-references to the representative viewpoints are also included. The LVA concludes that residents and residential communities are of high sensitivity, that rights of way users are of high sensitivity, and that highway users are of Medium-Low sensitivity. The LVA recognises that Burroughs Road is used by pedestrians and has accorded the users High sensitivity. The LVA also recognises that people may use the informal paths in Wirlybones Wood (which is adjacent to the site), and these receptors are afforded high sensitivity. The primary purpose of Burroughs Road recreation area is perhaps for children's play, but enjoyment of the view could also be relevant, so this receptor could perhaps be afforded higher sensitivity. In general, however, the LVA has recognised a suitable level of sensitivity for the various visual receptors. Views are also available from a section of the Ivanhoe Way (E: 449762 N: 306144) and it is recommended that this is included as a visual receptor.

4.1.22 It is not generally possible to obtain photographs from private properties, but the applicant has made efforts to provide similar views from publicly-accessible locations.

Night-time effects

4.1.23 Potential night-time effects should be addressed within the LVA.

Landscape-related designations

4.1.24 The site lies adjacent to the Ratby Conservation Area and there are also views across the site to the Church of St Philip and St James (Grade II* listed) which is a local landmark. The effects on these

landscape-related designation (including effects on their landscape setting) should therefore be considered.

- 4.1.25 The Ivanhoe Way should be considered as a receptor in the LVA.
- 4.1.26 The National Forest should be considered as a receptor in the LVA.

4.2 Proposed development

- 4.2.1 The proposed development is submitted in outline with all matters reserved except from access for residential and community uses. The drawings accompanying the application are illustrative or indicative in nature; as such, they cannot be relied upon as necessarily conveying a fixed final scheme. For example, the Design and Access Statement notes (page 15) "*The Illustrative Masterplan illustrates how the detailed layout of streets and buildings could come forward...*". It should be noted that both the Illustrative Masterplan and the Framework Plan are illustrative nature. This needs to be borne in mind when considering the findings of the LVA, as the final scheme could differ from that currently promoted, with consequential variation to the recorded landscape and visual effects.
- 4.2.2 The proposed development is described in Section 3 of the Planning Statement.
- 4.2.3 There is some confusion around the drawings which accompany the proposed development. The Planning Statement refers to a Concept Masterplan (Drawing No. 10783-FPCR-xx-xx-DR-L-0007). This drawing is titled Framework Plan, though it is referred to in the LVA as the Illustrative Framework Plan.
- 4.2.4 The assessment should rely only on information that is secured as part of the outline application (Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01) and should include a reasonable scenario of maximum effects (GLVIA 4.3). Any limitations of the information available (e.g. the appearance of the development) should be set out within the assessment. In particular it is unclear if any of the drawings actually control the distribution of uses across the site, or whether they are only illustrative in nature.
- 4.2.5 Were the application to be approved, the detail of the scheme would be developed and discharged through a future reserved matters application(s).

4.3 Appropriateness of the proposed mitigation

- 4.3.1 The LVA does not list the proposed mitigation measures, but some measures are mentioned within the text: "*To provide appropriate mitigation during the construction phases, all works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to minimise impacts on landscape character and landscape features.*" This would include measures to protect the existing trees and woodland. It is also stated that the design "*incorporates various design and mitigation measures, to include a comprehensive GI framework of retained and new landscape features within which built development can be sensitivity located.*"
- 4.3.2 Providing a comprehensive green infrastructure (GI) framework is appropriate, and it is noted that the proposed Green Infrastructure covers more than 50% of the site. It is noted, however, that certain features are already existing as part of the baseline environment. The application boundary includes existing woodland adjacent to Pear Tree Wood, existing trees and hedges and other

grassland habitats. It is noted that the existing hedges “*provide suitable habitat for nesting birds and resources / commuting and foraging for a range of species.*” Similarly the site provides “*good foraging habitat to the local bat population*” and supports badgers. Public access is already provided via the existing public rights of way and Burroughs Road. Retention of existing features is appropriate and welcome but should not be counted as a benefit of development.

4.3.3 The proposal does also include some new features such as woodland planting and “*habitat creation.*” In terms of habitat creation, the post-development habitats are shown on Figure 4 in the Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Report. These habitats would include willow scrub and mixed scrub (which are indistinguishable on the plan), broadleaved woodland, neutral grassland and drainage basins, as well as some new native hedges. The proposed planting supports the vision of the National Forest, but at the same time there would also be an urbanisation of the site which is not entirely offset by the woodland planting and GI. TLP would also note that the loss of ridge and furrow is not mitigable.

5 Review of the assessment of effects

5.1 Changes to site fabric

5.1.1 It is expected that a Landscape and Visual Appraisal would assess the direct and indirect effects on the landscape which would include an assessment of the direct effect on the physical features of the landscape, as well as effects on character and appearance. It is therefore recommended that a clearer distinction is made between the effects on the site features and effects on character.

5.1.2 The ridge and furrow within the site is irreplaceable, and the loss of this feature would be an important adverse effect.

5.1.3 The balance of the proposed land uses does seem to present a problem. 30% of the site area (9.81ha) is required for woodland creation if the development is to accord with Policy 21 in the Local Plan. The National Forest consultation response has indicated that incidental open space would not qualify as National Forest planting, and the design may therefore need to be reconsidered. The archaeologists at Leicestershire County Council have recommended that the existing ridge and furrow should be retained, but this is unlikely to be compatible with National Forest planting, and the site then may not be able to accommodate this amount of development.

5.2 Effects on character

5.2.1 Landscape effects on completion are discussed within Section 7.0 of the LVA.

5.2.2 The key characteristics include a gently undulating landform, a contrast between areas which are visually open and enclosed depending on the elevation of the landscape and presence of woodlands and vegetation. It is described as a predominantly rural landscape which is influenced by industrial/urban features such as masts, poles and pylons. The LCA forms part of the National Forest and Charnwood Forest and there is good public access throughout, especially within the National Forest Area. Many of these characteristics are present within the vicinity of the site.

5.2.3 It is acknowledged that large parts of this LCA would not be affected, but the proposal would have a direct effect on the part of the area which it occupies, and could also affect the perceived

character of the wider area indirectly. The proposal extends to 32.7 ha so would directly affect quite a large area within the Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills (LCA B). This is described as predominantly rural landscape, and a proposal of this scale would inevitably compromise the rural character of the landscape.

5.2.4 The proposed GI would contribute to the provision of new woodland and habitat and support the vision of the National Forest. It is stated in the Landscape Character Assessment that the siting and design of new development should complement the existing settlement pattern. The site is found adjacent to the village of Ratby, but a development of this scale would cause a significant expansion of the settlement. It is also stated that historic features of the landscape should be conserved. This presumably would include the existing ridge and furrow within the site. The proposed extension would to some extent be integrated by the surrounding woodland, but there would still be some residual views of the proposed development from beyond the site boundary.

5.2.5 Within the area of the site there would be a substantial alteration to key characteristics / features which represents a High to Medium degree of change. The proposal would not affect the whole Charnwood Fringe character area, so at the level of the overall character area the magnitude of change would be lower. The LVA reports effects on the Charnwood Fringe LCA as a whole and the effects on the landscape character of the site and its immediate context. The effect on the Charnwood Fringe LCA is judged as Moderate-Minor reducing to Minor adverse at Year 15. The effect on the site and its immediate context is judged as Major-Moderate adverse reducing to Moderate adverse. In TLP's opinion the effects on character have been slightly understated.

5.2.6 TLP would note the potential loss of characteristic landscape features i.e. ridge and furrow.

5.3 Visual Effects

5.3.1 The Visual effects table in Appendix C of the LVA provides an assessment of the effects on visual receptors. The LVA considers susceptibility to change, the value of the view and the magnitude of the effect as required by the guidance. The effects on visual receptors have been clearly described within the main text and the level of effect is clearly indicated.

5.3.2 The LVA has included a good number and range of representative viewpoints to illustrate the type of views which are available. The LVA helpfully includes more than one photo from some routes to show how views vary.

5.3.3 The assessment assumes that new woodland planting would be 8-10m in height at year 15, which is an optimistic assumption. For example, 14 years growth (i.e. assuming plants would not grow in the first year) at 0.3m/year, plus 1.2m planting height = 5.4m height at year 15.

Visual envelope

5.3.4 The LVA states that some views may potentially occur outside the visual envelope. Clarification is required regards the circumstances that as to how this scenario could occur. The text of the LVA acknowledges that there would be some visibility from the ridge of higher ground to the south in the vicinity of Kirby Muxloe. The visual envelope then would include this ridge (but not the lower

intervening ground around the Rothley Brook). The visual envelope also extends to the west along Burroughs Road and towards Woodlands Farm.

Visual effects

5.3.5 The LVA recognises that there would be significant effects on the adjacent residential receptors at Stamford Street (Visual Receptor A). The existing vegetation on this boundary is shown to be retained within the proposals. It is considered that the residential amenity of these properties would be a material consideration in a planning decision.

5.3.6 New residents in the approved developments to the north (Visual Receptor B) would also have close-range views. Permission 20/00462/FUL has been built out but outline consent 22/00648/OUT has not yet reached the construction stage. Whilst the proposed dwellings potentially overlook the site there is a certain amount of separation which would provide an opportunity for mitigation planting to soften the effects. The existing permissions will clearly obscure views from Markfield Road (Visual Receptor C).

5.3.7 It is considered that the assessment of Moderate adverse effects on Public Footpath R50 (Visual Receptor F) is fair. The quality of the existing views from Public Footpath R48 are better and this is reflected in an assessment of Major-Moderate adverse effects (Visual Receptor G). The westernmost end of the path, however, would be less affected (Visual Receptor H).

5.3.8 In relation to views from Kirby Muxloe (Visual Receptor E), TLP would note that views are available not just from residential properties, but from Desford Road and Public Footpath S2 also. It is acknowledged that the proposed development would be seen in the context of Ratby, which is a feature of the view. The proposed development would expand the village quite noticeably within the view, and the effect is therefore considered to be more than the Negligible cited in the LVA.

5.3.9 Public Bridleway R121 is situated within Pear Tree Wood and views of the development would be restricted by the woodland.

5.3.10 There would, however, be clear views of the development from the western portion of Burroughs Road (Restricted Byway 45). These views are represented by Photo Viewpoint 1A. A number of photographs have been provided to illustrate the changing sequence of views from Burroughs Road (Visual Receptor M). The LVA has acknowledged that Burroughs Road is a suitable route for pedestrians and has not attempted to downplay the effect on this route or on Public Footpath R44 which crosses the southern part of the site (Visual Receptor I).

5.3.11 The LVA includes a reasonable description and assessment of the likely visual effects. TLP would, however, note that visual effects would also be experienced from Public Footpath R43 (E: 449592 N: 305312) and Byway R56 (E: 449974 N: 305375) which are not covered within the appraisal.

5.4 Cumulative effects

5.4.1 The LVA has not discussed any potential cumulative effects.

6 Presentation of the assessment

- 6.1.1 The LVA is well presented with the main findings being summarised in the LVA, and supporting information contained within appendices. The LVA covers the main landscape and visual receptors but does not consider topics such as night time effects or cumulative assessment. Appropriate use has been made of tables and graphics to convey the findings of the assessment.
- 6.1.2 The visual envelope shown on Figure 7 was determined through fieldwork analysis, but a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence would potentially offer a more accurate and reliable indication of the site's visibility.
- 6.1.3 The photographs are well presented and are in accordance with Landscape Institute guidelines. Winter photography has been provided (showing the site at its most visible) and the photos have been annotated clearly. The photographs have been taken in clear light and are provided at a high resolution.
- 6.1.4 For this scale of development it is expected that some visualisations would be provided from key viewpoints to help readers understand the visual effects of the proposals.
- 6.1.5 The findings are clearly summarised in the tables and in the main text.

7 Summary statement

- 7.1.1 The following paragraphs are a statement by the reviewer in respect of the appropriateness, quality, comprehensiveness, compliance and conformity of the LVA with relevant guidance and regulations.
- 7.1.2 The LVA which has been submitted is clearly structured in accordance with the guidance and is well presented. The writing is clear and easy to follow, and the report is concise and to the point. The LVA distinguishes between landscape and visual effects. Sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effect are each discussed in turn, and the LVA is therefore considered to be generally compliant with relevant guidance including the GLVIA third edition. A clearer distinction could, however, be made between effects on the physical features of the landscape and effects on character.
- 7.1.3 The main effects have been clearly summarised within the main text with more detailed supporting information provided in the appendices. The LVA is well structured with clear distinctions between topics. The judgements in the LVA are accompanied by supporting reasoning, and the whole process is therefore considered to be transparent and straightforward to follow. The findings of the LVA have been clearly communicated, with appropriate use of tables. The document is internally consistent, and terminology has been applied consistently. The LVA is supported by appropriate winter-time photos. The Visual Envelope shown on Figure 7, however, does not reflect the full visual envelop of the site. It is also considered that supporting visualisations would be appropriate for a development of this scale to help communicate visual effects on key views.
- 7.1.4 The LVA has identified and discussed most of the relevant landscape and visual receptors, but the report is not considered to be fully comprehensive in its current form (see Section 8 below).

8 Recommendations for further information

8.1.1 Recommendations for further information are as follows:

- Distinction between effects on physical elements of the landscape and effects on character.
- Appraisal of views from the ridge of higher ground at Kirby Muxloe, particularly from Public Footpath S2 (E: 451128 N: 304162)
- Appraisal of views from Public Footpath R43 and Byway R56.
- Appraisal of effects on landscape-related designations including Ratby Conservation Area and the Church of St Philip and St James (Grade II*) including effects on their landscape setting.
- Appraisal of effects on promoted routes i.e. the Ivanhoe Way.
- Appraisal of night-time effects.
- Provision of visualisations from key viewpoints to illustrate the visual effects of the proposed development and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation planting.
- Review of judgements made in the LVA to ensure that the retention of existing site features and attributes – which is welcomed but should be treated as a neutral effect in the assessment balance – is not counted as a benefit of development when balancing losses and gains.

9 Overall conclusion

9.1.1 The LVA has been well put together in accordance with relevant guidance. As an appraisal for non-EIA development, the LVA has not assessed the significance of the effects, but levels of effect are nonetheless clearly stated within the report.

9.1.2 The site forms part of an expanse of countryside which extends up to the western boundary of Ratby Conservation Area. Whilst views from within the Conservation Area are limited there are views over the site to the Church of St Philip and St James to be considered. The site has a pleasant character and it can be argued that there is a distinctive sense of place. The site context includes some notable recreational value which is associated with the National Forest, and the site itself provides connections to Pear Tree Wood and Ratby Burroughs. The judgement of Medium landscape value is reasonable, but the ridge and furrow within the site is a relatively rare feature which should perhaps be accorded higher value.

9.1.3 The LVA offers a reasonable description of the effects on landscape and visual receptors. The visual envelope, however, is larger than is implied by Figure 7, and the effects therefore would be experienced over a larger area. In TLP's opinion the effects on landscape character are slightly understated, and it is also noted that the loss of ridge and furrow is not mitigable. The proposal would have certain adverse effects on views including important views to the Church of St Philip and St James, and there would be a large change to views from Burroughs Road. The assessment of visual effects is generally fair, but there are some visual effects which are not captured by the appraisal. Some visualisations from key viewpoints would also be expected for a development of

this scale and would aid understanding of visual change and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation planting.

9.1.4 The balance of the proposed land uses does seem to present a problem. To accord with local planning policy 9.81ha should be dedicated to woodland planting; however, the National Forest consultation response has indicated that incidental open space would not qualify as National Forest planting. The archaeologists at Leicestershire County Council have recommended that the existing ridge and furrow should be retained, but this is unlikely to be compatible with National Forest planting, and the site then may not be able to accommodate this level of development.