

TECHNICAL NOTE: LANDSCAPE & VISUAL RESPONSE

Lagan Homes

West of Ratby

July 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Technical Note has been prepared by FPCR Environment Design Ltd, on behalf of Lagan Homes.
- 1.2 The Note is in relation to the outline planning application submitted by Lagan Homes (Planning application ref. 24/00914/OUT).
- 1.3 FPCR prepared a Landscape & Visual Appraisal (LVA), (September 2024), to accompany the application.
- 1.4 The LVA was prepared based upon GLVIA3¹.
- 1.5 The purpose of the LVA is to review landscape character and visual amenity, and to assess the resulting landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development (i.e., that is presented by this Outline Planning Application) on the receiving landscape receptors and visual receptors.
- 1.6 This Technical Note provides a response to The Landscape Partnership's (TLP's) review of the LVA. The review was undertaken for Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council. (H&BBC)²

2.0 CONTEXT

- 2.1 TLP have not prepared their own LVA but have undertaken a site visit and have reviewed the planning application material, as expressed by TLP below:

"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 (para 2.1.3)

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 [sic]" (para 2.1.4)

- 2.2 TLP review states, in summary, the following:

"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... Appropriate use has been made of tables and graphics to convey the findings of the assessment.

¹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013.

² Review of landscape and visual aspects of planning application 24/00914/OUT, The Landscape Partnership, 23 January 2025

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.

The findings are clearly summarised in the tables and in the main text" (para 6.1.1-6.1.5) [emphasis added]

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" (para 7.1.2) [emphasis added]

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..."** (para 7.1.3) [emphasis added'].

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

3.1 Section 8 of TLP's review sets out recommendations to H&BBC for further information. These are set out below and followed by a response by FPCR.

TLP

- **Distinction between effects on physical elements of the landscape and effects on character.**

3.2 The LVA process examines the impact of development upon the landscape character of the site and immediate area. This takes into account the *impact of the development on the physical elements within this landscape* to include fields, hedgerows, woodland, trees, watercourses and landform. This assessment process is explained within the LVA Landscape Effects section:

"The impacts of the Proposed Development on the landscape receptors of the site and its immediate area and those landscape receptors within the site (e.g. woodland, hedges, trees, landform) have been evaluated alongside the landscape design and mitigation measures that have been adopted (LVA para 7.12) [emphasis added]

3.3 There is no requirement within GLVIA3 to assess landscape character and physical elements separately. The LVA comes to an overall conclusion on landscape effects taking into account impacts on landscape character and impacts on landscape receptors/physical elements, such as woodland, hedges and trees, as explained within the LVA.

"It is judged that at the outset and on the completion of the Proposed Development at year 1 the impact on the site and its immediate context would result in a Major-Moderate Adverse effect as a result of the change from agricultural land to built development. **This takes account of the overall scale and geographical extent of the development, the impact (change) on the site, the disruption in landscape character and the immediate area, and losses in vegetation and features- albeit these are limited.** These direct effects would be restricted to a comparatively localised area of the landscape, with no marked landscape effects on the wider landscape given the general overall containment of the site (and development upon it) within the surrounding landscape. The level of these effects would diminish in the longer term as the GI framework would be delivering a series of maturing habitats that would be delivering enhancement for local landscape character.

It is assessed that in the longer term the level of landscape effects would reduce to Moderate Adverse (15 years after completion) as a result of the maturing green infrastructure which would be providing benefits. In conclusion, a development of this scale, type and extent and on any greenfield site of this nature is likely to result in adverse effects at the outset, and it is considered that whilst there would be levels of adverse effects, the Proposed Development would not result in any unacceptable long-term landscape harm" (LVA para 7.16-7.17) [emphasis added]

TLP

- ***Appraisal of views from the ridge of higher ground at Kirby Muxloe, particularly from Public Footpath S2 (E: 451128 N: 304162)***

3.4 The Visual Amenity Plans (Figure 6-7 of the LVA) identify the visual receptors that have been assessed and the representative viewpoints. These are considered to provide a fair and representative range of viewpoints for the purpose of the LVA and provide a proportionate approach in terms of the likely impacts (change) and consequential level of effect on visual receptors.

3.5 TLP's report states that:

"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" (para 5.3.2) [emphasis added]

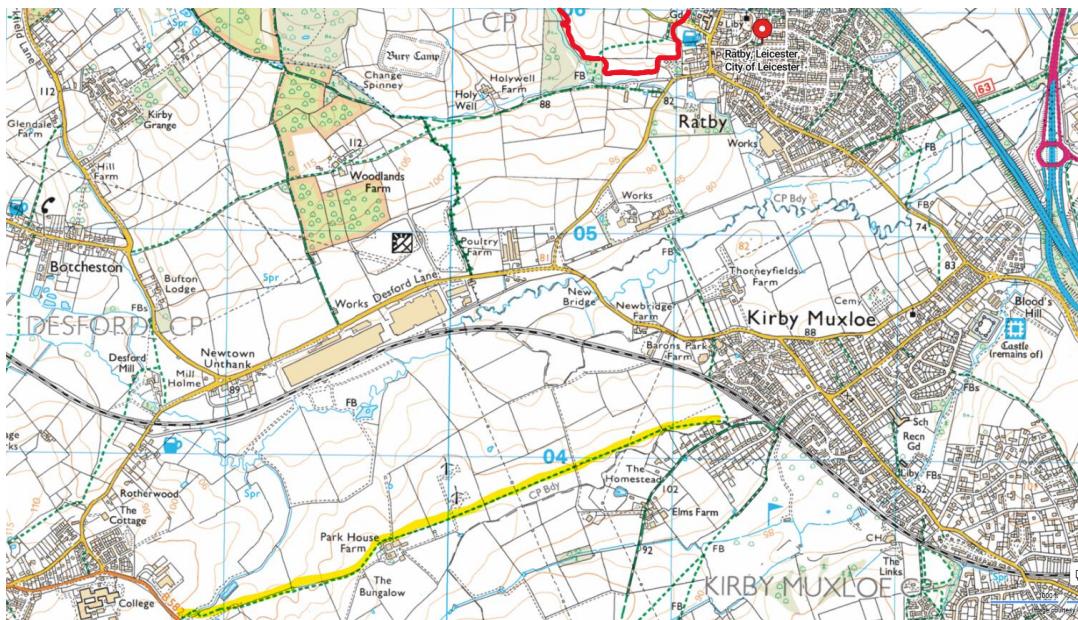
3.6 The LVA acknowledges that there is intervisibility between the site and higher ground at Kirby Muxloe to the south. As an example, **Viewpoint (15), Figure 21**, is included within the LVA to illustrate the view from properties in Kirby Muxloe that occupy the elevated Desford Road.

3.7 When considering visibility, the LVA states that:

"It is recognised that some views may potentially occur outside the VE [visual envelope], such as from elevated points at Kirby Muxloe to the south and from distant elevated vantage points to the west, although it is considered that distance and intervening elements such as landform, vegetation and buildings are likely to reduce the perceptibility of the Proposed Development. Furthermore, built development would be observed within the context of the built-up area of Ratby and

would be observed by some receptors alongside built features that are already apparent within the view" (LVA, para 8.15) [emphasis added]

3.8 To provide additional information to assist the decision making process, visual effects from Public Footpath S2 is explored below. This Public Footpath follows an elevated course between Kirby Muxloe and Desford, as shown below in **Extract 1**.



(Extract 1. Footpath S2 identified in 'yellow', with the site indicatively marked in 'red')

3.9 There are opportunities for extensive views northwards across the lower lying Rothley Brook valley towards Ratby. **Figure 1, Viewpoint 16** (included in this Technical Note), provides a representative view from the footpath. Receptors have views of agricultural fields, woodland, pylons, and built elements.

3.10 The northern and upper parts of the site (north of Burroughs Road) are visible, albeit distant (the footpath varies between 1.6km -3km from the site). There would be some partial views of the northern parts of the Proposed Development with the development being observed within the context of the built-up area of Ratby, which includes views of housing at Martinshaw Meadows and Stamford Street. New structural planting, alongside established woodland and overlapping hedgerows and tree cover within the intervening landscape, would filter views of the built form.

3.11 Given the receptors sensitivity (High) and judged magnitude of change (Low) - which takes into account the overall distance of the receptor from the proposed development; existing screening elements in the landscape such as landform and vegetation; and existing built elements in the view (ie Ratby), which development would be observed against - , effects are judged to be Minor Adverse on completion, reducing to Negligible Adverse in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account of the maturing nature of the GI framework, which would assist in assimilating the development into the landscape.

TLP

- **Appraisal of views from Public Footpath R43 and Byway R56.**

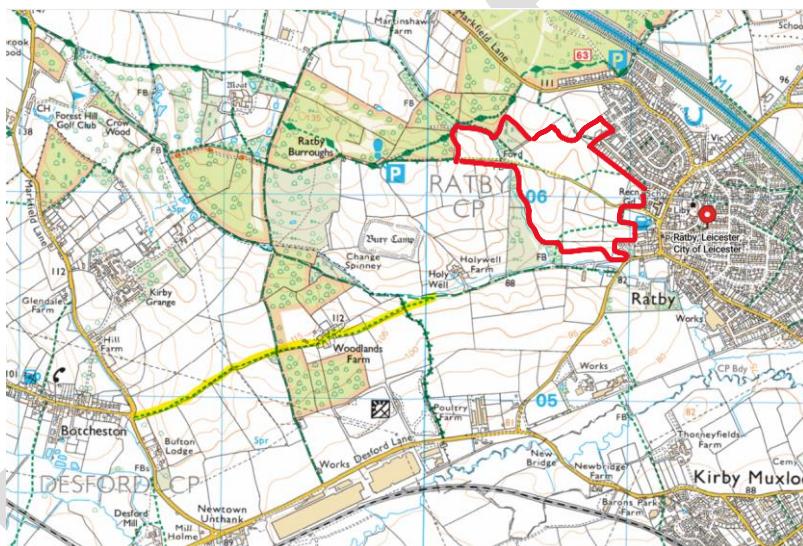
3.12 TLP's report states that:

"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" (para 5.3.11)

3.13 It is noted that there will be some level of visual effects for users of Footpath R43 and from Public Byway R56, albeit these routes are of some distance from the site (approx. 1km) and visibility of the site is restricted to occasional views from these routes.

3.14 To provide additional information, and to assist the decision making process, visual effects are summarised below for these receptors.

3.15 Footpath R43 lies to the west of the site and runs from Holywell Farm to Botcheston, via Woodlands Farm, as shown below in **Extract 2**.



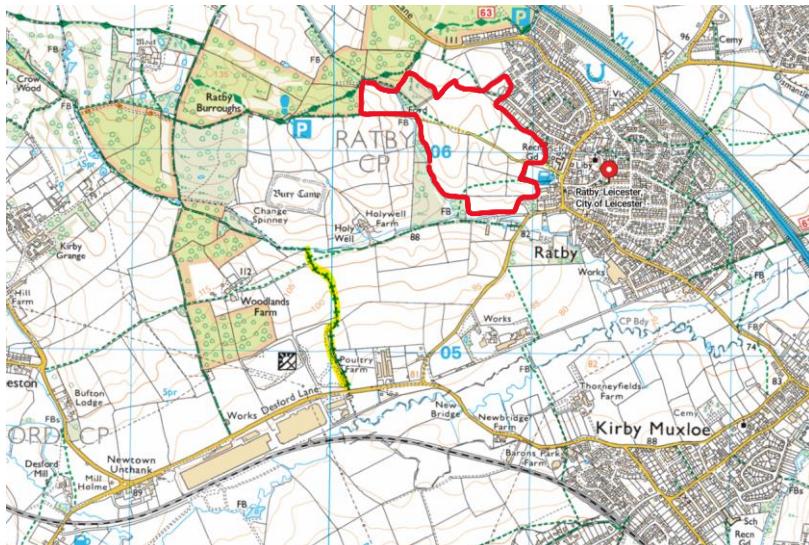
(Extract 2: Public Footpath 43 shown in 'yellow' with the site indicatively marked in red)

3.16 The extent of visibility across the landscape from Footpath R43 varies on account of the screening effects of landform, hedgerows and woodland cover. Existing woodland that borders the western parts of the site at Wirlybones Wood and Pear Tree Wood, together with landform variations in the intervening landscape would prevent views of the proposed development, albeit there will be some partial views of the development from some occasional locations along the route, specifically near Woodlands Farm. **Figure 2, Viewpoint 17**, is taken from the field immediately east of the farm. The site is not easy to percept because of screening elements of landform and tree cover in the intervening landscape, but buildings at Martinshaw Meadows and Stamford Street are visible, which help to locate the site.

3.17 Given the receptors sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (Low) - which takes into the limited opportunities for views of the Proposed Development as a result of distance and screening elements in the landscape, and the fact that the development would be seen against built features already apparent in the view with new housing seen against the backdrop of the existing built up area of Ratby, - effects are judged to be Minor Adverse on completion, reducing

to Minor Adverse-Negligible Adverse in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account the maturing nature of the green infrastructure framework, which includes structural woodland within the western part of the site, which would assist in assimilating the development into the landscape and filtering views of the built form.

3.18 Byway R56 provides a connection from Footpath 43 to Desford Lane and lies approximately 1km to the south west of the site, as shown below in **Extract 3**.



(Extract 3: Byway R56 shown in 'yellow' with the site marked indicatively in 'red')

3.19 Visibility across the landscape and views from Byway R56 varies depending on the screening effects of landform and intervening vegetation within the context of the route. The overall visual experience includes views of pylons, woodland, Desford Lane solar farm, farm buildings (Holywell Farm), surrounding agricultural fields, and intermittent, glimpsed views of buildings in Ratby. From the fieldwork the route is not clear on the ground and there is, for example, no onward journey from Desford Road. The assumption is that the route is not well-used.

3.20 **Figure 3, Viewpoint 18**, is taken from a high point on the route near Footpath 43. There would be some very limited glimpsed views of the proposed development seen within the context and backdrop of glimpsed occasional view of built elements in Ratby. Existing woodland and tree cover and new planting would integrate the development into the landscape.

3.21 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (Low-Negligible) - which takes into account the limited visibility of the Proposed Development - effects are judged Minor Adverse-Negligible Adverse on completion, and Negligible Adverse in the longer term (year 15)

TLP

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.

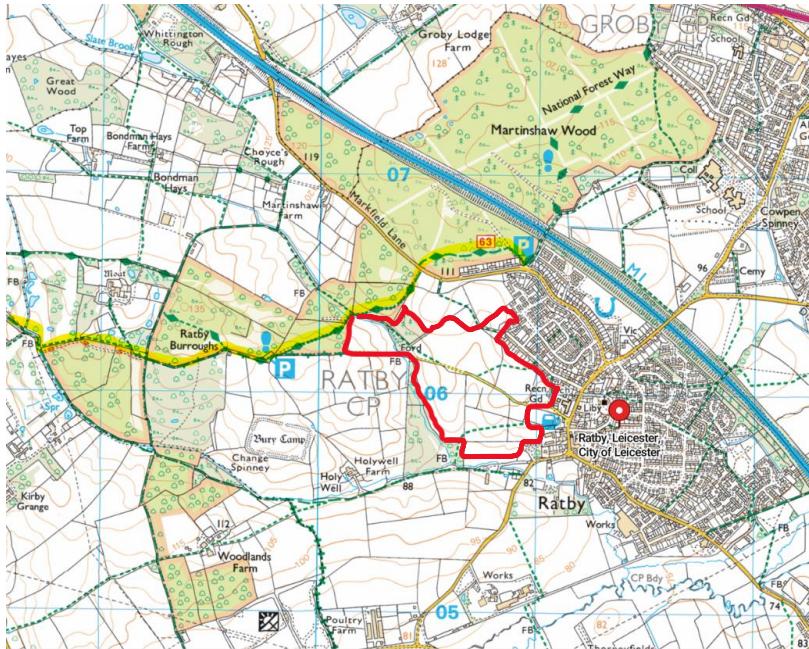
3.22 The LVA acknowledges and refers to Ratby Conservation Area and the Grade II Listed Church of St Philip and St James (LVA paras 5.29-5.30). However, assessing the effects on the historic environment is not a requirement for the LVA process as this is a separate specialist topic.

Impacts on the setting of the Conservation Area and the Church is addressed by the applicant's heritage consultants within the Heritage Report that accompanies the application.

TLP

• Appraisal of effects on promoted routes i.e. the Ivanhoe Way.

3.23 The TLP refers to "Views are also available from a section of the Ivanhoe Way (E: 449762 N: 306144)"



(Extract 4: Ivanhoe Trail Route 63 shown in 'yellow' with the site marked indicatively in 'red')

3.22 The Ivanhoe Way is a long-distance recreation route that lies beyond the study area. It is presumed that the reference by TLP is to the Ivanhoe Trail (Cycleway 63) which lies to the west and north of the site. To provide additional information, and to assist the decision making process, visual effects are summarised below for these receptors.

3.23 Within the Study Area the Ivanhoe runs from Ratby Burroughs, and follows part of Burroughs Road, near the Burroughs Wood Car Park, before heading northward into Pear Tree Wood and then continuing into Martinshaw Wood.

3.24 The majority of the route, within the Study Area runs through woodland such that visibility of the Proposed Development would be prevented. There would be some glimpsed views of the site's western most field which is proposed for green infrastructure uses. As the route approaches Martinshaw Wood views of the development would be prevented by intervening landform, green infrastructure uses and housing as part of the consented site off Markfield Road.

3.25 **Figure 4, Viewpoint 19** is taken from Burroughs Wood. There are views across to the east which includes views of housing at Martinshaw Meadows and Stamford Street. There would be some glimpsed views of the Proposed Development seen against the backdrop of the existing built edge of Ratby and it is considered that there would be no fundamental change to the viewing experience.

3.26 Given the receptors sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (Negligible-Low), and the very limited opportunities for views of the development, effects are judged to be Minor Adverse-Negligible on completion and Negligible Adverse in the longer term (year 15).

TLP

- **Appraisal of night-time effects.**

3.27 The Landscape Institutes' Technical Guidance Note (LITGN-2024-01)³, August 2024, makes it clear that.

"A night time assessment should not be a routine requirement and will only be required where lighting will have a potential significant influence on landscape character and/or visual amenity" (para 8.2)

3.28 The site and local landscape is not located within a designated landscape and is not subject to any 'dark skies' planning policies, such as would be the case for designated National Landscapes.

3.29 The receiving environment is subject to varying levels of sky glow, light spill and light intrusion from the surrounding built up area of Ratby. The Proposed Development will follow best practice measures for lighting in terms of well-designed columns and luminaires that minimise levels of light spill.

3.30 Lighting would not lead to any significant influences on landscape character and visual amenity.

TLP

- **Provision of visualisations from key viewpoints to illustrate the visual effects of the proposed development and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation planting.**

3.31 The use of technical visualisations in the form of photowires (wireframes) or photomontages is not essential for the LVA process. A proportionate approach has been adopted. The series of baseline photographs and commentary within the LVA provide sufficient information to aid the understanding of visual change and likely visual effects both at the outset and in the longer term which takes into account landscape mitigation in the form of structural planting. The main receptors and visual effects have been evaluated and judgments have been made on the level of effects.

TLP

- **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.**

3.32 The retention of existing site features such as woodland, hedgerows and mature trees form part of the development's 'ground up' landscape led masterplanning approach. The development's masterplan is specifically designed to protect and conserve the vast majority of

³ The Landscape Institutes' Technical Guidance Note (LITGN-2024-01), Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, GLVIA3, August 2024

the site's landscape features, such as woodland, mature trees and hedgerows, which is considered to be a benefit of the scheme.

3.33 The impact of the development on the receiving environment, which takes into account the retention of landscape features, losses/disruption in landscape features and provision of compensatory planting and new green infrastructure have all been considered and which lead to the judgments reached in terms of the level of effects.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 The final section of TLP report considers whether the LVA is sufficient for H&BBC to make an informed planning decision with regards to landscape and visual matters. The report states:

"Section 9 is an overall conclusion on the adequacy of the assessment and whether it is sufficient to support an informed planning decision".

4.2 In its overall conclusion TLP states:

"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" (para 9.1.1) [emphasis added]

4.3 When considering landscape value, TLP report does not come to a different conclusion to that of the LVA, but notes that the element of ridge and furrow could perhaps be given a higher value.

*"...**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." (para 9.1.2) (emphasis added)*

4.3 The LVA refers to 'ridge and furrow' within the fields in the southern part of the site. The condition and value of the 'ridge and furrow' is assessed by the heritage reports accompanying the application.

4.4 In terms of the description of effects the TLP report states that

"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 and 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...." (para 9.1.3) (emphasis added)

4.5 The LVA contains a visual envelope (VE). The purpose of which is to identify the potential area of the landscape in which the Proposed Development is likely to be visible for those visual receptors that are within that area. The LVA makes it clear that the VE is representative and that there may be some views of the development beyond the extent of VE. The LVA states

"some views may potentially occur outside the VE, such as from elevated points at Kirby Muxloe to the south and from distant elevated vantage points to the west although it is considered that distance and intervening elements such as landform, vegetation and buildings are likely to reduce the perceptibility of the Proposed Development (LVA para 8.2) [emphasis added]

4.6 Whilst TLP state that "...effects on landscape character are slightly understated" (para 9.1.13), differences of opinion on the level of effects are not uncommon when professional judgments are brought to bear on landscape and visual matters. In this case, and given the use of "slightly", the assumption is there are no significant variations in judgments between TLP and FPCR.

4.7 The TLP report states that

...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... (para 9.1.3)

4.8 There are no reference to 'important' views of the Church within the Local Plan. As noted by the LVA there are opportunities to view the spire of Church of St Phillip and St James from the surrounding and wider landscape, which includes views from properties, local roads and local rights of way. This would continue to be the case with the Proposed Development in place.

4.9 The final paragraph from TLP's report goes beyond a review of the LVA and considers land uses within the site and responses from the National Forest and Leicestershire County Council (Archaeology).

4.10 Archaeological matters are addressed by the applicant's heritage report.

4.11 National Forest contributions are set out by the Hinckley & Bosworth Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (DPD, 2016). Policy 21 states that the requirement for the National Forest should not exclusively be in the form of woodland planting, and that the 30% contribution can be delivered through other green infrastructure means, such as open space, recreational facilities and the creation of 'other habitats'.

"Landscaping will generally involve woodland planting, but can also include creation and management of other habitats, open space provision and the provision of new recreation facilities." (Policy 21)

4.12 Some 52% of the site is dedicated as green infrastructure. This equates to 17 ha. This includes sizeable areas of new woodland, together with the provision of copses, hedgerow planting, individual trees, large areas of accessible green space, drainage features, play, open space and recreational routes, which provides for a variety of landscape habitats and features that will benefit the National Forest.

4.13 The guiding principles for the design approach are identified within the application's Design & Access Statement (Nove 2024) and the Design & Access Statement Addendum (July 2025). The Addendum shows how the National Forest contribution (9.81ha) could be defined within the site, forming part of the wider green infrastructure framework.

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