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# LANDSCAPE & VISUAL APPRAISAL

Client

**Lagan Homes**

Project

**West of Ratby  
Leicestershire**

Date

**September 2024**

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-	Draft		
B	Final	FPCR/03/09/24	BC/03/09/24

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) prepared by FPCR Environment & Design Ltd, as part of an Outline Planning Application for a development at land west of Ratby, Leicestershire. The Description of Development is:

*Outline planning application (with all matters reserved apart from access) for a phased mixed-use development comprising up to about 470 dwellings (Use Class C3) or, in the alternative, up to about 450 dwellings and care home/extra care facility (Use Class C2/C3). Provision of community hub (Use Class F2); provision of land for 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.*

1.2 The site location and its context are shown in Figure 1.

1.3 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.

1.4 The landscape and visual effects are assessed in relation to the development as described with the Planning Statement, the Design & Access Statement, and as identified on the Illustrative Framework Plan and Illustrative Masterplan

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This LVA has been prepared based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013. The assessment of Landscape Value also takes account of guidance in Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02-21 "Assessing landscape value outside national designations".

2.2 In summary, the GLVIA3 states:

*"Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity." (GLVIA3 paragraph 1.1.)*

2.3 There are two components of LVIA:

- *"Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
- *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people." (GLVIA3 paragraph 2.21.)*

2.4 The GLVIA3 states:

*"LVIA can be carried out either as part of a broader EIA, or as a standalone 'appraisal' of the likely landscape and visual effects of a proposed development...*

- *As a standalone 'appraisal' the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity of the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies". (GLVIA paragraph 3.2)*

2.5 The components of this report include: baseline studies; description and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme; and identification and description of likely effects arising from the proposed development.

2.6 In terms of baseline studies, the assessment provides an understanding of the landscape that may be affected, its constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the visual baseline, this includes an understanding of the area in which the development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views.

### Assessment of Landscape Effects

2.7 GLVIA3 states that *"An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource" (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1).*

2.8 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing published Landscape Character Assessments and by a description of the site and its context.

2.9 A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;

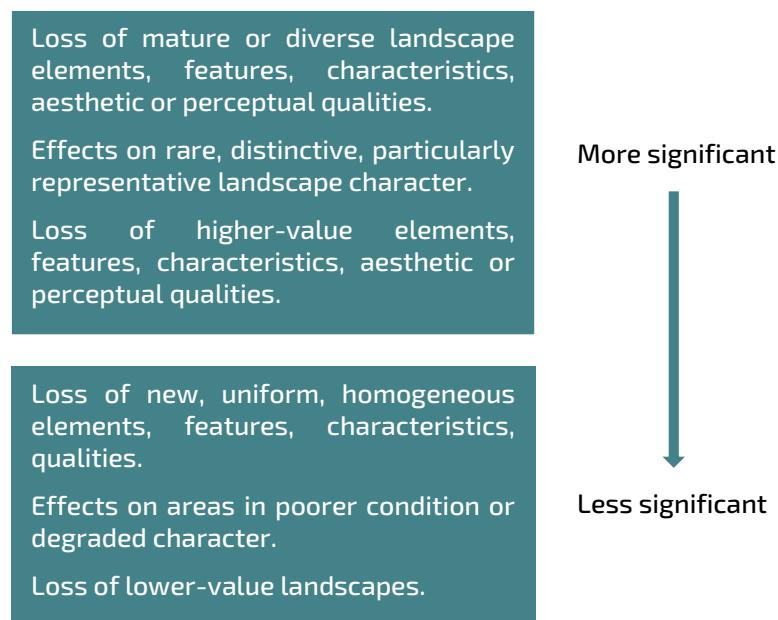
- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- Combined effects of these changes.

2.10 The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. The value of the existing landscape is also considered.

2.11 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale of change, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or addition of new elements. Geographical extent is considered by reference to the extent of the area over which there will be a change. Duration is considered for the landscape effects, with short term effects being defined as those lasting less than 5 years, medium term effects lasting between 5 and 10 years and long-term effects being defined as anything over 10 years in duration.

2.12 The level of effect is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of effect on the landscape. Final conclusions on the overall landscape effects are drawn from the assessment components described. This appraisal describes the nature of the landscape effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).

2.13 GLVIA3 sets out some guidance on the underlying principles, which are used in this appraisal. This includes Figure 5.10, Scale of significance. Whilst this scheme is not EIA development, and judgements on significance are not therefore required, the Figure does provide useful guidance on reaching an overall judgement on the level of effects. This is repeated below (note this includes the correction of a typo, from the published document).



2.14 The criteria used in the appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

## Assessment of Visual Effects

2.15 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. This appraisal describes the nature of the visual effects and, whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1 Winter) and longer term (year 15 Summer).

2.16 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/ visibility mapping. This is done by either a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)<sup>1</sup>, or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation. A series of viewpoints are included within the assessment that are representative of views towards the site from surrounding visual receptors. Other views of the site are included where it supports the description and understanding of the site's landscape and visual characteristics.

2.17 The views also typically represent what can be seen from a variety of distances from the development and different viewing experiences.

2.18 It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. For each affected viewpoint, the assessment considers both the susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views.

*"The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:*

- *Residents at home;*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*

*Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of moderate susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high." (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.33.)*

*"Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:*

- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life)." (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.34.)*

2.19 Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.

<sup>1</sup> Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV): A map usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible. [GLVIA3]

2.20 In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:

- *"The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
- *The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture;*
- *The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses" (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.39).*

2.21 The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:

- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

2.22 As with landscape effects, the duration of the effect could be short to long term or permanent and the same definitions apply.

2.23 GLVIA3 states that there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal, but the following points should be noted;

- *"Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant*
- *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant*
- *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view." (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.44)*

2.24 The criteria used in this appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

### **Overall Landscape and Visual Effects**

2.25 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.

2.26 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following terms have been used for this appraisal:

- **Major**
- **Moderate**
- **Minor**
- **Negligible**

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2.27 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

### 3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1 A Planning Statement is submitted as part of the application. The following provides a summary in relation to landscape matters at a national and local level.

#### National Context

##### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

3.2 The NPPF sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

*"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

*Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identifies quality in the development plan)" (§ 180)*

*"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environment or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries. " (§ 181)*

##### Planning Practice Guidance (PPG 2014)

3.3 The PPG is an online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF. Regarding landscape issues, the PPG states that:

*"The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.*

*Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully."*

(036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721. Revision date: 21 07 2019)

#### Local Context

##### Hinckley & Bosworth Core Strategy (2009) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (DPD, 2016)

3.4 Adopted policy guidance at a local level is set out within the Hinckley & Bosworth Core Strategy and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies.

- 3.5 With regards to landscape matters the Core Strategy includes Policy 20 Green Infrastructure; Policy 21 National Forest; and Policy 22 Charnwood Forest.
- 3.6 The DPD includes the following policies: DM4 Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation; and DM10 Development and Design.

**Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan 2020-2041 (Regulation 18, July 2024)**

- 3.7 The emerging new Local Plan (Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan 2020-2041) includes the following draft policies: SP20 Green Infrastructure, and SP27 Landscape Character.
- 3.8 The site is a draft allocation in the emerging Local Plan under Policy SP02 Development Strategy "450 homes on land south of Markfield Road, Ratby;"

**Summary**

- 3.9 The adopted and draft Local Plan policies have all been reviewed in the process of the LVA.
- 3.10 The following additional documents have been reviewed by the LVA; The Good Design Guide (SPD, 2020), the Ratby Village Design Statement (SPD, 2011), and the Ratby Conservation Area Appraisal (adopted 2014).

**4.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT****Designations**

- 4.1 The site and the wider landscape is not covered by any landscape quality designation at either a national or local level.
- 4.2 Part of the site's eastern boundary, near Burroughs Road, borders Ratby Conservation Area (see **Figure 5**)

**NATIONAL & REGIONAL CONTEXT****National Character Area NCA Profile**

- 4.3 Landscape character is assessed at a national level by Natural England using National Character Area (NCA) profiles. The assessment provides the general characteristics of these substantial landscape areas.
- 4.4 The site lies within the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield NCA71 and the Leicestershire Vales NCA94. The landscape to the north of the site lies within the Charnwood NCA73. (see **Figure 3**).
- 4.5 The NCA profiles, which include the characteristics of these landscapes, has been reviewed and considered as part of the LVA. Given the extensive nature of the NCAs, not all of the NCAs key characteristics are considered to be specifically relevant to the site and its local context, but the full characteristics are, however, set out in full below.

**Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield NCA71**

- *"The landscape is unenclosed with shallow valleys, subdued sandstone ridges and a gently undulating plateau.*

- *There are heavy, poorly draining soils over the Coal Measures and mudstones of the Mercia Mudstone Group, and free-draining soils on the sandstone ridges. Restored opencast site and new housing within The National Forest at Woodville.*
- *The area forms part of a regional watershed between the River Mease to the south and the River Soar to the east and has many minor, swift flowing streams draining the area, for example Saltersford Brook and Rothley Brook. Flooded clay pits and mining have resulted in many subsidence pools or flashes, which in combination with Thornton Reservoir provide valuable open water sites for nature conservation and recreation.*
- *The area has a developing woodland character that is heavily influenced by the work of The National Forest initiative, which augments locally dense riparian woodland and prominent amenity trees around settlements with developing woodland on former colliery sites.*
- *Small- to medium-sized fields occur with a wide variation in field pattern, including some narrow, curved fields that preserve the strips of the open field system. Where arable production predominates, fields have been enlarged. Hedgerows are low with a few scattered hedgerow trees and in places show the effects of former open cast workings.*
- *Agriculture comprises a mixture of arable and mixed sheep and beef units and, to a lesser extent, dairy. Combinable crops are grown on the freer-draining soils. Potatoes are grown in rotation on the heavier soils around Measham and Packington.*
- *There is remnant acid grassland over sandstone with neutral grassland in the valleys, and acid heathland on open mosaic habitats on previously developed land, particularly colliery spoil. The River Mease SSSI and SAC has internationally important spined loach and bullhead fish and nationally important white-clawed crayfish, otter, and aquatic plants such as water crowfoot.*
- *Rich heritage assets include Ashby-de-la-Zouch medieval castle and industrial heritage including the Ashby Canal and Moira Furnace, one of the best examples of an early 18th-century blast furnace. Archaeological assets include a moated medieval village at Desford and the Roman town at Ravenstone.*
- *Traditional vernacular is predominately locally manufactured red brick with tile or slate roofs. Some older buildings are of stone. Locally characteristic around Measham is a double-sized brick of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century known as the 'Measham gob'. There are many three-storey brickbuilt farmhouses.*
- *The settlement pattern is dominated by mining settlements. Isolated hamlets along the roadsides and small villages centred on a church contrast with extensive areas of 20th-century housing and prominent industrial and commercial distribution warehouses at the edge of larger centres, notably Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Measham and Coalville.*
- *Around Coleorton, a more dispersed pattern of settlement associated with small-scale bell pit mining of the 13th century, spoil heaps, small fields, a dense network of footpaths and a fine example of historic parkland landscape contribute to the distinctiveness of this part of the coalfield landscape.*
- *The area is easily accessible by major roads and rail and is close to East Midlands Airport. Long-distance recreational routes include the Ivanhoe Way, the Leicestershire Round, and a*

*wide network of local trails and footpaths associated with the recreational assets of The National Forest. The Ashby Canal also provides a link to the wider area."*

### **Leicestershire Vales NCA94**

- *"An open landscape of gentle clay ridges and valleys underlain by Mercia Mudstone and Lias groups bedrock but with an extensive cover of superficial deposits occasionally giving rise to moderately steep scarp slopes. There is an overall visual uniformity to the landscape and settlement pattern.*
- *Land use characterised by a mixture of pasture and arable agriculture that has developed on the neutral clay soils.*
- *Distinctive river valley of the Soar and Swift, with flat flood plains and gravel terraces together with tributaries including the Sence. Riverside meadows and waterside trees and shrubs are common, along with waterbodies resulting from gravel extraction.*
- *Woodland character derived largely from spinneys and copses on the ridges and the more undulating land and from waterside and hedgerow trees and hedgerows. The density, height and pattern of hedgerows varies throughout.*
- *Diverse levels of tranquillity associated with contrasts between busy urban areas and some deeply rural parts. Large settlements dominate the open character of the landscape. Leicester, Lutterworth, Hinckley and Market Harborough and related infrastructure, including major roads, are often visually dominant.*
- *Frequent small towns and large villages often characterised by red brick buildings and attractive stone buildings in older village centres and eastern towns and villages. Frequent, imposing spired churches are also characteristic, together with fine examples of individual historic buildings.*
- *Rich and varied historic landscape, with the nationally important Bosworth Battlefield near Sutton Cheney, prominent historic parklands and country houses, ridge-and-furrow earthworks and important medieval settlement remains, for example at Wistow Hall, Gumley, Knaptoft and Peatling Magna."*

### **Regional Character**

#### **East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment (2010)**

##### Landscape Character Area Forested Ancient Hills.

4.6 Within the East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment (2010) the site lies within the extensive Landscape Character Group 10: Woods and Forest, Landscape Character Area Forested Ancient Hills.

#### **Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment (2019)**

##### Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland Landscape Character Area

4.7 The Landscape Character Assessment provides a review and update of the original 2008 study and incorporates changes to the landscape and settlements that have occurred.

4.8 The site and the surrounding wider landscape lies within Area 10: Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland Landscape Character Area (See **Figure 3**).

4.9 Key Characteristics of the Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland are defined as the following:

*"A rolling landform, generally falling towards the south east which includes Slate Brook and tributaries to Rothley Brook as well as numerous scattered field ponds.*

*Heavily wooded in part with extensive ancient woodland and open access land at Martinshaw Wood as well as areas of more recent plantation. Mix of arable and pastoral land with some small scattered rocky outcrops surrounded by stone walls (ie Little John).*

*Medium to large regular field pattern enclosed with hedgerows featuring hedgerow trees and some stone walls.*

*Includes Groby and the edge of Ratby as well as some large houses (Bradgate House and Markfield Court). M1 forms main road corridor through the area but is mostly screened by vegetated embankments. Few minor roads connect through the area but good network of PRoW and access land at Martinshaw Wood.*

*Multiple listed buildings in Groby centre. Scattered SM and listed buildings elsewhere.*

*A generally open feel with some views towards the edge of Leicester, but enclosure is created by extensive woodland which extends into settlements at Ratby and Groby. The area is quite tranquil, but affected by underlying noise from the M1".*

4.10 The report includes the following management recommendations.

- *"Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to reinforce the field pattern through the area.*
- *Ensure any new development is well integrated within the landscape with planting to soften urban edges.*
- *Ensure any new development is appropriate in scale and vernacular style and focussed at the main settlements to preserve the pattern and form of the villages and scattered farms.*
- *Protect the existing vegetation on settlement fringes to retain their wooded setting and reduce dominating the local landscape.*
- *Ensure recreation provision is appropriate for the area to avoid undue urbanising influences.*
- *Maintain lifecycle of ageing woodlands by replanting and managing.*
- *Ensure plantation woodlands are replanted when felled to maintain overall wooded character.*
- *Promote good woodland management in newly planted areas to create diverse woodland habitats and promote these areas for informal recreation.*
- *Continue to protect and sensitively manage ancient woodland habitat especially at Martinshaw Wood which links across the M1 corridor."*

## LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### Hinckley & Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment (2017)

4.11 The Landscape Character Assessment reviews and update the previous Landscape Character Assessment, published in 2006. The Landscape Character Assessment is part of the evidence base for policies and proposals for the new Local Plan.

4.12 The Borough is sub-divided into Landscape Character Types (LCT), Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and Urban Character Areas (UCA).

#### Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills LCA

4.13 The site and the landscape to the west of Ratby lies within the large Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills LCA (see **Figure 3**). Its key characteristics are defined as:

- 1) *Gently undulating landform with small plateaus on higher ground and rising to the adjacent Charnwood Forest area to the east.*
- 2) *Contrast between areas which are visually open and enclosed depending on the elevation of the landscape and the presence of woodlands and vegetation.*
- 3) *Large scale irregular field pattern of mainly arable and some pasture, with smaller fields around settlements. Fields enclosed by hedgerows with scattered trees.*
- 4) *Industrial heritage of quarrying and mining resulting in areas of restored land.*
- 5) *Part of the National Forest and Charnwood Forest with areas of new woodland plantations associated with former industrial areas.*
- 6) *Dispersed pattern of former mining villages following a linear pattern on ridgetops, either located close to a colliery or providing housing for mine workers. Good public access and footpath network throughout, especially within National Forest area.*
- 7) *Predominantly rural landscape with arable and rough set-aside, influenced by industrial / urban features such as masts, poles and pylons.*

4.14 The report identifies the following "Key Sensitivities & Values".

- 1) *Rocky outcrops on the elevated land together with past and former quarries provide exposures of great geological interest.*
- 2) *Late to post medieval enclosure, ridge and furrow as well as some assarts in and around Ancient Woodland contribute to the sense of place and provides continuity to the agricultural past.*
- 3) *Large mature woodlands and newer woodland plantations interspersed throughout the landscape create a well-wooded context and create relatively tranquil subareas away from the busy roads.*
- 4) *The distinct historic cores of the villages with an abundance of local building stone provide a strong sense of place and a sense of time depth.*
- 5) *The long distance and panoramic views to Leicester from the more elevated vantage points combine with contrasting contained views to provide a high scenic quality.*
- 6) *Bury Camp and the Old Hays moated site have strong cultural associations and provide a sense of historic time depth.*

7) *Groby Pool and Woods and Cliffe Hill Quarry have high biodiversity value and provide areas of ecological and geological importance.*

8) *Valued for recreation, with local attractions including Groby Pool, the Alter Stones and Billa Barra Hill connected via a comprehensive network of public footpaths and bridleways, including the Leicestershire Round and the Ivanhoe Way."*

4.15 The report provides a series of "Landscape Strategies". These are:

- 1) *"Support the vision of the National Forest Strategy.<sup>2</sup> - to unify the forest area by planting native and mixed species woodland- as well as for areas beyond the National Forest boundary, encouraging, connecting and enhancing habitats such as hedgerows, tree planting, farm woodlands and lowland meadows*
- 2) *Conserve and enhance the historic core of village settlements and ensure extensions are well integrated within this wooded landscape.*
- 3) *Restore typical zones of woodland types from alder, crack willow, hazel and grey willow in valleys, to oak/birch woodland on higher slopes; developing and managing transitional scrub communities between woodland and adjoining habitats.*
- 4) *The siting and design of new development should complement the existing settlement pattern. New developments, extensions or alterations should be of appropriate materials, scale, massing and location within their plot to the rural context of the area. Removal of traditional building features such as crown chimney pots and boundary walls of brick, stone, metal railings and timber fences should be avoided.*
- 5) *Conserve the historic features of the landscape including industrial heritage of mining villages, railway"*

#### Ratby Urban Character Area (UCA)

4.16 The report also considers the various settlements within the Borough. Ratby Urban Character Area (UCA) lies adjacent to the site (see **Figure 3**). The key characteristics of this UCA are described below:

- 1) *"A historic hilltop settlement with an open countryside setting to the west and south.*
- 2) *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.*
- 3) *Distinctive historic core. High stone walls and trees give the historic core a distinctly separate rural appearance from the north.*
- 4) *Compact streetscape of narrow medieval lanes within the historic core contrasting sharply with the expansive design of later roads such as Markfield Road.*
- 5) *Legacy of the former hosiery industry through its characteristic Stockinger's cottages.*
- 6) *Built form of predominately two storey terraces with pitched roofs, red brick chimneys with sub-divided arched windows.*

<sup>2</sup> The majority of the site lies within the National Forest.

7) Principle building materials consist of brick and render, stone with brick detailing, below slated roofs.

8) Settlement clearly visible from the surrounding landscape, on a hill top rising from the flatter topography.

9) The M1, overhead lines and Leicester fringe are strong urban influences."

4.17 "Key Sensitivities and Values" are the following:

1) The diverse compact historic core comprising linear terraces of former workers cottages provide a strong sense of place and historic time depth.

2) The open landscape to the west and south plays an important role in providing a rural context to the historic core.

3) The rural village character influenced by surviving historic street patterns, granite road kerbs, mature trees, green verges and stone and brick boundary walls contribute to the local distinctiveness and time depth.

4) Martinshaw Wood creates a wooded backdrop to views out from the northern edge and provides a valued recreational and ecological resource.

5) The unique roofscape punctuated by the Norman Church Tower and with the rolling wooded hills as a backdrop provide a high scenic quality.

6) Views and vistas of the Church of St Philip and St James which dominates the skyline from the surrounding countryside and within the settlement between dwellings and above rooftops and trees.

7) Historic buildings such as public houses, farm buildings and shop frontages interspersed with mature trees and small green spaces contribute to the visual amenity and sense of place.

8) The disused railway provides recreational and ecological links with the wider landscape, and has continuity with the past."

4.18 The report provides a series of "Townscape Strategies", which are set out below.

1) Ensure that any development respects the intact rural character including the use of traditional and local materials such as red brick and Welsh slate.

2) Ensure that future new development respects the setting of the village and its rural interface, including historic landscape elements.

3) Protect the cohesive nature of the historic core and the strong street scene by ensuring any changes do not negatively impact existing characteristics.

4) Consider enhancing the western fringe through new woodland/ hedgerow planting

5) Protect the distinctive character of the rising roofline cumulating at the church on a high point by ensuring any development does not detract from this or become more significant on the skyline.

6) Protect views and vistas of the Church of St Philip and St James, retaining its dominance on the skyline from the surrounding countryside and within the settlement between dwellings and above rooftops and trees.

7) Extend pedestrian and cycle links along the dismantled railway corridor."

#### **Hinckley & Bosworth Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2017)**

4.19 The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment provides the context for policies and proposals within the emerging Local Plan. In particular, it assesses the capacity for the landscape to absorb built development (housing and commercial). The report considers several assessment areas and comes to an overall judgment on landscape sensitivity using a five-word point scale: "high, high-medium, medium, medium-low, low".

##### Assessment Area 13: Ratby

4.20 The site, and the western fringes of Ratby, lie within Assessment Area 13: Ratby. This broadly covers the landscape area between Markfield Road in the north to Rothley Brook in the south. The report concludes that this area is of "medium" sensitivity to residential and commercial development.

4.21 Under the category: "Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement", the report states the following:

*"Despite its intact rural character providing an attractive setting to the settlement, the assessment area is considered to have overall medium sensitivity to residential and commercial development due to the relationship it has with built development and the visual containment from existing woodland in the north".*

4.22 The report sets out a series of "Key Sensitivities & Values." These are.

- *"The rural and undeveloped character of the landscape with a relative sense of tranquillity.*
- *Mature hedgerows and trees define historic field patterns and form part of the overall ecological network.*
- *Semi-improved grasslands and lowland meadow habitats which are particularly valued in the area due to the relative scarcity of biodiversity assets.*
- *Long distance and panoramic views from the elevated land creates a high scenic quality and attractive setting to Ratby".*

4.23 The report provides specific guidance for built development in this location (i.e. the area of the site)

*"Any new development should:*

- *Seek opportunities to maintain the rural character of the landscape and, where possible, conserve rural views and the setting of settlement.*
- *Plan for successful integration of potential new development in the landscape through sensitive design and siting, including use of sensitive materials and use of landscape mitigation to enhance sense of place.*
- *Seek to retain the historic pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees where possible.*
- *Conserve and enhance the long, panoramic views from higher ground of uncluttered skylines and avoid vertically prominent elements within any new development.*
- *Conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the landscape and its mosaic of habitats.*

- *Support the vision of the National Forest Strategy and promote regeneration and enhancement of tree cover through establishment of linear copses and hedgerow trees within field boundaries and around urbanising influences.*
- *Seek to maintain and enhance recreational assets including the rights of way network.*
- *Consider opportunities to create and promote an integrated green infrastructure network linking with the waterways and the urban area.*

### **National Forest Strategy (2014-2024) & National Forest Developer Contributions: Guide for Developers & Planners**

4.24 The Strategy sets out the vision for the National Forest which, amongst other things, promotes planting guidelines relating to all forms of development within the National Forest. The National Forest Guide for Developers & Planners (2018) states that development sites of over 10ha (which is applicable for this site) are expected to provide 30% of land for “*Forest related green infrastructure*”.

*“Forest green infrastructure will consist of some or all of the following elements depending on the character of the site and its surroundings:-*

- *New woodland planting (ideally a minimum size of 0.25ha)*
- *Creation of woodland belts (minimum of 15m wide)*
- *Planting to form parkland style landscapes*
- *Ecologically designed sustainable drainage systems*
- *Creation of new habitats (wetlands, reedbeds, meadows, heathlands)*
- *Incorporation and management of existing woodland and hedgerows*
- *Greenways - landscaped footpath and cycle routes*
- *Roadside trees*
- *Development landscaping with a strong tree emphasis*
- *Incorporation of heritage features”*

#### **Summary**

4.25 Key characteristics, sensitivities and values, landscape and townscape strategies and specific guidance for development in this landscape, as outlined within Council's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, have been taken into account as part of the LVA process, and through the design evolution of the proposed development's masterplan.

## **5.0 BASELINE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER & VISUAL ANALYSIS**

### **Site Context & Character**

5.1 The baseline appraisal has been formulated through a review of landscape characterisation work, together with field surveys of the site and the surrounding landscape. This has included an understanding of the area of the landscape that may be affected, and the area in which the

Proposed Development may be visible. Field work was undertaken in October 2023 and March 2024, which covers seasonal variations.

5.2 The Site Location plan, Aerial Photograph and Landform Plan (**Figures 1-3**) help to illustrate the site's landscape context.

### **Ratby & Context**

5.3 Historically, Ratby developed as a small hilltop settlement around the Church on land above Rothley Brook. Ratby developed through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the modern period with the settlement extending to the northwest and to the southeast.

5.4 The landscape to the west and southwest of Ratby, within the context of the site, comprises undulating agricultural fields that gently slope away from the village towards tributaries of Rothley Brook that are located within Pear Tree Wood to the west, and to the south near Desford Lane. The landscape around this part of Ratby is characterised by extensive woodland to the north and west which includes Martinshaw Wood, Pear Tree Wood, Wirlybones Wood, and Ratby Burroughs.

5.5 The site and the local landscape is influenced in part by the urbanising elements of the built edge and built-up area, which includes housing at Markfield Road, Stamford Street and new housing at Martinshaw Meadows.

### **Site**

5.6 The site comprises 32.7ha of predominantly agricultural land that extends from the western edge of Ratby (at Stamford Street) across to Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood. The single laned track of Burroughs Road broadly runs through the central part of the site.

5.7 Adjacent to the north of the site housing is being constructed at Martinshaw Meadows (90 homes). This is situated alongside housing at Markfield Road and The Poplars and Bevington Close (Charnwood Estate). The adjacent field to the west of Martinshaw Meadows, and which borders the site, has outline planning permission for housing (75 homes). Reserved matters applications have been submitted for this land. (See **Figure 1**).

5.8 The northern part of the site lies alongside the built edge of Ratby, which includes the rear gardens of properties on Stamford Street. The site lies alongside a new drainage basin, (part of the Martinshaw Meadows development) and the area to the north which has outline planning permission. Beyond, is Markfield Road and the extensive Martinshaw Wood.

5.9 The site's eastern boundary is defined by a combination of the built edge of Ratby (Stamford Street), which includes rear property fences and gardens, and by hedgerows and mature trees. The site lies adjacent to The Plough Inn Public House, Burroughs Road Sports Ground - which is contained by mature tree belts- and Peartree Business Park. The wider built-up area of Ratby lies to the east with the older core of the village focussed on Main Street, Church Lane and Ratby Church.

5.10 The site's southern extents are defined by a combination of Desford Lane, Ratby allotments, an access road to Peartree Business Park, and part of a grazing field that lies alongside Burroughs

Brook, which is a tributary of Rothley Brook. The wider agricultural landscape extends to the south of Ratby, and this comprises the lower lying area of Rothley Brook. To the south, beyond the valley, the landscape rises to the settlement of Kirby Muxloe, around 1.2 km from the site at its closest point.

- 5.11 The site's western boundary is defined by woodland at Wirlybones Wood and Pear Tree Wood. A watercourse runs through the woodland and connects with Burroughs Brook which enters Rothley Brook to the south of the village.
- 5.12 Burroughs Road (which in part is designated as a Public Footpath and a Restricted By-Way) runs through the site from the built-up area of Ratby and provides access for local farms to the west. It forms an undulating narrow laned track bordered with intermittent hedgerows and some mature hedgerow trees.
- 5.13 That part of the site that lies to the north of Burroughs Road comprises open and gently undulating arable and grassland fields with low cropped and fragmented hedgerows. It also includes a block of woodland (primarily a willow plantation) bordering Pear Tree Wood, and an existing recreation and play area near The Plough Inn. Housing at Stamford Street and Martinshaw Meadows overlook and define its northern extent.
- 5.14 To the south of Burroughs Road the site comprises pasture fields which are generally smaller in scale and more enclosed in character than those to the north and are typically bound by established hedgerows with several mature hedgerow trees.
- 5.15 Public Footpath (ref 44) runs through the southern part of site from Burroughs Road before connecting with a Public Bridleway (ref 42) which lies outside the site to the south. A Public Footpath (48) crosses the northern part of the site and provides a route between Stamford Street and Pear Tree Wood, via a section of Burroughs Road. A further Public Footpath (ref 50) is located within the very northern part of the site, near Martinshaw Meadows, and connects Stamford Street with Markfield Road.
- 5.16 There are other routes within the vicinity of the site. To the west, a Public Bridleway (ref 121) forms part of the recreational route of the National Forest Way which travels through and within the woodland of Pear Tree Wood and Martinshaw Wood. A Public Footpath, "The Stattie" (ref 55), lies to the east, and provides a connection between Stamford Street and Burroughs Road, via The Plough Inn Car Park.

### Landform

- 5.17 The landform character of the landscape is illustrated by the Topography Plan (**Figure 4**). The landscape is effectively shaped by Rothley Brook and its tributaries with Ratby occupying a small rise above Rothley Brook. Much of the northwestern part of Ratby lies at 105-115m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), whilst the older part of the village at Main Street, Church Lane and Chapel Street sits at a slightly lower level at 95-100m. The eastern part of Ratby typically occupies the lower valley slopes (75-100m AOD).

5.18 The site, like the local landscape, is undulating in its character and within the centre of the site is a shallow north-south valley defined by a field ditch. The site's landscape falls steadily from its highest point near Stamford Street (c105m AOD), down to the watercourse in Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood (c85m AOD) in the west, and to Burroughs Brook (80m AOD) in the south. The landscape rises south of Burroughs Brook to form a small rise (100m AOD) near Holly Well Farm. The site includes some steeper areas around its western edges where it descends sharply to the Burroughs Road ford.

### **Landscape Value**

5.19 Landscape value<sup>3</sup> can apply to a landscape area, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. In all landscapes, there will be variances in the level of landscape value depending on several factors.

5.20 When looking at value, GLVIA3 advises that in the first instance: "*A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding value...*" (§ 5.19). The site and the local landscape is *not* subject to any landscape quality designations at a national or local level. Whilst landscape designations are not an exclusive indicator of value and that the lack of a designation does not render a landscape as having no value, designated landscapes are widely acknowledged as being of particular importance and generally of high susceptibility to change.

5.21 GLVIA3<sup>4</sup> describes those elements that are generally agreed to influence value as being: landscape quality (condition); scenic quality; rarity; representativeness; conservation interests; recreation value; perceptual aspects; and associations<sup>5</sup>. Additional guidance on landscape value has been prepared by the Landscape Institute's: Assessing Landscape Value, A Technical Guidance Note, TGN 02/215. This sets out a range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value and these broadly represent the same factors within GLVIA3. These are considered below.

### **Natural Heritage**

5.22 An Ecological Appraisal and Arboricultural Assessment accompany the application, and the following provides a summary from those reports.

5.23 The site is not covered by any statutory ecological designations. The nearest designation is Groby Pool and Woods SSSI, located approximately 1.7km to the north.

5.24 There are six Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 1km with the closest being Martinshaw Wood, (c200m from the site to the north), which is also defined as Ancient Replanted Woodland. The two watercourses near the site, which are tributaries of Rothley Brook, are defined as potential Local Wildlife Sites (pLWS).

5.25 The site mainly comprises arable and pasture fields, with areas of scrub, broadleaved woodland, hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees. Hedgerows vary in structure and quality with some established, tall and thick, whilst others are gappy and fragmented. According to the Ecological Assessment, none are classified as 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations Act (1997).

<sup>3</sup> Landscape value: The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons. [GLVIA3]

<sup>4</sup> GLVIA3, Para 5.27, Box 5.1.

There are mature hedgerow trees across the site, most of which lie to the south of Burroughs Road. The woodland plantation (referred to in the Arboricultural Assessment as W5), and two individual trees (T19 on Burroughs Road, and T25 south of Stamford Street on the edge of the Recreation Area) are judged to be Grade A High Quality. The woodland plantation and the two Grade A trees are retained as part of the development proposals.

### **Cultural Heritage**

- 5.26 A Heritage Statement accompanies the application.
- 5.27 There are no Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings within the site.
- 5.28 Ratby Bury Camp, Scheduled Monument, lies to the west around c0.4km from the site's closest point, which is the western most field alongside Pear Tree Wood. This field is proposed for green infrastructure uses and specifically for biodiversity benefits. Intervening woodland (Pear Tree Wood, the woodland plantation and Wirlybones Wood) lies between the Scheduled Monument and the main part of the site.
- 5.29 Part of the site borders Ratby Conservation Area, near Burroughs Road (see Figure 5). The Conservation Area is centred around the older part of the village along Main Street, Chapel Street, and Church Lane. The Conservation Area includes the Grade II\* Listed Church of St Philip and St James.
- 5.30 The Ratby Conservation Area Appraisal (2014) contains an Appraisal Map which refers to several "Vistas to be protected" and "Views to be protected". This includes a view into the village on Burroughs Road near the recreation area and The Plough Inn.
- 5.31 The fields around the edge of the Ratby are planned enclosure. Three of the fields within the southern part of the site contain remnant 'ridge and furrow'.

### **Landscape Condition**

- 5.32 The site's agricultural fields and the surrounding landscape show no significant signs of degradation or dereliction, although development and agricultural practices have resulted in some disruption in landscape character and some fragmentation, particularly around the edges of Ratby within the northern part of the site. In general, it is considered that the landscape fabric of the site and local area is in a moderate condition.

### **Associations**

- 5.33 The site and the immediate landscape is not subject to any specific cultural associations such as notable people, events and arts, or prominent events in history.

### **Distinctiveness**

- 5.34 The site does not exude any strong sense of identity in that 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 surrounding undulating agricultural landscape and large areas of woodland around this part of Ratby contribute to the positive characteristics of this landscape. Martinshaw Wood, Pear Tree Wood, and Wirlybones Wood, along with other

areas of woodland to the west, such as Ratby Burroughs, are distinctive and characteristic elements of this landscape.

### **Recreational**

- 5.35 Given the site's location alongside the built-up area of Ratby it provides some local value for the adjacent community -as is often the case for any farmland/green fields on the edge of settlements.
- 5.36 Part of the site contains a recreational area, adjacent to The Plough Inn, which includes an equipped children's play space. Nearby, outside the site, is Burroughs Road Sports Ground. To the south, near Peartree Business Park, is Desford Lane allotments.
- 5.37 There is public access across parts of the site. Public Footpath (ref R50) runs between Stamford Street and Markfield Road. Public Footpath (ref 48) lies between Stamford Street and Pear Tree Wood via Burroughs Road and then connects with the National Forest Way Long Distance Route. Public Footpath (ref 44) runs across the southern part of the site between Burroughs Road and Wirlybones Wood.

### **Perceptual (Scenic, Wildness and Tranquillity)**

- 5.38 The site and the local area forms a pleasant agricultural and wooded landscape with positive characteristics and elements in the landscape such as mature woodland, watercourses, and mature trees. Ratby's built edge, which includes housing at Stamford Street and Martinshaw Meadows, imparts, to varying degrees, urbanising influences on the site and the local landscape. There will be additional urbanising influences on the landscape when development comes forward on the land alongside Martinshaw Meadows.
- 5.39 It is considered that the site does not display any pronounced sense of tranquillity, nor any sense of wildness or remoteness.

### **Functional**

- 5.40 It is judged that the site does not perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function, albeit surrounding woodland within the local landscape contribute to the healthy functioning of this landscape.

### **Landscape Value: Summary**

- 5.41 In conclusion and having examined the above factors and using a word scale of high, medium and low, it is concluded that the site and the immediate landscape around is of **medium** landscape value.

### **VISUAL AMENITY**

- 5.42 The baseline visual study includes an understanding of the area in which the Proposed Development may be visible, the groups of people who may experience views, the viewpoints where they may be affected and the nature of these views.

### Visual Receptors

5.43 Visual receptors include residents; users of public rights of way, open spaces, and recreational facilities; highways users; and people at their place of work. In general, and as expressed by GLVIA3, the first two categories (residents and rights of way users) are normally of higher susceptibility to change, although the surrounding context can, in some cases, have a bearing on susceptibility.

5.44 The availability of views of the site for visual receptors has been undertaken in parallel with the baseline landscape study. The fieldwork analysis has determined those visual receptors within the landscape that have views of the site, and therefore development upon it.

### Visibility Mapping

5.45 Elements within the landscape, such as landform, vegetation (e.g., Pear Tree Wood, Martinshaw Wood and Wirlybones Wood) and buildings (e.g., Ratby) determine the actual visibility of the site and its representative 'visual envelope'. From the fieldwork exercise a series of visual receptors have been identified that represent views of the site, and, consequently, potential views of the Proposed Development.

5.46 The Visual Amenity Plans (**Figure 6-7**) identify the visual receptors that have been assessed and representative viewpoints. These are assessed as providing 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 receptors.

5.47 Baseline photographs in the form of Type 1 Annotated Viewpoint Photographs are included at **Figures 8-21**. The photographs contained in the LVA were taken in March 2024 when vegetation was not in full leaf and thus demonstrate a 'worst case' scenario where there is generally greater visibility across the landscape than would be the case during the summer months, when planting would provide screening and containment. Field work was also completed in October 2023 when vegetation was in full leaf, and seasonal differences in terms of visibility have been factored into the commentary and assessment process as appropriate.

### Residents

5.48 In combining susceptibility to change (High), value of views (Medium) and professional judgment it is concluded that residents and residential communities are of High sensitivity. It was not possible to obtain views from properties as they are private views, but wherever possible photographs are taken from publicly accessible locations to provide an understanding of their visual experience. Where this hasn't been achievable, professional judgment on visibility is derived through the field work analysis, which includes looking out from the site towards these receptors.

#### Visual Receptor A: Stamford Street, Ratby

5.49 Properties on the western edge of Ratby at Stamford Street, Charnwood and Ash Close have, to varying degrees, views of the local landscape around the western and southern parts of the village. (See Viewpoints 4-5, 6a and 6c). Those residents that directly border the site on Stamford

Street, and which occupy a slightly elevated position in the landscape, have open and close-range views of the site, particularly its northern fields. Their experience comprises wider views of the landscape across to Pear Tree Wood and Ratby Burroughs (see Viewpoint 6a, taken from the Footpath at the back of Stamford Street, near rear gardens). There are also views to the south with distant but perceptible views of Kirby Muxloe. Depending on location some residents also have views of new housing at Martinshaw Meadows and the existing built-up area of Ratby (see Viewpoint 5), and the nearby recreation area (see Viewpoint 8).

#### Visual Receptor B: Martinshaw Meadows, Ratby

5.50 New homes are being built at Martinshaw Meadows. It is expected that residents on the edge of this development will, given their proximity, have open views of the site, across to Pear Tree Wood, together with views of the built-up area of Ratby at Stamford Street. (see Viewpoint 5 and 6c which show the built edge and the site).

#### Visual Receptor C: Markfield Road, Ratby

5.51 There are existing properties on Markfield Road. Views of the site are largely obscured by intervening elements of buildings within Martinshaw Meadows, although there are some glimpsed and partial views of the very northern parts of the site.

#### Visual Receptor D: Holly Well Farm Cottage, Desford Lane, Ratby

5.52 As shown by Viewpoint 11, taken from the nearby Public Bridleway, residents at Holly Well Farm Cottage have views of the southern parts of the site (the two southernmost grassland fields) with the experience comprising views of gently sloping grazing land, hedgerows and trees, together with views of woodland at Wirlybones Wood and some filtered views of buildings in Ratby. Views of the wider area of the site to the north are prevented by the screening effects of the landform.

#### Visual Receptor E: Desford Road, Kirby Muxloe

5.53 The landform rises to the south of Ratby to a local ridge edge at Kirby Muxloe. Viewpoint 15 provides a representative view for residents. There are long and wide views across the landscape to the north and this includes views of farmland, hedges, trees, woodland, pylons and the built-up area Ratby. Parts of the site are perceptible -albeit distant- observed as a minor component within the wider context of the built-up area and woodland at Martinshaw Wood and Pear Tree Wood.

#### **Rights of Way Users**

5.54 In combining susceptibility to change (High), value of views (Medium) and professional judgment it is concluded that Rights of Way users are of High sensitivity.

#### Visual Receptor F: Public Footpath R50, Stamford Street – Markfield Road

5.55 Viewpoints 4a-4b represent the general experience for users of the Public Footpath between Stamford Street and Markfield Road. Viewpoint 4a is taken from the edge of Stamford Street looking west and Viewpoint 4b is taken looking back towards Ratby. This viewpoint is taken from the field that has outline planning permission for housing.

5.56 Heading out from Stamford Street users experience views of the local landscape which includes views of the site. There are views across to Pear Tree Wood and Martinshaw Wood and close-range views of new housing being built at Martinshaw Meadows.

Visual Receptor G: Public Footpath R48, Stamford Street – Burroughs Road -willow plantation

5.57 Viewpoints 6a-6c represent the general experience for users of the Public Footpath as it crosses the site from Stamford Street to Burroughs Road. Viewpoints 10a-10b are from a section of the Footpath that heads out of Pear Tree Wood towards Burroughs Road.

5.58 Users experience open and close-range views of the site. From the slightly elevated edge at Stamford Street there are opportunities for wide and open view across the landscape to the west and south (see Viewpoints 6a and 6b) and this includes views of the site, Burroughs Road and the wooded backdrop of Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood. When heading towards Ratby from the edge of Pear Tree Wood there are close range views of the site and views of housing at Stamford Street and Martinshaw Meadows (See Viewpoint 6c and Viewpoint 10a).

Visual Receptors H: Public Footpath R48, Pear Tree Wood- willow plantation

5.59 The Public Footpath runs through Pear Tree Wood and alongside the willow plantation. Viewpoint 3 provides a representative view. Visibility out from the wood is heavily restricted by mature vegetation although there are some filtered views of the site's western most field (which will be laid out for habitat creation to deliver biodiversity benefits).

Visual Receptors I: Public Footpath R44, Burroughs Road -Wirlybones Wood

5.60 Viewpoints 9a-9d represent the general viewing experience for users of the Public Footpath that crosses the southern part of the site. The Footpath runs from Burroughs Road, near Burroughs Road Sport Field, to Wirlybones Wood. Receptors have open and close-range views of the site. The experience varies but essentially includes views of open and undulating grazing fields, established hedges and mature trees, farm buildings, the edge of Pear Tree Business Park, Holly Farm Cottage and Wirlybones Wood. Heading in northerly direction there are some glimpsed views of housing at Martinshaw Meadows and clearer views of housing at Stamford Street where the route approaches Burroughs Road.

Visual Receptors J: Public Footpath R55, The Stattie- Burroughs Road

5.61 This is short Public Footpath from Stamford Street to Burroughs Road. This crosses the car park of The Plough Inn. The experience includes views of housing at Stamford Street, and built elements of Ratby Primary School. There are views of the eastern most parts of the site which include the recreation area. (see Viewpoint 7).

Visual Receptors K: Public Bridleway, Wirlybones Wood- Desford Lane

5.62 Public Footpath (R44) connects with a Public Bridleway that runs south of the site within the vicinity of Burroughs Brook. There are views across to the southern part of the site (see Viewpoint 11) with the experience including views of grazing fields, hedges and trees, as well as views of farm buildings and Holly Farm Cottage. Views of the wider area of the site to the north are prevented by the screening effects of the rising landform and by woodland at Wirlybones Wood.

**Highway Users**

5.63 Vehicle uses (receptors) are of lower sensitivity as they are travelling at speed and experience transient views of the landscape. Highway users are judged to be of Medium- Low susceptibility of change and of Low value. Overall sensitivity is judged to be Medium-Low.

Visual Receptors L: Desford Lane

5.64 Views heading into Ratby from Desford Lane are restricted and filtered by roadside hedgerows and trees. On the edge of the village (see Viewpoint 13) there are some glimpsed and transient views of the southern part of the site and across to buildings on Stamford Street through the tree line, with intervening vegetation tending to obscure the view. These views are glimpsed and fleeting in nature. In the summer months, when vegetation is leaf, views out towards the site from this location would be heavily restricted.

**Other Receptors**Visual Receptors M: Burroughs Road

5.65 Although the route provides highway access for local users to the farms to the west of the site, it is considered that the majority of receptors are pedestrians. Part of Burroughs Road is defined as a Public Footpath and to the west, near Burroughs Wood, it becomes a Restricted Public-By-Way. In combining susceptibility to change (High) and value of views (Medium) alongside professional judgment it is concluded that these receptors are of High sensitivity.

5.66 Viewpoints 1a-1e provide a series of sequential views from Burroughs Road as users head into Ratby, whilst Viewpoint 2a -2b demonstrate the experience looking west.

5.67 Elements within the view and the extent of visibility across the landscape varies along the route, largely as a result of its undulating character. As a result of its proximity to the site and the fact that roadside hedgerows are fragmented there are opportunities for open, clear and close-range views of the site up to Stamford Street (see Viewpoint 1D). There are also views of the site to the south of Burroughs Road and this includes views of grazing fields, established hedges, and mature trees. There are opportunities for views of the built-up area of Ratby which includes housing at Stamford Street and Martinshaw Meadows (see Viewpoint 1D) and depending on location, and the undulating nature of the road, there are views across to Ratby church (see Viewpoint 1D- 1E). From its western section, near Burroughs Wood, the route is elevated and there are distant views across the landscape with views of the site and Ratby (see Viewpoint 1a-1b).

#### Visual Receptors N: Wirlybones Wood

5.68 There are several informal paths within Wirlybones Wood, although these are not formally designated routes<sup>6</sup>. In combining susceptibility to change (High) and value of views (Medium) alongside professional judgment it is concluded that these receptors are High sensitivity.

5.69 A path skirts the eastern fringe of the wood which provides opportunities for filtered views of the site through the tree line (see Viewpoint 14). During the summer months visibility would be restricted by the screening effects of the woodland. There are more open views of the site where the route leaves the woodland and connects with Burroughs Road.

#### Visual Receptors O: Recreation Area, Burroughs Road

5.70 In combining susceptibility to change (Low) and value of views (Medium-Low) alongside professional judgment it is concluded that these receptors are Low sensitivity.

5.71 Viewpoint 8 is taken from the recreation area on Burroughs Road. There are close range views of the eastern part of the site which includes views of the recreation area, Burroughs Road, and the built edge of Ratby.

#### Visual Receptors P: Ratby Allotments

5.72 In combining susceptibility to change (Low) and value of views (Medium-Low) alongside professional judgment it is concluded that these receptors are of Low sensitivity.

5.73 Viewpoint 12 is taken from the access road leading to Pear Tree Business Park. Allotment users have views across the southern parts of the site with views of fields, hedges and Wirlybones Wood. Wider views of the site to the north are restricted by the screening effects of the gently rising landform. Receptors also have view of built elements at Pear Tree Business Park and its associated access road.

### **Visual Amenity: Summary**

5.74 The baseline analysis results in several reasoned conclusions which are summarised below:

- 1) The visual envelope of the site is comparatively limited in extent being defined by the adjacent built-up area of Ratby which restricts wider views from the east; surrounding mature woodland at Martinshaw Wood, Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood, which visually contains the site from the wider landscape to the north and west; and by the local rise to the south near Desford Lane, which screens views of the site from the wider

<sup>6</sup> These routes are not identified on the LCC Public Rights of Way Definitive Map

landscape to the south. Views of the site are gained within this visual envelope which includes residents and rights of way users.

- 2) Beyond this visual envelope there are distant views of the site from the elevated local ridge at Kirby Muxloe. There are views across towards Ratby with the site perceptible albeit forming a minor component within a much wider viewer that is experienced which includes the built-up area of Ratby.
- 3) Given its location on the settlement edge there are opportunities for open and close-range views of the site for residents on the western part of Ratby, such as from properties on Stamford Street and Martinshaw Meadows that border the site.
- 4) There are open and close-range views of the site and the local landscape for users of the three Public Footpaths that cross the site.
- 5) There are some partial views of the southern part of the site from the he Public Bridleway to the south, and partial views of the eastern part of the site from the Public Footpath of 'The Stattie'
- 6) From the rights of way and informal routes that lie within Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood views out across the landscape towards the site are prevented or heavily restricted by the screening effects of vegetation, although there are some views from the informal path on the edge of Wirlybones Wood.
- 7) There are close range views of the site, the local landscape and the built-up area of Ratby for users on Burroughs Road.
- 8) There are views of parts of the site from the recreation area off Burroughs Road.

## 6.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT- DESIGN

### Design Process

- 6.1 The fieldwork and baseline findings of this LVA, together with the analysis of other environmental and technical topics, have shaped the site's Framework Plan. An Illustrative Framework Plan and Illustrative Masterplan is included within the Design & Access Statement which shows how the development *could* be laid out based upon the description of development.
- 6.2 The proposals include design measures and landscape strategies to minimise the level of adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity, and to sensitively assimilate the Proposed Development into the landscape. This includes the careful siting of built development within the site, the retention of existing landscape features and the creation of new landscape habitats.
- 6.3 The Proposed Development delivers opportunities for enhancements to the National Forest vision through the provision of "*Forest related green infrastructure*", which includes new

woodland planting. The development seeks to accord with landscape strategies of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (i.e., Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills LCA), and the specific guidance for development in this location, as set out within the Council's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment.

### **Landscape led Masterplanning & Green Infrastructure**

6.4 The Proposed Development follows a landscape led 'ground up' approach to masterplanning whereby existing landscape features, such as woodland, hedgerows and trees are retained within new green corridors and are expanded upon with new planting and green space to create a comprehensive Green infrastructure (GI)<sup>7</sup> framework, within which the built development can be accommodated. The GI includes the retention of the willow plantation, mature trees and hedgerows and the introduction of new habitats. This comprises: broadleaved woodland, native trees and species rich hedgerows; wildflower meadows and species rich grassland; ponds and drainage features; and accessible green space, equipped play, and recreational routes. The GI, which covers some 17ha (c52% of the site), will provide long term benefits for landscape character, biodiversity, recreation, health and well-being, and adaptation to climate change.

### **Landscape Strategy**

6.5 To minimise impacts (change) and the level of adverse effects upon landscape character and visual amenity, and to respond to the guidance and landscape strategies for this area, the proposals adopt the following measures:

- 1) To sensitively locate built development within the landscape by introducing a green infrastructure (GI) framework of retained and new landscape habitats (e.g. woodland, trees and hedges) that will integrate new built development within this landscape and provide an appropriate and sympathetic transition between built development and the surrounding countryside.
- 2) The development's GI equates to around 52% of the site. The GI will be designed to meet the "*forest green infrastructure*" guidance of the National Forest Strategy. This will include the provision of new "*woodland planting*", "*creation of woodland belts*," "*incorporation and management of existing woodland and hedgerows*", and the delivery of "*greenways - landscape footpath and cycle routes*".
- 3) Built development is set back from the western and southern parts of the site where the landform descends to Pear Tree Wood, Wirlybones Wood and Burroughs Brook. A broad swathe of woodland planting and green space is located around the western and southern parts of the site to provide an appropriate transition between built development and existing landscape features.
- 4) Existing features such as woodland, trees and hedgerows are retained and form part of a landscape led development. The willow coppice woodland is retained and so to the vast

<sup>7</sup> Green Infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities [NPPF]

majority of existing hedgerows and mature trees (which includes the three Grade A High-quality trees). Hedgerows will be sensitively incorporated within the public realm within new green corridors. Built development will be set back from these corridors to ensure that there is sufficient space for existing hedges and mature trees to thrive as well as providing space for the planting of new native hedgerows and trees and biodiversity led grassland mixes.

- 5) Woodland is a characteristic feature of the landscape around Ratby and new areas of woodland planting are proposed. These will be principally located around the western parts of the site, close to Wirlybones Wood and Pear Tree Wood, to complement this wooded character and to support the National Forest vision. New woodland and tree planting will assist in integrating and assimilating development into the landscape, as well as 'softening' and filtering views of the built form for visual receptors that have views of the development.
- 6) Burroughs Road and its associated hedgerows and mature trees are retained and will be located within a dedicated landscape corridor of new hedges, trees and grassland. There would continue to be access for the local community onto Burroughs Road and new recreational routes will be provided to connect with the route. New built development will be set back from Burroughs Road, and it is anticipated that there will be no direct frontage access to properties from Burroughs Road. On its eastern section there will continue to be views along the route of the Church.
- 7) The existing Public Footpaths within the site are retained and these will be located within dedicated green corridors or 'Greenways' that also provide opportunities for new planting and landscape habitats to create attractive routes through the site. Additional recreational routes are provided which will provide increased access around the site and will connect with these Footpaths.
- 8) New habitats of woodland, trees, scrub, hedgerows, and grasslands will provide compensatory measures for vegetation and features that would need to be removed to accommodate access points, street connections, ground works, development platforms and built development. The majority of the site's mature trees and hedgerows are retained.
- 9) Using an appropriate form, scale and height for new homes that reflect the surrounding built form, and to adopt a palette of locally distinct building materials that would assist in sensitivity assimilating buildings within this landscape context.

### **Detailed Landscape Design**

- 6.6 The detailed landscape design, to include the selection of species and the design character of planting and green space would be developed through reserved matters applications.
- 6.7 An appropriate mechanism will be set in place that covers the long-term maintenance and management of the GI, such as Landscape & Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) which can be secured, for example, as part of a planning condition.

## 7.0 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

### Assessment of Landscape Effects

7.1 The Landscape Effects Table (**Appendix B**) provides an assessment of the landscape effects on receptors as a result of the Proposed Development. The LVA evaluates the level of effects during the construction phase, on completion of the development and in the longer term (15 years after completion of the development). The assessment considers the susceptibility to change, landscape value and the magnitude of effects.

7.2 When looking at potential development in this location the Council's evidence base concluded that the area was of "medium" sensitivity to residential development. The susceptibility to change is the ability of the landscape to accommodate change arising from the specific development proposal. In all landscapes there will be variances in susceptibility to change depending on the type of change that is proposed and the receiving landscape in which the change would occur. .

7.3 It is concluded that this landscape is tolerant of change through a well-planned and well-designed development, and which incorporates various design and mitigation measures, to include a comprehensive GI framework of retained and new landscape features within which built development can be sensitively located.

7.4 It is considered that a direct impact and effect would occur on the landscape receptor of the site itself. Whilst there would be a level of change – as there would be for any built development upon a greenfield the site- this level of change is alleviated to some degree by the fact that the site lies alongside the settlement edge and is influenced, in part, by the adjacent built-up area of Ratby.

### Landscape Effects: Construction

7.5 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 will include methods in which to protect the site's woodland, mature trees and hedgerows, which are to be retained, and various measures to ensure no direct impacts upon surrounding features such as Wirlybones Wood and Pear Tree Wood. This will be in accordance with the information contained within BS 5837 Trees in Relation to Construction<sup>8</sup>.

7.6 Effects on the various receptors during the construction phase are contained within the Landscape Effects Tables (**Appendix B**). In summary, none of these effects would be permanent.

### Landscape Effects: On Completion

#### National

#### Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield NCA

<sup>8</sup> BS5837, Trees in Relation to construction.

7.7 The landscape effects on the substantial landscape receptor of the Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield NCA and the nearby Leicestershire Vales NCA and Charnwood NCA is assessed as being **Negligible** both on completion and in the longer term, given the overall scale of these receptors, and the fact that extensive areas of these landscapes would not be impacted (changed) and effected. Development would be located within the context of the settlement edge of Ratby and would be well-contained within the wider landscape through the structure of surrounding woodland and the built-up area.

### **Regional**

#### Forested Ancient Hills

7.8 The landscape effects on the Regional Landscape Character Area of Forested Ancient Hills is assessed as being **Negligible**, both on completion and in the longer term, given the overall scale of this receptors, and the fact that extensive areas of these landscapes would not be impacted (changed) and effected. Development would be located within the context of the settlement edge of Ratby and would be well-contained within the wider landscape.

#### Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment

#### Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland Landscape Character Area (LCA)

7.9 Effects on the Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland LCA during the operational phase would, in effect, be restricted to a relatively small component of this LCA.

7.10 It is judged that the overall effect on these receptors is **Moderate-Minor Adverse** on completion reducing to **Minor Adverse** in the longer term (Year 15) on account of the relatively localised impacts upon this receptor, and that the GI proposals would be established and would be delivering localised landscape benefits such as the provision of new woodland, trees, hedgerow, which as well as providing additional habitats, which will sensitively integrate built development into this landscape.

### **District**

#### Hinckley & Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment

#### Charnwood Fringe LCA

7.11 It is judged that the overall effect on this receptor is **Moderate-Minor Adverse** on completion reducing to **Minor Adverse** in the longer term (Year 15) on account of the relatively limited and localised impacts upon this large receptor (ie large parts of this LCA would not be affected) and that in the longer term the GI proposals would be established and would be delivering localised landscape benefits through the provision of new woodland, trees and hedgerows. This supports the National Forest Vision, which is one of the "landscape strategies" for this LCA. The GI will sensitively integrate built development into this landscape.

### **Site & Immediate Context**

7.12 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.

7.13 Whilst there would be impacts and levels of adverse effects it is considered that the comprehensive GI framework of retained and new landscape habitats- which covers some 50% of the site - is an appropriate design response and which will assist in minimising the levels of longer term effects. The GI will sympathetically assimilate built development into the landscape, as well as providing localised landscape benefits in the medium to longer term, through habitat creation, accessible green space and new planting.

7.14 The vast majority of the site's established landscape habitats, such as woodland, hedgerows, and mature hedgerow trees are retained and located in dedicated areas of green space. This include the woodland plantation and Grade A High Quality trees. To support and enhance these features, the Proposed Development includes the planting of new broadleaved woodland, trees, shrubs, and species rich hedgerows to create a wooded character for the development. Once fully established and maturing, there will, for example, be an increase in the amount of tree cover within the site, as well an extensive areas of accessible green space designed for recreation and biodiversity benefits.. This GI framework, which will help support the National Forest vision, will provide longer benefits for local landscape character, biodiversity, amenity and recreation and adoption to climate change.

7.15 The Proposed Development would result in the loss of the site's agricultural fields and disruption in the site's landscape fabric with earthworks and land-modelling to accommodate drainage basins, development platforms and appropriate levels for buildings and streets etc. There will be some loss in vegetation to accommodate, for example, access points, internal street connections and efficient development parcels. The planting of new native species hedgerows, tree planting and grassland will be provided to deliver compensatory measures.

7.16 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 form 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.

7.17 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.

## 8.0 VISUAL EFFECTS

## Assessment of Visual Effects

8.1 The Visual Effects Table (**Appendix C**) provides an assessment of the visual effects on receptors as a result of the Proposed Development. The LVA evaluates the level of effects during the construction phase, on completion of the development and in the longer term (15 years after completion of the development). The assessment considers the susceptibility to change, the value of views and the magnitude of effects. The assessment assumes that woodland planting, depending on species, would be between 8-10m in height at year 15.

## Visibility Mapping

8.2 The representative Visual Envelope (VE) (**Figure 6**), which has been prepared through the fieldwork, identifies the VE of the site and potential area of the landscape in which the Proposed Development is likely to be visible for those visual receptors that are within that area. It is recognised that 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. Furthermore, the 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. Similarly, those receptors *within* the VE that have views of the Proposed Development are likely to experience different degrees of visibility. Additionally, the amount of time over which the Proposed Development will be seen may also vary.

## Visual Effects: Construction

8.3 Inevitably for those visual receptors that have views of the site, such as nearby residents in Ratby and for users of the Public Footpaths, there will be views of construction activities to include vehicles and associated machinery, site compounds, earthworks, and ground modelling etc. It is expected that all construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to protect and to minimise, as far as practicable, adverse impacts on visual amenity during the construction phases.

8.4 Effects on the various receptors during the construction phase are contained within the Visual Effects Tables (**Appendix C**). In summary, none of these effects would be permanent.

## Visual Effects: On Completion & Long Term

### Residents

#### Visual Receptor A: Stamford Street, Ratby

8.5 The existing residential area of Ratby borders the northern part of the site and this includes properties at Stamford Street which are slightly elevated in the landscape. Given their proximity alongside the site, residents will afford close range views of the Proposed Development, which will principally comprise views of new housing, streets, and green space. For some residents views of the development would be observed within the context and backdrop of housing at Martinshaw Meadows which is a current feature of the view.

8.6 Overall, the level of effects on these receptors would vary given their location and the extent of visibility. Taking into account their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (varying between High-Medium, and Medium depending on location and existing built elements in the views), effects are judged to be **Major Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Major-Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account of the maturing nature of the GI framework, which includes new planting to the back of Stamford Street, which would help to 'soften' and filter views of the built form for these receptors.

Visual Receptor B: Martinshaw Meadows, Ratby

8.7 It is expected that once these houses are occupied residents on the edge of this development will have close range views of the Proposed Development. Primarily this will comprise views of new housing immediately to the south, observed within the context of housing at Stamford Street and the wider built up area of Ratby, and views to the west beyond an area of intervening green space.

8.8 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (varying between High-Medium, and Medium depending on location), and the fact that existing built elements are apparent in the view, effects are judged to be **Major-Moderate Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account the maturing nature of the GI framework, which would help to 'soften' and filter views of the built form for these receptors.

8.9 The land to north west of the site has outline planning permission for housing. When this comes forward for development there will be additional built elements within the landscape and the Proposed Development would be observed by these receptors within that context.

Visual Receptor C: Markfield Road, Ratby

8.10 There are existing properties on Markfield Road. Views of the site are largely obscured by intervening buildings within Martinshaw Meadows, although there are some glimpsed views of the very northern parts of the site. Any views of the Proposed Development are likely to be partial and glimpsed in nature and observed within the context of the intervening built up area of Martinshaw Meadows.

8.11 Given the limited visibility and the limited magnitude of change (Negligible) and the fact that existing built elements are apparent in the view, effects are judged to be **Negligible** on completion and in the longer term (year 15).

8.12 When the land that has outline permission comes forward for development views of the Proposed Development would effectively be prevented by this intervening built-up area.

Visual Receptor D: Holly Well Farm Cottage, Desford Lane, Ratby

8.13 Residents have views of the southern parts of the site (the two southernmost grassland fields) with the experience comprising views of gently sloping grazing land, hedgerows and trees, and some views of built elements in Ratby. There would be full/partial views of the Proposed Development and this includes views of drainage features, the proposed access road heading

into the site from Desford Lane and new housing in the southern part of the site. The GI framework of new woodland and tree planting around the boundary will strengthen boundary hedgerows and will assimilate the drainage basins and the road into the landscape, and will 'soften' and filter views of new housing.

8.14 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (High Medium) effects are judged to be **Major-Moderate Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the maturing nature of the green infrastructure framework, which would integrate the Proposed Development into the landscape and 'soften' and filter views of the built form. These effects are restricted to that of a single property.

#### Visual Receptor E: Desford Road, Kirby Muxloe

8.15 The landform rises to the south of Ratby to a local ridge on the residential edge of Kirby Muxloe at Desford Road. Residents on Desford Road have wide views across the landscape to the north and this includes views of farmland, hedges, trees, woodland, pylons and the built-up area of Ratby. There would be some partial-glimpsed views of the Proposed Development with new housing and buildings discernible but forming a comparatively minor addition to the wider view with the Proposed Development observed within the context of the built-area of Ratby. New woodland planting, alongside established areas of woodland, would integrate the development into the landscape.

8.16 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (Low-Negligible) - which takes into account the built elements are already apparent in the view and the limited visibility of the Proposed Development given distance and screening elements in the landscape- effects are judged to be **Minor Adverse-Negligible** on completion, reducing to **Negligible** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account of the maturing nature of the GI framework.

#### **Rights of Way Users**

8.17 In combining susceptibility to change (High) and value of views (Medium) alongside professional judgment it is concluded that Rights of Way users are of High sensitivity.

#### Visual Receptor F: Public Footpath R50, Stamford Street – Markfield Road

8.18 Heading out from Stamford Street, footpath users will experience close range views of the Proposed Development and this will be observed with the context of the built-up area of Martinshaw Meadows and housing at Stamford Street. The route extends through agricultural fields to the north west and there would be views southwards of the Proposed Development. However, the route runs through land that has outline planning permission for new housing such that when this land comes forward for development, much of the western section of route will be located within a built-up environment, such that views of the Proposed Development to the south would be prevented.

8.19 The Footpath is retained within the Proposed Development and located within a dedicated green corridor. There would continue to be access across from Ratby into Martinshaw Wood, which includes access to the National Forest Way. Whilst the Proposed Development of new housing would be a noticeable feature for these receptors it would not be a completely uncharacteristic element in this context as users currently have views of the built edge and housing at Ratby, which includes Martinshaw Meadows.

8.20 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (High-Medium) - which takes into account built elements that are already apparent in the view - effects are judged to be **Major-Moderate Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account the maturing nature of the GI framework that would assist in 'softening' and filtering views of the Proposed Development. It is considered that these year 1 effects would reduce in degree to Moderate Adverse when development comes forward on the land to the north west as users will, for the most part, be moving through a built up area, such that there would be a more limited degree of change on their experience.

Visual Receptor G: Public Footpath R48, Stamford Street – Burroughs Road -willow plantation

8.21 There will be a marked change in the view as receptors head south from Stamford Street as users will experience full views of the Proposed Development. This will comprise close range and open views of new buildings, streets and green space. Heading into Stamford Street via Burroughs Road the Proposed Development would be observed within the context and back drop of the existing built edge which is a feature of the view. Within the western sections of the route there will be views of the Proposed Development's GI framework of new woodland, tree planting and accessible green space and the new housing edge either side of Burroughs Road.

8.22 The Proposed Development retains the Public Footpath on its alignment. There would continue to be access into the wider landscape and the routes in Pear Tree Wood (to include the National Forest Way). Within the Proposed Development the Footpath will be located within a new green corridor of public open space, which will include the planting of new hedges and trees to create an attractive route as users move through the site. In the western part of the site, near the willow plantation, the route will be located within a broad area of accessible green space together with new woodland and tree planting. Whilst the experience and nature of the route would be markedly different, it is concluded that as a result of the design response the overall experience would not be unpleasant in nature and users will be able to continue to access the wider landscape.

8.23 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (which varies between High, and High-Medium), which takes into account built elements that are apparent in the viewing experience, effects are judged to be **Major Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Major-Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account of the maturing nature of the GI framework that would assist in integrating the route into the Proposed Development with woodland and tree planting 'softening' views of the built development and creating an attractive 'green' route.

Visual Receptors H: Public Footpath R48, Pear Tree Wood- willow plantation

8.24 The Public Footpath runs through Pear Tree Wood and alongside the willow plantation. Views out from the route are restricted by the screening effects of vegetation – even in the winter months- such that views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to filtered and glimpsed views of the site's western most field, adjacent to Burroughs Road. This field is designed for GI uses in the form of new grassland habitats such that there would be no discernible change in the view on this section of the route.

8.25 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (Negligible), effects are judged to be **Negligible** and on completion *and* in the longer term (year 15).

Visual Receptors I: Public Footpath R44, Burroughs Road -Wirlybones Wood

8.26 The route runs between Burroughs Road and Wirlybones Wood and crosses the southern part of the site. Receptors will have full and close-range views of the Proposed Development. This will include views of new housing, buildings, streets, greenspace, planting and drainage basins.

8.27 The Proposed Development retains the Public Footpath and there would continue to be access into Wirlybones Wood and the wider landscape to the south and west.

8.28 There would be a high degree of change. Within the Proposed Development the Footpath will be located within a new green corridor of public open space, which will include the planting of new hedges and trees to create an attractive route as users move through the site. Whilst the experience and nature of the route would be markedly different (ie fields replaced by housing), it is concluded that as a result of the design response the experience would not be unpleasant in nature and there would continue to be access into the wider landscape.

8.29 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (High) effects are judged to be **Major Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Major-Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account the maturing nature of the GI framework that would assist in integrating the route into the Proposed Development with woodland and tree planting 'softening' views of the built development and creating an attractive 'green' route.

Visual Receptors J: Public Footpath R55, The Stattie- Burroughs Road

8.30 This is short Public Footpath from Stamford Street to Burroughs Road through the built-up area .Users would experience views of the eastern part of the Proposed Development, which would include new housing and the school land overlooking part of the retained recreation area. The planting of trees and hedges is proposed around the edges of the Proposed Development, and this will 'soften' views of the built form. Users currently observe built features, which includes properties at Stamford Street together with Ratby Primary School and The Pough Inn, such that whilst the Proposed Development would be noticeable and would add further built elements into the view, it would not be an uncharacteristic feature within this context given current experience encountered on the route.

8.31 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (Medium-Low) – which takes into account existing built features in the view and that there would be no significant change in the overall experience – effects are judged to be **Minor Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Minor Adverse-Negligible** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account the maturing nature of the green infrastructure framework that would assist in integrating the built development into this context.

#### Visual Receptors K: Public Bridleway, Wirlybones Wood- Desford Lane

8.32 A Public Bridleway runs to the south of the site within the vicinity of Burroughs Brook and connects with Desford Lane. Views of the Proposed Development would be largely prevented and obscured by the intervening vegetation at Wirlybones Wood. As users head towards Desford Lane there would be views of the southern part of the Proposed Development and this would include views of new housing on the southern part of the site. The proposed GI framework of new broadleaved woodland and tree planting will strengthen the existing boundary hedgerows. In the longer term, planting will 'soften' and filter views of the built form.

8.33 Given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (High-Medium) effects are judged to be **Major-Moderate Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account the maturing nature of the GI framework that would will create a wooded edge to the Proposed Development and which will sensitively integrate the built form into the landscape.

#### **Highway Users**

8.34 Vehicle uses (receptors) are of lower sensitivity as they are travelling at speed and experience transient views of the landscape. Highway users are judged to be of Medium- Low susceptibility of change and of Low value. Overall sensitivity is judged to be Medium-Low.

#### Visual Receptors L: Desford Lane

8.35 There would be some glimpsed views of the Proposed Development on the immediate approach to the village, albeit these will be restricted and heavily filtered by existing roadside hedgerows and trees. These views would be transient and fleeting in nature. Users will experience views of the new road junction on Desford Lane, which will be of limited change to the current experience as it will be observed as a modest alteration to the existing junction.

8.36 Given their sensitivity (Medium-Low) and magnitude of change (Low-Negligible) effects are judged to be **Minor Adverse-Negligible** on completion, reducing to **Negligible** in the longer term (year 15). This takes account of the maturing nature of the GI framework that would will create a wooded edge to the Proposed Development and which would assist in integrating and 'softening' views of the built development.

#### **Other Receptors**

#### Visual Receptors M: Burroughs Road

8.37 Although the route provides highway access for local users to the farms to the west of the site, the majority of receptors are pedestrians and cyclists. Part of Burroughs Road is also defined as a Public Footpath.

8.38 As a consequence of its proximity to the site there would be open and close-range views of the Proposed Development on either side of the route as users move along Burroughs Road. There are opportunities for views of the built-up area of Ratby, which includes housing at Stamford Street and Martinshaw Meadows, such that views of new housing to the north of Burroughs Road would be observed within that context.

8.39 Burroughs Road is retained within the development and there would continue to be access into the wider landscape from Ratby. The route would be designed within a broad green corridor with the existing roadside hedges and mature trees retained and strengthened with new planting. Housing is set back from the road. In the eastern section the proposed school and the retained recreation ground will border the route. Although the overall experience and nature of the route would be different, the design response would create pleasant route. New planting will, in the longer term, 'filter' and soften the built form.

8.40 From its western section, near Burroughs Wood, where the route is elevated, there would continue to be distant views across the landscape to the east and south. There would be clear views of the Proposed Development observed on the lower slopes with the established edge of Ratby on the skyline. New woodland planting around the western part of the site, which would be seen within the context of Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood, would assist in assimilating the new built edge into the landscape.

8.41 Effects would vary depending on location and visibility of the development with the Proposed Development observed, in places, against the backdrop of the built edge of Ratby. Overall, given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (High-Medium) effects for these receptors are judged to be **Major Adverse** on completion, reducing to **Major-Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into the maturing nature of the GI framework that would assist in integrating the route within the development and would assist in 'softening' views of the built form.

#### Visual Receptors N: Wirlybones Wood

8.42 From the path on the edge of the wood there would be some filtered views of the Proposed Development's western edge and this would comprises views of a broad area of green space and planting with new housing beyond. Visibility would be restricted and obscured by intervening vegetation within Wirlybones Wood, although there would be more open views where the route leaves the wood and connects with Burroughs Road. During the summer months, when vegetation is in full leaf, views out from the wood would be heavily restricted.

8.43 Visibility and effects would vary depending on location. Overall, given their sensitivity (High) and magnitude of change (Medium-Low), together with the limited visibility of the Proposed Development, effects for these receptors are judged to be **Moderate-Minor Adverse** on

completion, reducing to **Minor Adverse** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account the maturing nature of the GI framework which includes new woodland planting that would combine with Wirlybones Wood to create a wooded edge to the Proposed Development.

#### Visual Receptors O: Recreation Area, Burroughs Road

8.44 It is considered that the main focus for these receptors is the play and open space facility rather than an appreciation of the wider landscape. Receptors would, however, experience close range views of the Proposed Development which would include views of new housing and the school land. Users currently experience views of the built edge of Ratby which includes views of housing at Stamford Steet as well as views of Ratby Primary School and The Plough Inn. The Proposed Development's housing would be a noticeable additional built feature but would not be a completely uncharacteristic element given the current viewing experience.

8.45 Overall, given their sensitivity (Low) and magnitude of change (Low), which reflects built components that are already apparent in their view the effects for these receptors are judged to be **Minor Adverse-Negligible** on completion. In the longer term (year 15) effects are judged to be **Negligible** as new tree planting around the edge of the built development will 'soften' views of the built form.

#### Visual Receptors P: Ratby Allotments

8.46 It is considered that the main focus for these receptors is being engaged in the facility itself rather than an appreciation of the wider landscape. Allotment users will have views the southern parts of the Proposed Development which will include views of the new road heading into the site, drainage features, woodland planting and new housing.

8.47 Overall, given their sensitivity (Low) and magnitude of change (Medium), effects for these receptors are judged to be **Minor Adverse-Negligible** on completion, reducing to **Negligible** in the longer term (year 15). This takes into account new woodland planting and tree planting within the southern part of the development which will soften and filter views of the built elements.

## 9.0 SUMMARY

9.1 This LVA has been prepared based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013.

9.2 The Hinckley & Bosworth Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2017) assesses the capacity for the landscape to absorb built development. The site, and the western fringes of Ratby, lies within Assessment Area 13: Ratby. The report concludes that this area is of "medium" sensitivity to residential and commercial development.

9.3 The landscape to the west and southwest of Ratby, within the context of the site, comprises undulating agricultural fields that gently slope away from the village towards tributaries of Rothley Brook that lie within Pear Tree Wood to the west, and to the south near Desford Lane.

The landscape around this part of Ratby is characterised by extensive woodland to the north and west which includes Martinshaw Wood, Pear Tree Wood, Wirlybones Wood, and Ratby Burroughs. The site and the local landscape is influenced in part by the urbanising elements of the built edge and built-up area, which includes housing at Markfield Road, Stamford Street and new housing at Martinshaw Meadows.

- 9.4 The site, like the local landscape, is undulating in its character. The landform falls steadily from its highest point near Stamford Street (c105m AOD), down to the watercourse in Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood (c85m AOD), and to Burroughs Brook (80m AOD) in the south. The site includes some steeper areas around its western edges where it falls sharply down to the Burroughs Road ford, and within the centre of the site is a shallow north-south valley defined by a field ditch
- 9.5 The visual envelope of the site is comparatively limited in extent being defined by the adjacent built-up area of Ratby which restricts wider views from the east; surrounding mature woodland at Martinshaw Wood, Pear Tree Wood and Wirlybones Wood, which visually contain the site from the wider landscape to the north and west; and by the local rise to the south of Burroughs Brook near Desford Lane. Views of the site are gained within this visual envelope, which includes views for local residents overlooking the site and for users of the Public Footpaths the cross the site.
- 9.6 The proposals include design measures and landscape strategies to minimise the level of adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. This includes the careful siting of built development within the site, the retention of existing landscape features and the creation of new landscape habitats in accordance with the National Forest vision.
- 9.7 Whilst there would be impacts and levels of adverse effects it is considered that the comprehensive GI framework of retained and new landscape habitats- which covers some 50% of the site - is an appropriate design response which will assist in minimising the levels of longer term effects. The GI will sympathetically assimilate built development into the landscape, as well as providing localised landscape benefits in the medium to longer term, through habitat creation, accessible green space and new planting. New woodland and tree planting will assist in 'softening' and filtering views of the built form for visual receptors that have views of the site.
- 9.8 In conclusion, a development of this scale, type and extent and on any greenfield site of this nature is likely to result in impacts effects at the outset and it is considered that whilst there would be levels of adverse effects, the landscape design approach would integrate and assimilate the built development into the landscape such that levels of adverse effects on landscape and visual receptors would reduce in the longer term.



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