

A photograph showing a road curving to the left. Bare trees line the right side of the road, and a few green trees are visible further down the slope. A white car is parked on the side of the road in the distance.

Land off School Road, Langley Common, Barkham

## Landscape and Visual Appraisal

October 2025

| Revisions |      |             |             |             |
|-----------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Revision  | Date | Description | Prepared by | Approved by |
|           |      |             |             | PJR         |
|           |      |             |             |             |

|  |     |                               |              |
|--|-----|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Document No 25-01-PL-CR01 — School Road, Langley Common — Landscape and Visual Appraisal |     |                               |              |
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| Reviewed by:   | JBG | Chartered Landscape Architect | October 2025 |

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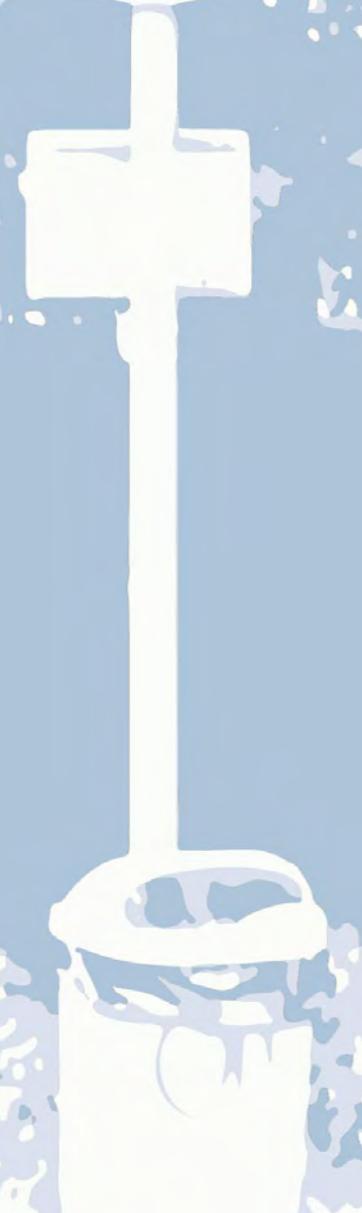
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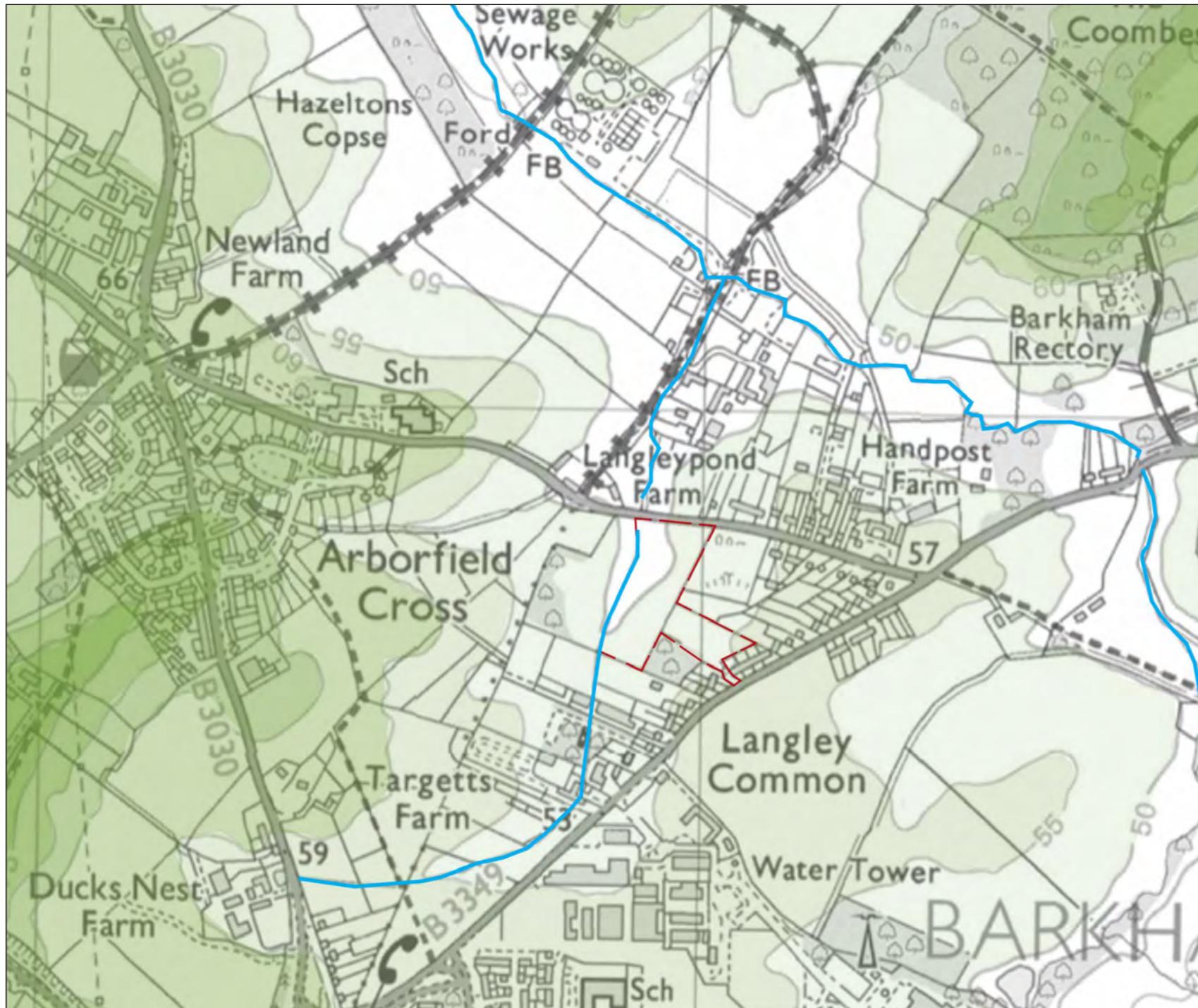
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# Section 1

## **Introduction**

Figure 1 - Site Location & Context



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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Richards Partnership (TRP) have been appointed to carry out a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVA) for a proposed residential development of up to 27 dwellings together with associated access and landscaping for, Land to the rear of Langley Common and south of School Road, Barkham (the site) (see Figure 1). The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved except for access.
- 1.2 The site falls within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council.
- 1.3 The circa 2.85 hectare site is located alongside and to the rear of residential properties that front on to School Lane (to the north) and west of houses at Langley Common Road (B3349) (see Figure 1). The site consists of two fields which, at the time of visiting the site in February 2025 appeared to be used as pasture.
- 1.4 The site, and an additional field to the west, was the subject of a planning application (172165) for "70 dwellings". This application was refused in April 2019 the reasons for refusal relating to landscape and visual matters being:

**Reason 1:** *The proposed development would result in an unsustainable pattern of development by reason of the creation of a new unplanned large housing estate in the countryside which is unconnected and unrelated to any existing defined settlements and is located in a settlement separation area, substantially eroding the physical and visual gap between existing villages. The proposal is contrary to spatial objectives of the development plan and policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6, CP9, CP11, CP17 and CP18 of the Core Strategy, CC01, CC02 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD, Barkham Village Design Statement and sections 2, 4, 8, 12 and 15 of the NPPF.* (author's underlining)

**Reason 2:** *The proposed development will have a detrimental and urbanising impact on the landscape and the character and appearance of the area by reason of the size and scale of the proposal; the rural setting; the erosion of the separation between existing settlements and removal of important landscape features, contrary to policies CP1, CP3, CP9, CP11 and CP18 of the Core Strategy, CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD, Barkham Village Design Statement, WBC Landscape Character Assessment and section 12 & 15 of the NPPF.* (author's underlining)

**Reason 3:** *The proposal fails to demonstrate the quantum of development is achievable on the site by reason of the uncharacteristic and urbanising grain and layout of the indicative plans which would be contrary to the character and appearance of*

*the locality and the removal or impediment of important landscape and ecological features that include mature protected trees, areas of woodland, native hedge rows and a drainage ditch/stream. The development is contrary to policies CP1, CP3, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, CC01, CC02, CC03, TB08 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD, Barkham Village Design Statement and section 12 & 15 of the NPPF.*

**Reason 5:** *The proposed development will have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area by reason of the felling of protected trees & woodland and other landscape features which have a positive contribution to the area. The quantum of development proposed will leave inadequate space to incorporate effective landscaping and will result in residential plots being in close proximity to mature trees and hedgerows which will result in pressure to fell or heavily prune the trees. The proposed development is contrary to Core Strategy policy CP1 and CP3, MDD Local Plan policy CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21, The Borough Design Guide SPD, WBC Landscape Character Assessment, The British Standard 5837:2012, sections 7, 12 and 15 of the NPPF and section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act.* (author's underlining)

- 1.5 The author of this report recognises the references to the NPPF are out of date as the relevant NPPF is now the December 2024 revision.
- 1.6 The landscape and visual impacts referred to later in the report are assessed separately in accordance with good practice<sup>1</sup>. They may be defined as follows:
  - (I). Landscape character: impacts on the landscape or townscape may arise where the character of areas with a particular scenic quality or merit are modified by the development.
  - (II). Landscape features: impacts on landscape features such as hedgerows, trees or landform may arise where features are lost or substantially modified as a result of the development.
  - (III). Visual amenity: impacts on visual amenity may arise where features intrude into or obstruct the views of people, or where there is some other qualitative change to the view seen.

1

Best practice guidelines for landscape and visual assessment include:

- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment – October 2014. Christine Tudor, Natural England.
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013) Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (GLVIA3).

1.7 It should be stressed that the resulting effects can be changes for the better (positive effects) as well as changes for the worse (adverse effects). A methodology is attached as Appendix A, the tables outlining levels of sensitivity and effects are also included as Figures 2a-2f.

1.8 The baseline landscape and visual appraisal was carried out through a desk study of relevant documents and by field study work undertaken during February 2025. The purpose of the site visit was to establish:

- The content and quality of the site's existing landscape features.
- The character of the site and its immediate environs.
- The site's visual relationship with its surroundings.
- The contribution of the site to the wider landscape.
- The people most likely to be affected by development on all or part of the site.

| Landscape Sensitivity |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Sensitivity           | Typical Examples  |
| Very High             | <p>Highly valued landscapes, which by their nature would be unable to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes of national significance, likely to be recognised through formal designation e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, National Landscapes or containing attributes of these recognised landscapes</li> <li>Landscapes with highly valued elements/characteristics, possibly rare, in good condition which make a strong positive contribution to the landscape character and sense of place and could not be replaced or would take some considerable time to replace e.g. mature woodlands or trees.</li> <li>Areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>Highly valued landscapes which makes a very important contribution to/plays a strong role in the approach to and/or setting of a designated and/or recognised historic settlement or heritage asset.</li> </ul>  |
| High                  | <p>Highly valued landscapes, which by their nature would be less able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes of national or regional significance, not in the highest condition, which may be recognised through formal designation e.g. National Parks, National Landscapes, Local Landscape Designation or containing attributes of these recognised landscapes</li> <li>Highly valued landscape elements/characteristics (mature woodlands and/or trees) in fair condition or moderately valued elements (eg trees that contribute less positively to the local landscape) in good condition that make a positive contribution to local character and sense of place and that would take some considerable time to replace.</li> <li>Areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>Highly valued landscapes which makes an important contribution to/plays a strong role in the approach to and/or setting of a recognised historic settlement or heritage asset.</li> </ul> |
| Medium                | <p>Landscapes, which by their nature would be partly able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes which are unlikely to be nationally designated, but may be locally designated.</li> <li>Moderately valued landscape elements/characteristics in fair condition, which are replaceable but may take some time.</li> <li>Areas containing some features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations</li> <li>Valued landscapes which makes a moderately important contribution to/plays a moderate role in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.</li> </ul>   |
| Low                   | <p>Landscapes, which by their nature would be more able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes which are unlikely to be designated</li> <li>Landscape with commonplace elements/characteristics in poor condition, which may be easily replaceable or repaired.</li> <li>Areas containing few, if any, features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>Landscapes which make a minor contribution to/plays some role in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.</li> </ul>  |
| Very Low              | <p>Landscapes, which by their nature would be able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes which are not designated.</li> <li>Landscapes with elements/characteristics in poor condition and may be discordant, derelict or in decline and which may be easily replaced.</li> <li>Areas containing few, if any, features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>Landscapes which do not make a contribution to/play a part in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.</li> </ul>   |

**Figure 1a - Landscape Sensitivity Criteria**

| Magnitude of Effect - Landscape |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Very High                       | <p>The proposed development would lead to an extensive or widespread, irreversible complete alteration of existing landscape character/elements with large scale new features and elements.</p> <p>The addition of new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing highly conspicuous and uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p> |
| High                            | <p>The proposed development would lead to a notable but not extensive change to existing landscape character/elements over a wide area or an intensive change over a more limited area.</p> <p>The addition of new but uncharacteristic prominent features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing highly uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p>                       |
| Medium                          | <p>The proposed development would lead to a partial change to existing landscape character/elements which may be partially reversible.</p> <p>The addition of new but uncharacteristic noticeable features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing moderately uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p>   |
| Low                             | <p>The proposed development would lead to a small or relatively localised change in the existing landscape character/elements</p> <p>The addition of new but uncharacteristic perceptible features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing perceptibly uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p>  |
| Very Low                        | A negligible, potentially reversible change in existing landscape character or landscape elements.   |
| None                            | No Change  |

Figure 1b - Landscape Magnitude of Effect

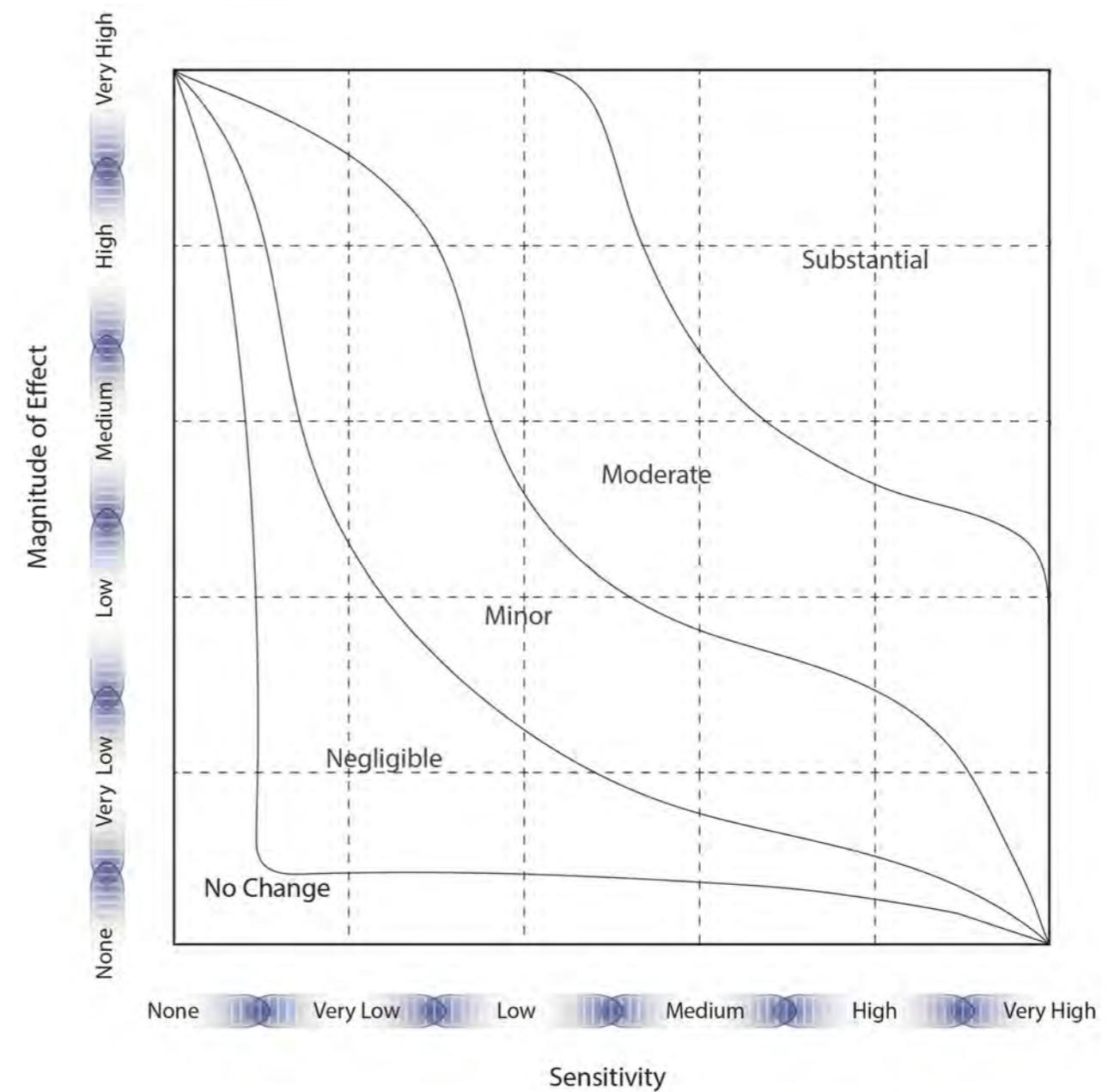


Figure 1c - Significance of Landscape Effects

| Visual Sensitivity |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Sensitivity        | Typical Examples   |
| Very High          | <p>Viewers who are very sensitive/highly attuned to their surroundings with a prolonged intact viewing opportunity of the landscape. Views are likely to be of internationally or nationally designated landscapes or heritage assets. Views may be recognised in art or literature and noted in guide books: Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitors to recognised viewpoints/look-out points such as hillforts</li> <li>Visitors to heritage assets of which visual setting is a key component.</li> <li>Walkers/Riders using national trails through nationally designated landscapes</li> <li>Motorists using recognised 'scenic' routes.</li> <li>Residents whose properties have been orientated to take advantage of a view, or for whom the view comprises a key component of their daily lives</li> </ul> |
| High               | <p>Viewers who are highly attuned to their surroundings but their interest and viewing opportunity may not be prolonged but broken or interrupted. Views may be of nationally or locally designated landscape or of heritage assets and may be noted in local guide books and recognised in art and literature. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walkers/Riders using national trails or popular footpaths/Bridleways</li> <li>Visitors to some heritage assets</li> <li>Motorists travelling through high quality landscapes</li> <li>Local residents who may be able to see the view from rooms normally occupied during waking hours.</li> </ul>  |
| Medium             | <p>Viewers with a moderate awareness of their surroundings and whose occupation is such that while they may appreciate the view, it would not be fundamental to the satisfaction of the viewers' activity. Views may be of a locally designated landscape or a heritage asset, but it is unlikely to figure in guidebooks, art or literature. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less well used public footpaths/Bridleways</li> <li>Travellers on local roads through a moderate quality landscape</li> <li>Local residents with views from rooms not normally occupied during waking hours</li> </ul>  |
| Low                | <p>Viewers with a passing awareness and limited interest in their surroundings. Views unlikely to be of designated landscape or noted in guidebooks, art or literature. Views may have a number of overt or intrusive elements. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People engaged in outdoor recreation/sport which does not depend upon the appreciation of the view.</li> <li>People at their place of work</li> <li>Travellers on fast moving roads</li> </ul>  |
| Very Low           | <p>Viewers with a passing awareness and limited interest/focus in their surroundings. Views not designated or noted in guidebooks, art or literature. Views of a degraded landscape with a number of overt or intrusive elements: Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People at their place of work</li> <li>Travellers on fast moving roads with only transient views</li> </ul>   |

**Figure 1d - Visual Sensitivity Criteria**

| Magnitude of Effect - Visual |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Very High                    | <p>The proposed development would result in a complete alteration to the characteristics of the view such that post development the existing view would be completely changed.</p> <p>The addition of new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/or replacement of existing highly conspicuous and uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p>  |
| High                         | <p>The proposed development would result in a change in the view such that it becomes the key influence and focus in the view</p> <p>The addition of new and obvious uncharacteristic features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p>   |
| Medium                       | <p>The proposed development is clearly visible in the view and forms an important but not defining element of the view. The feature may integrate partially.</p> <p>The addition of new and noticeable uncharacteristic features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/or replacement of existing moderately uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p>   |
| Low                          | <p>The proposed development is visible, but forms a small element and minor alteration in the view and integrates well with existing landscape/ features.</p> <p>Slight change to the existing character or features and elements;</p> <p>The addition of new but perceptible uncharacteristic features and elements (adverse change);</p> <p>The removal, restoration and/or replacement of existing perceptibly uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).</p> |
| Very Low                     | The proposed development may go unnoticed as a small element in the view, or is not readily visible.  |
| None                         | No change   |

Figure 1e - Visual Magnitude of Effect

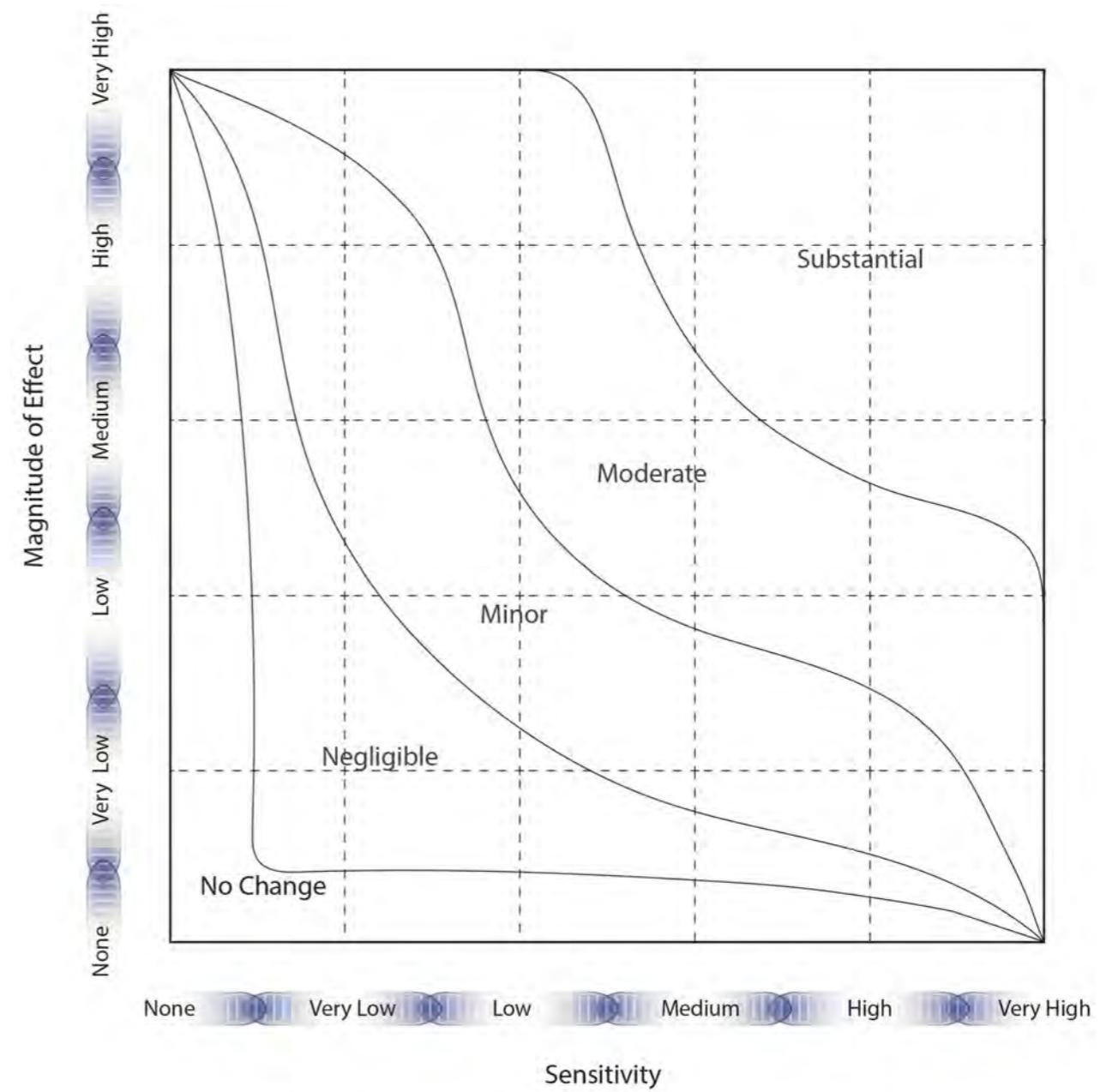


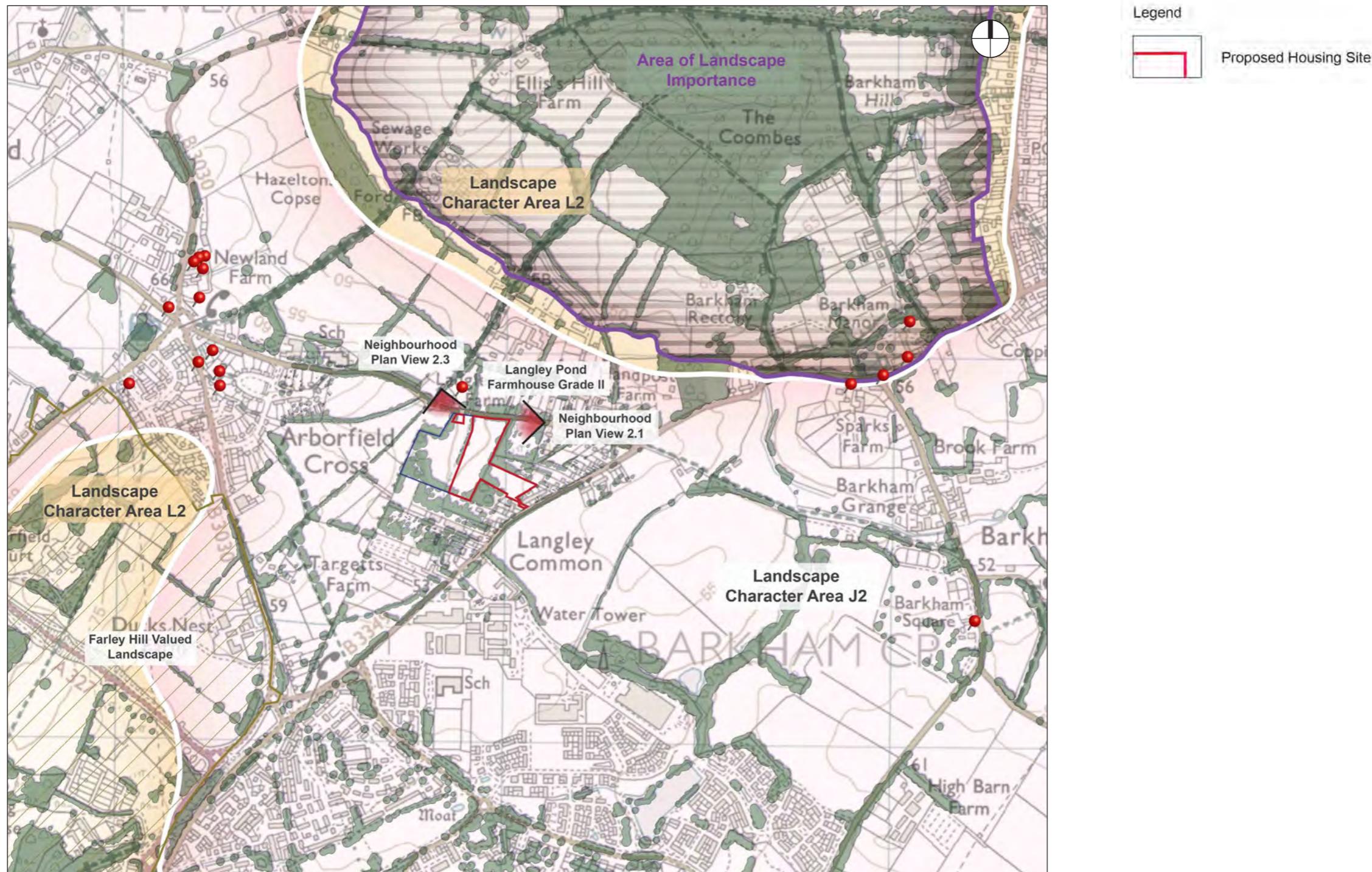
Figure 1f - Significance of Visual Effects



# Section 2

## **Landscape Planning Context**

Figure 3 - Landscape Planning Context



## 2.0 Landscape Planning Context

2.1 The site lies within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC). The relevant planning policy is contained within The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – (December 2024), the Wokingham Core Strategy (adopted January 2010), the Wokingham Borough Development Plan Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014) and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2019).

### National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

2.2 NPPF Section 2: Achieving sustainable development states that:

*“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

*c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

2.3 NPPF Section 12: Achieving well-designed and beautiful places states:

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

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience. (Para 135)*

It continues in paragraph 136:

*“Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.”*

and goes on to state in paragraph 139:

*“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:*

- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.*

2.4 NPPF Section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment states:

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

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to,*

*being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*

*f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.” (Para 187)*

it continues:

*“Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental 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”. (Para 188)*

### The adopted Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Core Strategy (January 2010)

2.5 The following are the pertinent landscape policy extracts from the WBC Core Strategy

2.6 Policy CP1: Sustainable Development states:

*Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:*

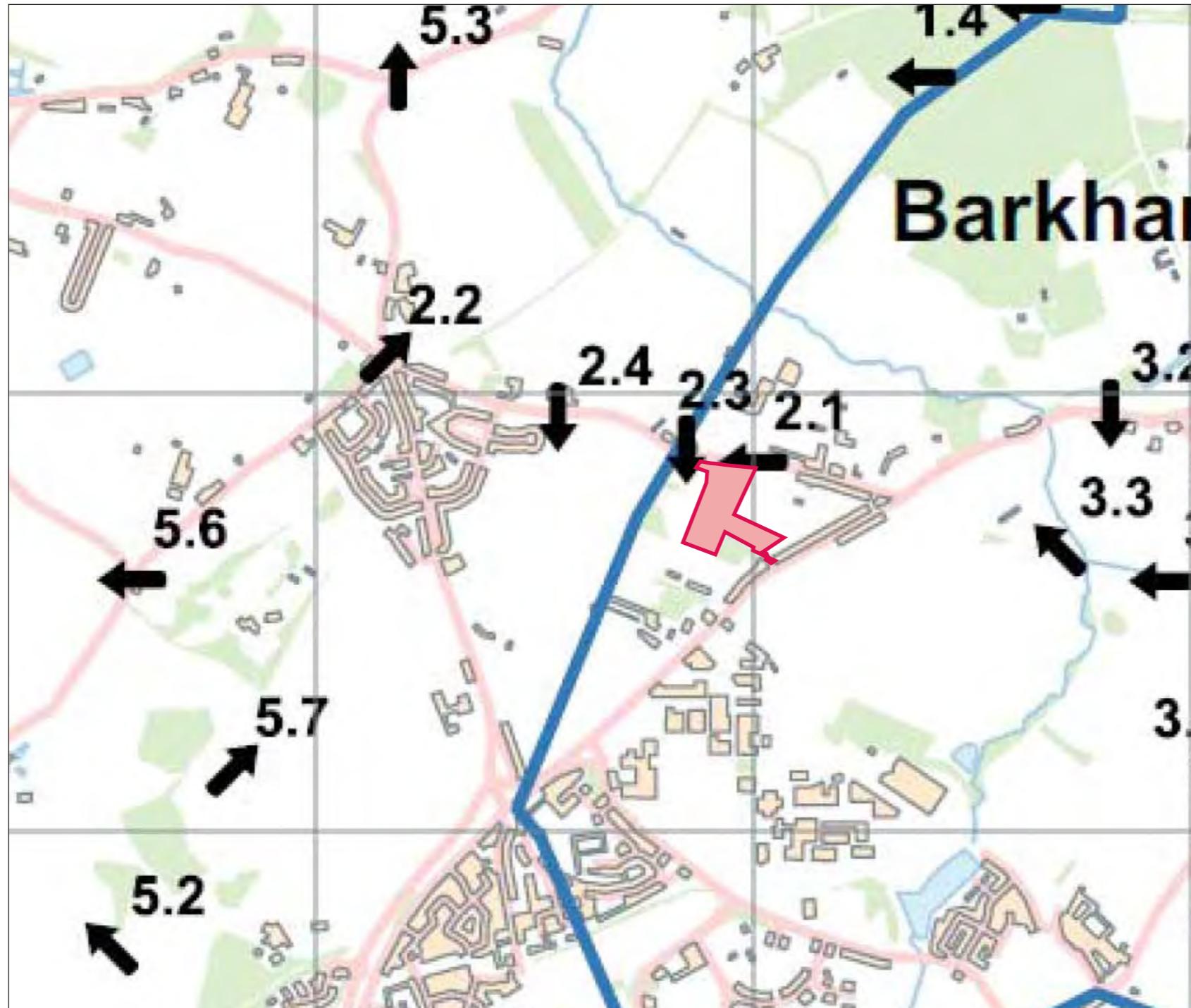
- 1) Maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment;*
- 10) Provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes;*

2.7 Policy CP3: General Principles for development states:

*Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:*

- a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
- b) Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
- c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*
- f) Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;*
- g) Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65 ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space;*

Figure 4 - Extract from the Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan Appendix III Views & Vistas



View 2.1 "Tree Arch in School Road" (page 12 of 25)



View 2.3 "Fields to the south of School Road" (page 12 of 25)

The Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (February 2014)

**2.8 Policy CC01 – Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development states:**

1. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

**2.9 Policy CC02: Development Limits:**

1. Development limits for each settlement are defined on the Policies Map.

**2.10 Policy TB21: Landscape Character states:**

1. Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.
2. Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

**2.11 Policy IRS2: Recognise, respect and preserve identity and rural setting of settlements (page 21)**

Development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, with regard to:

- a) Scale and form of the development
- b) Density of the development
- c) Tree and hedgerow planting that reinforces and reflects local biodiversity in the parishes and
- d) The distinctive character of the varied landscapes of the area and outstanding views.

The Neighbourhood Plan refers to The Barkham Village Design Statement (annex II) and the Landscape b& Important Views (Annex V)

The Barkham Village Design Statement: Design Guidelines (Jan 2007) states:

**2.12 Impact on Surroundings (page 14):**

1. Development should have regard to, and have no detrimental effect on, the surrounding landscape. Care needs to be taken to set buildings in their space to allow them to blend into the landscape rather than to dominate or interrupt the landscape

**2.13 Position & Scale of Buildings (page 15):**

5. Building lines should continue to be set back from the road. This adds considerably to the rural character of the parish

**2.14 Trees & Boundaries (page 18):**

19. All trees should wherever possible be retained and cared for. New tree planting should be encouraged so that the leafy appearance of Barkham is conserved and enhanced. In particular locally native broadleaf species should be planted such as field maple (*Acer campestre*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), myrobalan/cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and oak (*Quercus robur*).

**2.15 Views (Annex V, page 5)**

In addition to Bearwood Park and The Coombes, there are many other wooded areas and copses across the two Parishes that are fragments and reminders of earlier times when the area was more heavily wooded before being cleared for cultivation.

Key to maintaining the rural nature of the area, the quality of the environment and many of the views, is to retain the separation areas around the individual settlements within the two parishes and other neighbouring parishes. Those outside the current development limits are protected by Core Policy CP11 but are under threat.

The Landscape Strategy for the Arborfield and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay (J2) area recognises the importance of these areas between settlements where it is stated that '... the aim is to integrate new development into its landscape setting, and retain the open and rural character of the landscape between settlements'.

The views shown in Appendix III have been grouped to broadly follow the landscape types shown in Appendix II. They have been selected from over 70 submitted by local residents as being significantly important and representative, thereby:

1. Capturing the diversity and ambience of this landscape as described in the 2019 Landscape Character Assessment.
2. Emphasising the importance of maintaining settlement separation.
3. Defining the character of the area.

**2.16 Views 2.1 and 2.3 taken along School Road are relevant to the site. The views are put forward in the assessment as being of relevance to Landscape Character Area J2.**

**2.17 View 2.1 is a view west of the site looking eastwards along the treed School Lane. The site is largely concealed in this view by the hedgerow and trees along the southern side of School Road**

2.18 View 2.3 is a view afforded pedestrians and motorists as they pass the site and includes a view looking south into the site. This is noted in the assessment as representative of an "open countryside view" (page 12 of Annex V).



# Section 3

## **The Baseline Situation**

Figure 5 - Existing Site Conditions





### 3.0 The Baseline Situation

- 3.1 The site sits alongside and to the west of Langley Common (village) between School Road and Barkham Road (B3349) and to the west of houses that face onto Barkham Road. Langley Common is referred to as a village in the WBC Local Plan and the Barkham Village Design Statement. The village is located on the eastern side of the Loddon Valley. Arborfield Cross is situated approximately 0.75km to the west, Arborfield Green approximately 1km to the south-west and Barkham approximately 2km to the north-east.
- 3.2 The site may be broken down into two distinct fields (see Figure 5: Existing Site Conditions):
  1. Field A: A larger field accessed off School Road, (circa 2.85 hectares)
  2. Field B: A smaller, narrower rectilinear field adjoins the School Lane field extending eastwards to the rear gardens of a number of properties facing on to Langley Common Road (circa 0.7 hectares). This field is accessed via a gateway and track off Langley Common or through the School Road field.
- 3.3 Both fields have some large and attractive trees along their boundaries. These trees have been the subject a tree survey undertaken by ACD Environmental, dated February 2025. The predominant tree species is oak interspersed with ash and an understorey of hedgerow species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and elder. A significant proportion of the boundary trees are considered to be A and B grade with many having “40+” years of “expected remaining contribution”. The trees within and around the site are protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 1515/2016 Reference G1, G2, & G4 and two woodland areas; W1 to the west and W2 to the east. (see Viewpoints A – D)
- 3.4 A seasonal (winterbourne) stream runs northwards through the larger, School Road, field before entering a culvert several metres before School Road before emerging in the field north of School Road. The watercourse is heavily overgrown along most of its passage through the field.



Character Viewpoint A: View looking from the northwestern corner of the housing site to the attractive line of oak trees along the site's eastern boundary



Character Viewpoint B: View looking from the western proposed BNG/nature conservation field eastwards. The roofscape of houses along Langley Common Road are just discernible.



Character Viewpoint C: View looking north to east from the southern boundary of the proposed housing site.



Character Viewpoint D: View from the southeastern corner of the site looking northwards to School Road

Figure 6 - Historic Maps

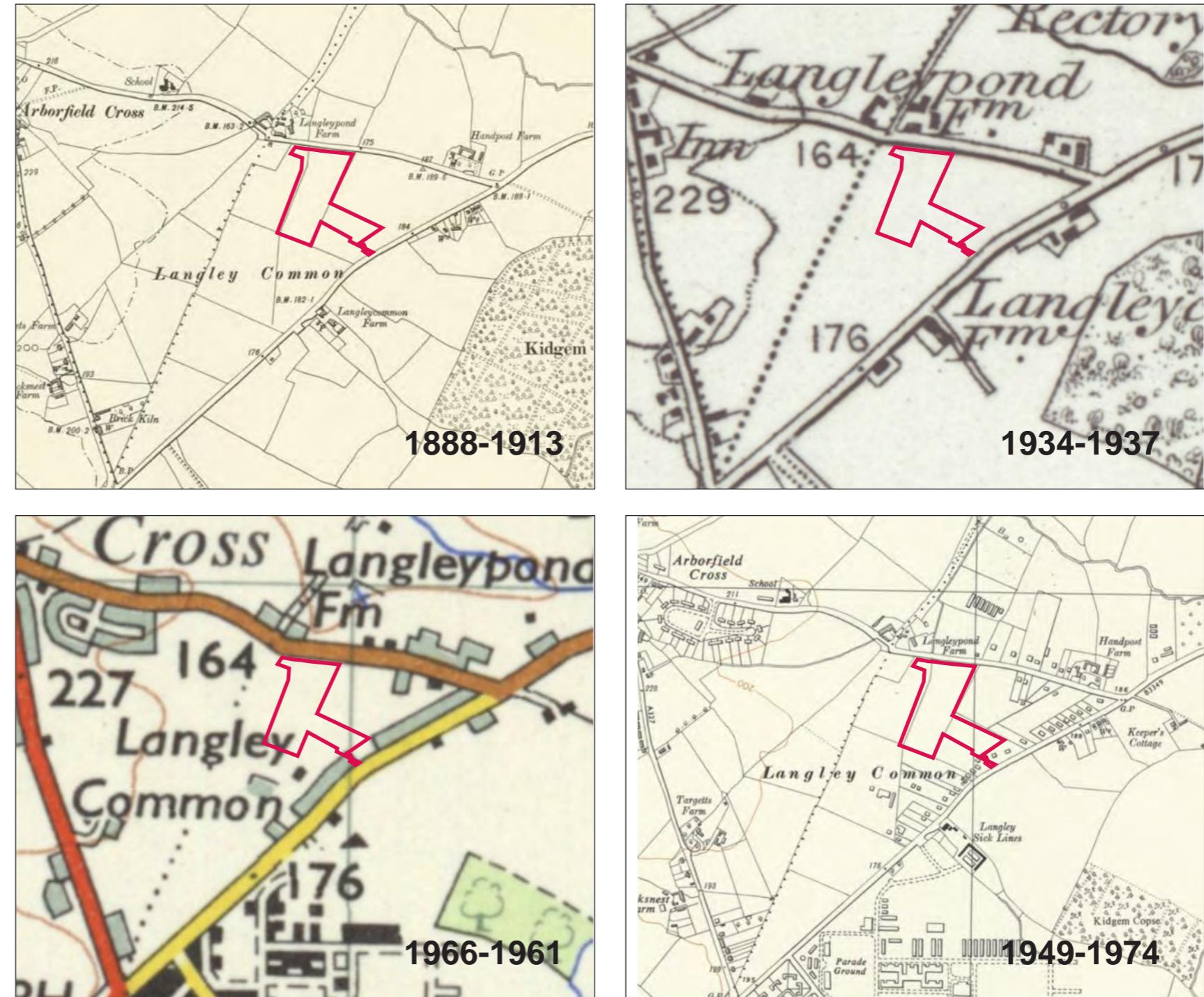


Figure 7 - Local Character

**The Site's Historical Context:**

3.5 Historic maps provided as Figure 6 show the village was initially ribbon development along the B3349 between Barkham/Wokingham and Aborfield Green to the south. Today the parish has a scattered settlement pattern with notable clusters of larger settlements in the form of Aborfield Cross, Aborfield Green and Barkham. Langley Common is something of an oddity in that it is notably smaller than these three larger towns/settlements. An examination of historical maps suggests development arrived in earnest during the inter-war years along both Barkham Road and School Road, slowing notably by the 1960s. Plot sizes appear to be consistent, but the house styles and sizes vary considerably. Today most houses appear to have been extended. Taken together, Langley Common has an attractive character with a myriad of architectural styles. **An interesting development in the last 20-30 years has been the arrival of infill housing development** with notable number of new houses being introduced behind the original houses facing onto School Road. This can be seen along the northern side of School Road with Coringa behind Rickwick and Windrush and The Nook behind Handport Farm and Willow Farm behind Fieldfare and Harvest Cott.

3.6 Another notable change in the character of the landscape during the Twentieth Century has been many of the fields around and to the north of the settlement appear to have been given over to equine use. This can be seen along the western side of Wood Lane and in the fields to the west of Barkham.

**Trees & Hedgerows:**

3.7 As shown in Figures 5 & 7 and the character photographs A to D the area has an attractive treed and wooded character, with tall, mature trees forming the boundaries to the lanes and fields to the north and west of the site. This treed characteristic is noted in the Barkham Village Design statement which, under the section regarding Landscape Character & Wildlife, notes:

*“Native broadleaf trees have always been prominent in the Barkham landscape. Large oak trees are a typical feature along roadsides and field boundaries as well as in gardens. The oaks lining School Road where it approaches Langley Pond Farm are so close that in summer the tree canopy becomes a lofty leafy archway.”*

3.8 Both of the fields which form the site are bounded by tall, mature trees. These trees have been the subject a tree survey undertaken by ACD Environmental dated February 2025. The predominant tree species is oak interspersed with ash and an understorey of hedgerow species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and elder. A significant proportion of the boundary trees are considered to be A and B grade with many having **“40+” years of “expected remaining contribution”**. The trees are protected by a TPO.



Figure 3 - Landscape Planning Context



3.9 An examination of the Google Earth satellite photograph and the historic Maps suggests tree cover appears to have increased during the Twentieth Century with a number of smaller fields falling out of agricultural use and young woodlands appear to have developed. Two examples of this can be seen to the south of the site in the land behind residential properties facing onto Barkham Road.

#### Landscape Character – National & District Scale

3.10 The site and the surrounding area are situated within the **National Character Area 129 – Thames Basin Heaths**. National Character Areas (NCAs) are, 'areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision making framework for the natural environment'. The character area comprises a large tract of land that extends from Newbury to the west to Woking in the east. Given its scale, it is considered to be of limited relevance/value to this assessment in comparison to the considerably more detailed and finer grained assessment of the county level; Wokingham Landscape Assessment (WLA) (2019).

3.11 In the WLA Langley Common and the site are shown as being situated within LCA J2 **Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay**. The assessment summarises the LCAs characteristics as, "**A gently undulating landscape, principally in agricultural use. Large arable fields bound by hedgerows dominate, with smaller fields of sheep pasture and horse paddocks close to settlements.**" (report highlighted this text as bold). The Key Characteristics of the J2 LCA are noted as:

- **A gently undulating landscape** between 50m and 65m AOD, underlain by London Clay with localised areas of River Terrace Gravels.
- **Wooded context** provided by characteristic mature hedgerow and in-field trees, combined with woodland belts, with BAP priority habitats and ancient woodland, and the wooded horizons of the surrounding hills. This creates a loose sense of enclosure.
- **Arable farming dominates, with pasture on higher ground and horse paddocks near settlement.** Fields are large and geometric, bound by fragmented hedgerows supported by post and wire. Fields used for paddocks are often subdivided with horse tape.

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-07/Wokingham%20Borough%20LCA%20Part%202%20Areas%20J-K.pdf> (page 12)

3.12 This assessment broadly concurs with this analysis although for the purposes of this assessment a number of additional characteristics seen within the locality are considered of relevance. These include:

- *Whilst most of this LCA is dominated by arable fields, most of which are medium and large rectilinear fields the fields between Arborfield Cross, Arborfield Green the woodlands west of Barkham are notably smaller scaled and irregular shaped with notable lines of mature trees forming their field boundaries.*
- *Historic maps indicate the historic field pattern remains largely intact albeit satellite photographs suggest arable farming has diminished notably in the last few decades and many of the fields have been given over to equine uses. These equine uses are subdividing the fields. This is evident in the fields south east of Arborfield Cross and in the fields west of Wood Lane.*
- *In addition to the reduction of arable farming many of the smaller fields, particularly those around the edges of Langley Common have fallen out of active agricultural use altogether and scrub and self-sown woodlands have started to emerge. This is evident when examining the satellite photographs from 2003 to 2025 (see Figure 7).*

3.13 Overall the area of LCA J2 which adjoins the site is considered in good condition and contains some fine mature tree lined field boundaries which make a positive contribution to the local area. Whilst the area adjoining and surrounding the site is not designated as being of national, regional or local significance it is nevertheless an attractive landscape with some valued elements (the mature oak trees along the field boundaries). The attractive qualities of the landscape are recognised and highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan and the value of two views along School Road (views 2.2 & 2.2) contribute to the setting of Langley Common. However the site and its surroundings are not identified as being within a Valued Landscape in the Woking Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024). In consideration of this the area surrounding the site is considered on Medium value. With regards Susceptibility the LCA J2 around the site has a limited visual and character interrelationship given the rolling nature of the landscape and the cumulative screening and filtering role of intervening hedgerow, trees and woodland. In view of this the surrounding LCA J2 is considered to have a Low susceptibility to the change envisaged. On balance its sensitivity is considered **Medium**.

#### The Site:

3.14 The site may be divided into two quite different character areas. The main body of the site off School Lane has a countryside character with some attractive mature trees along its boundaries (principally oaks). In contrast the western finger of land behind the houses facing on to Barkham Road (B3349) (Nos 22-30) has a notable urban context with houses and gardens forming three of its four boundaries. As a result of the wealth of trees and tree lined hedgerows both of these areas (the site) have a limited landscape and visual interrelationship with the surrounding countryside to the south, west and north and the urban edge a short distance to the west. The principal value of the site lies in the fact that it is countryside and the mature attractive oak trees which run around the field edges.

3.15 With regards value the site is not particularly rare, it is not a Valued Landscape and its contribution to the wider landscape is limited by the areas topography and tree cover. Nevertheless the site is attractive and it plays a role in the setting to Langley Common along School Lane. The site is in good condition and has some attractive mature trees around its edges. In consideration of this the site is considered to be of Medium and its susceptibility to the change envisaged is High. On balance its sensitivity is considered **High**.

#### The adjoining Langley Common residential area:

3.16 As noted earlier the village was initially ribbon development along the B3349 between Barkham/Wokingham and Arborfield Green to the south. An examination of historical maps suggests development arrived in earnest during the inter war years along both Barkham Road and School Road, slowing notably by the 1960s. Plot sizes appear to be consistent but the houses styles and sizes vary considerably. Today most houses appear to have been extended. Taken together Langley Common has an attractive character with a myriad of architectural styles. An interesting development in the last 20-30 years has been the arrival of infill housing development with notable number of new houses being introduced behind the original houses facing onto School Road.

3.17 The village does include a number of Listed Buildings (insert) but the greater part of the village consists of late Twentieth Century housing and the settlement is not covered by a Conservation Area designation.

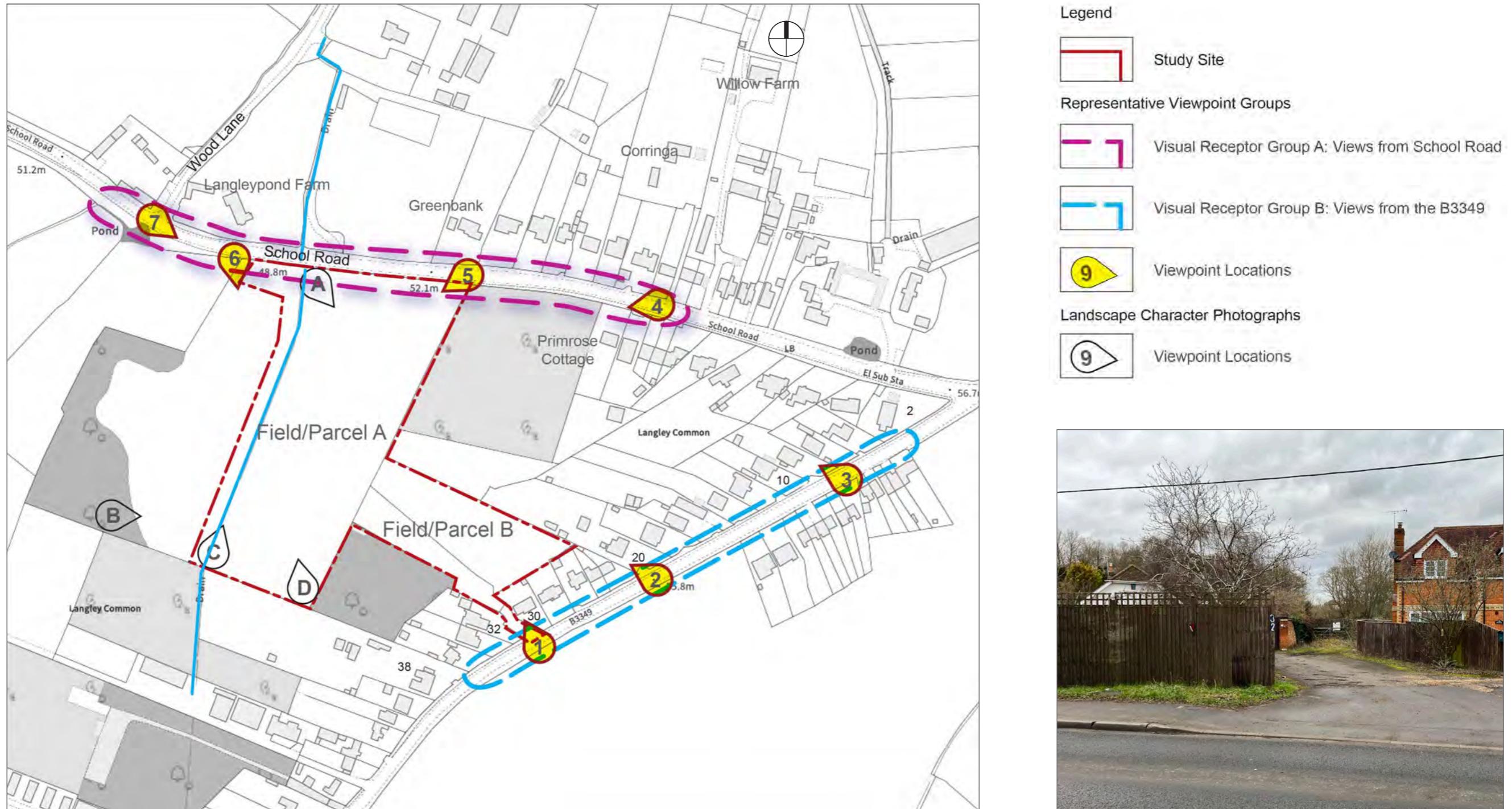
3.18 The village is considered to be in fair/good condition and of low/moderate scenic quality. The houses are in good condition but are not of any commonplace and would easily be replaced. On balance the value of the settlement is considered Low. With regards susceptibility the change envisaged would be one of setting and no buildings would change. It is considered the village would be able to accommodate the proposed development without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. In consideration of the above the existing village's susceptibility to the change envisaged is considered Low and the resulting Sensitivity **Low**.

#### Landscape Character Baseline Summary

3.19 Long Langley is situated in **National Character Area 129 – Thames Basin Heaths**. Given its scale, it is considered to be of limited relevance/value to this assessment in comparison to the considerably more detailed and finer grained assessment of the county level; Wokingham Landscape Assessment (WLA) (2019). In the WLA Langley Common and the site are shown as being situated within **LCA J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay**.

3.20 The landscape around the village has seen some notable changes over the last 20-30 years with active farming falling away and in the place of both arable and pasture many of the fields around the settlements such as Langley Common are seeing the land being changed to equine uses. Along the northern and north eastern edges of Langley Common a number of fields have also fallen out of use and young self-sown woodlands have grown up in their place. The landscape has retained its historical field pattern and the attractive tree lined field hedgerows. Whilst the landscape around Langley Common is not identified as a Valued Landscape in the Woking Valued Landscapes Assessment the landscape nevertheless is considered to be of some aesthetic value and its sensitivity to change is considered **Medium**. The site shares these same characteristics and its value in the setting of the settlement is recognised in the Neighbourhood Plan which identifies two views of Value along School Lane. In light of the site's high susceptibility to the change envisaged its sensitivity is considered to be **High**. The adjoining urban edge is a typical urban area and its sensitivity is considered **Low**.

Figure 8 - Viewpoint Locations



Viewpoint 1: View afforded motorists passing the proposed cycle/pedestrian entrance on Langley Common Road.



Viewpoint 2: View looking towards #22 & #20 Langley Common Road



Viewpoint 3: View looking west between #8 & #10 Langley Common Road

#### Visual Baseline

3.21 The photographs within this report were taken in February 2025 when the trees and hedgerows were without leaf and as such they are considered to show the landscape in its most open state. During the summer months the degree of intervisibility would be notably lower.

3.22 Visual impact relates to the changes that the development would have upon views as experienced by the public. The people within the study area who may be affected by a change in view or in visual amenity are referred to as 'visual receptors'. Where possible the relative number of people who experience a view or series of views are noted in the text. It is not practical to consider every viewpoint and therefore those selected for inclusion as part of this assessment are considered representative of those available to the public looking towards the site from the surrounding area. They range in distance from approximately 30 metres to 850 metres which is a relatively small visual envelope.

3.23 In accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (2013), Chapter 6, Paragraph 6.19, viewpoints selected/proposed fall into the following three groups:

##### Representative Viewpoints:

Viewpoints selected to represent the experience of different types of visual receptors, when it would not be appropriate, or proportional, for large numbers of viewpoints to be included individually and where significant effects are unlikely to differ, for example:

- The views of users of particular public rights of way
- The views of users of a particular road

##### Specific Viewpoints:

Viewpoints chosen because they are 'key' and sometimes promoted viewpoints within the landscape, including, for example, specific local visitor attractions, viewpoints in areas that are particularly noteworthy visually and/or recreational amenity locations such as landscape with statutory designations or viewpoints with particular cultural landscape associations.

##### Illustrative Viewpoints:

Viewpoints chosen specifically to demonstrate a particular effect or specific issues, which might, for example, be the restricted visibility of certain locations.

#### Group A – Views from Langley Common Road

Receptors: Motorists, Pedestrians

3.24 Langley Common Road is a busy (40mph) arterial road between Barkham and the A327 at Aborfield Cross. The road as it passes through Langley Common has a footpath on just the northern side. Viewpoints 1-3 are considered representative.

#### Viewpoint 1 – View looking northwest from the road outside of No34 Langley Common Road

(approximately 30 metres from the western boundary of the proposed development)

3.25 Viewpoint 1 shows the view from afforded motorists and pedestrians as they pass the driveway gap between Nos 32 and 34 Langley Common Road. The overall impression both motorists and pedestrians have are of a linear/ribbon of houses running along Langley Common Road and there is no appreciation of the presence of the site behind and to the west of the houses.

#### Viewpoint 2 – View looking northwest from the road outside of No26 Langley Common Road

(approximately 30 metres from the western boundary of the proposed development)

3.26 Viewpoint 2 shows the view afforded motorists as they pass No26 Langley Common Road. As with viewpoint 1 the overall impression for both motorists and pedestrians is one of travelling along a road with a linear/ribbon of houses running along it. The houses and their garden planting, fencing, garages etc. conceal views to the site and the countryside beyond. The only elements of the site that are visible are the upper tree canopies of trees around and within the site.

#### Viewpoint 3 – View looking northwest from the road outside of Nos 8 & 10 Langley Common Road

(approximately 200 metres from the eastern parcel/area of the site and 300 metres from the northern parcel/area of the site)

3.27 Viewpoint 3 shows the view afforded motorists as they pass Nos 8 & 10 Langley Common Road. As with viewpoint 1 & 2 the overall impression for both motorists and pedestrians is one of travelling along a road with a linear/ribbon of houses running along it. At this more northern location (than viewpoints 1 & 2) there are a number of gardens extending back from School Road which filter and screen views to the site.

#### Group A Summary

3.28 This viewpoint group considers views afforded motorists and pedestrians travelling in both directions along Langley Common Road. In all of the views the intervening houses and their garden planting and structures heavily filter if not block views to the site. These receptors have no appreciation of the site's presence. The view is considered typical of most street scenes in the area with low scenic quality and the Value of the view is considered Low. With regards susceptibility both pedestrians and motorists would most likely have their focus of attention on the road in front of them with little or no reason to look obliquely towards the site. The susceptibility of these receptors is considered Low and the resulting Sensitivity 'Low'.



Viewpoint 4: View looking west along School Road towards the site



Viewpoint 5: View from School Road at the north eastern corner of the site.

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**Group B - Views from School Road**

Receptors: Motorists and pedestrians travelling along the road

3.29 School Road runs between Langley Common and Arborfield Cross. The road is unusually quiet as it has been blocked off from through traffic with bollards blocking the route immediately west of Wood Lane. As a result the road only serves local traffic, i.e. residents and businesses along Wood Lane (which is also a dead end road).

**Viewpoint 4 – View afforded motorists approaching the site from the east.**

Receptors: Motorists & Pedestrians

(approximately 70 metres from the site's eastern boundary)

3.30 Viewpoint 4 is as the road passes Rosewood approximately taken approximately 140 metres from the site's eastern boundary with School Lane. This view was selected as it is the first point at which the large oak trees along the site's southern boundary come into clear view and it is thought that during the winter there may be some filtered views to the roofscape of the northern most part of the development.

**Viewpoint 5 – View afforded motorist as they travel past the north-eastern corner of the site**

Receptors: Motorists and pedestrians

3.31 Viewpoint 5 is taken at the north eastern corner of the site between the gateways to Greenbankk and Sherwood (the two western most houses on School Road). This is the first point at which all of the northern parcel/area of the site comes into view. The site gently rises up to its south western boundary where trees and vegetation along and beyond this boundary preclude views to the wider countryside (the warehouses/sheds at Field Farm behind 48-50 Langley Common Road)



Viewpoint 6: View from School Road at the north western corner of the field which is to be managed for BNG/nature conservation value. The permissive car park would be in the foreground of this view.



Viewpoint 7: View from the junction of School Road and Wood Lane approximately 100 metres from the proposed housing site.

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**Viewpoint 6 – View afforded motorists and pedestrians as they travel past the north western corner of the site.**

Receptors: Motorists & Pedestrians

3.32 Viewpoint 6 shows the first clear view of the site afforded motorists and pedestrians approaching Langley Common from the west. At this point there are clear views between the boundary trees into the site and south up to the site's southern boundary. Boundary vegetation blocks views of any note beyond the site's southern edge.

**Viewpoint 7 – View afforded motorists and pedestrians approaching the site from the west (junction of Wood Lane and School Lane).**

Receptors: Motorists & Pedestrians travelling east along School Road

3.33 Viewpoint 7 is taken at the junction of Wood Lane and School Lane and shows the first view afforded motorists of the site as they turn on to School Lane approximately 100 metres to the northwest of the site. The view demonstrates that during both the winter (and therefore the summer when vegetation would be in leaf) the site is largely hidden by the intervening vegetation.

#### **Group B Summary**

3.34 School Lane is a no through Road and as such it is a relatively quiet road with traffic limited to that visiting the area and properties along Wood Lane (also a no through road). Clear views into the site are limited by intervening hedgerows, trees and garden fencing to the stretch of School Lane which runs alongside the site. This stretch measures approximately 150 metres. As receptors pass the site they are afforded attractive views under the boundary trees into the site south to the northern parcel's southern boundary. The smaller eastern parcel/area of the site is not visible. In these views motorists and residents are not afforded more distant views beyond the site boundary.

3.35 For motorists and pedestrians the view is considered to have some local scenic value and as such the value of the view is considered Medium. With regards Susceptibility motorists would be navigating their way along a road with their line of sight curtailed to a degree by its meandering nature so their focus of attention would largely be on the road, with a passing awareness of their surroundings and the site. In consideration of this motorists' susceptibility is considered Medium and their sensitivity **Medium**. Pedestrians would have a longer viewing opportunity and they would be likely to enjoy the view into the field and their susceptibility to change is considered High. On balance their sensitivity is also considered as **Medium**.



# Section 4

## **The Development Proposals**

Figure 9 - Illustrative Landscape Masterplan



## 4.0 The Development Proposals

4.1 As shown in Figure 9, Illustrative Landscape Masterplan, the development proposals include the introduction of up to 27 dwellings on the site, with vehicular access provided off School Road and a supporting pedestrian and cycle access off Langley Common Road. The proposed housing development would occupy the two fields east of the watercourse which flows through the site and the remaining land to the west would be managed for nature conservation enhancement and permissive informal amenity.

**The Landscape Approach:**

4.2 The underlying and lead consideration of the landscape approach has been that the development should respect the site's context and its existing landscape features. To this end, the disposition and orientation of built form and the positioning of the roads have been sited so as to retain the most valued and prominent trees around the site.

4.3 The road layout has been led by landscape considerations and in particular the need to provide an active edge with permissive access to the trees around the site's eastern boundary. Similarly, the houses fronting onto School Lane are set well back from the road with the ground within their root protection areas to be retained under a management company and managed as a wildlife meadow area. This approach retains the trees of most value and only entails the loss of one tree.

4.4 Tree removal within the site is limited to three trees

- A Grade B Oak - Tree 28 situated along the treed boundary which separates the two parcels/areas of land and
- A Grade U Elm – Tree 141 and a grade B Oak – Tree 142 alongside School Road to facilitate the introduction of the entrance road.

It is considered the loss of these three trees would be more than offset by the tree planting that would be provided within the site. In addition the development would bring about a tree management plan and good husbandry works which would provide valued management of the trees around the site.

4.5 The road within the site has been aligned along the eastern side of the site so as to retain the trees along this edge and to ensure the POS under and around the trees is overlooked.

4.6 The suggested configuration of dwellings provides several points at which visitors and residents can walk westwards into the riparian corridor. All of the houses with boundaries onto this riparian corridor are provided with hedgerow and tree planting along their boundaries to help soften the presence of the boundary walls and fences.

4.7 Large stature tree planting is proposed within and round the site to

offset trees lost, to help provide an attractive character to the site complimentary to the areas existing treed character and to enhance the site's nature conservation value.

4.8 The adjoining field to the west of the stream would be managed to enhance its nature conservation value. Circuitous permissive mown and bark mulch paths would be laid out around and across this space for residents and visitors. Of most importance interpretative boards would be provided within and at the entrances to the space explaining and illustrating why access is permissive and what target flora and fauna species the area is being managed to enhance.

### Management of the landscape proposals:

4.9 Subject to further discussions with officers at the council it is suggested the development would also bring forward a Landscape & Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) for the stream and the field to the west. It is thought the stream would benefit from careful peeling back of scrub and hedgerow trees which have self-sown over and round the stream and now overly shadows the watercourse. It is proposed that the details of this removal, replanting management and the programme of these works would be agreed as part of the Discharge of Conditions.

4.10 The project masterplanners and drainage consultants propose surface water (SuDS) are directed to subterranean crates and then an infill ditch.

### The western side of the development:

4.11 Subject to discussions with the planning authority the management of the nature conservation area west of the stream would be delivered by means of a 106 Agreement.

### Nature Conservation Value

4.12 The project ecologists Gavia environmental have noted the project would bring forward an overall policy compliant nature improvement (BNG Requirements).

### Management of the landscape proposals

4.13 It is suggested the delivery and management of the site landscaping and the wildflower meadow area to the west (the 106 area) would be agreed with the council as part of a Landscape & Ecological Management Plan which would be the subject of a Condition.



# Section 5

## **Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the Proposals**

5.1 The purpose of mitigation is to avoid, reduce and, where possible, remedy or offset any adverse impact on the environment arising from the proposed development. In terms of landscape and visual impact, mitigation may either be 'in-built' and as such effective from the outset or, as in the case of planting, it may become more effective over time. This appraisal has considered effects at Year 1 and Year 15 to account for the increasing screening effects of proposed planting.

#### Assessment of Landscape Effects – National Scale

5.2 At a national scale, the proposed development is considered unlikely to result in any adverse effects on **National Character Area 129 – Thames Basin Heaths.**, as a result of the relatively small scale of the proposed development.

#### Assessment of Landscape Effects – District Scale

5.3 The more detailed Wokingham Landscape Assessment (WLA) considers the landscape at the district scale. In the WLA Langley Common and the site are shown as being situated within LCA **J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay**. This assessment considers the scale of this assessment to be sufficient for this study's assessment of landscape impacts and resulting effects.

##### The WLA **J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay** – Medium sensitivity

5.4 Relative to the site, this is a large character area. The site sits at the boundary of this area, adjacent to the existing urban edge. The fabric of a small part of this character area would change from an agricultural field to built form, and as such the site itself would experience a significant and irreversible change to its character. However, this is a small element within a large area, and the site is located at the edge of the area, adjacent to the existing urban form of the village. As such, this is judged to constitute a 'small or relatively localised change' to the existing landscape character of this character area, equating to a 'low' magnitude of effect. This would result in a '**Minor adverse**' effect at Year 1. As the boundary planting continues to mature, the visual and landscape interrelationship with the adjoining character area to the north area would continue to decrease, and given the planting strategy, the village interface with the countryside would be enhanced, and the development would bring forward some benefit. Given the loss of the field, it is judged that the effect will remain '**Minor adverse**' into the long term.

##### The adjacent C20 Lower Langley residential area – Low sensitivity

5.5 Given that the site is not located within this character area, it would not experience any changes to its fabric, and any effects would be as a result of changes to its setting. This change would be notable in two areas. Firstly, the change would be that seen/found to the setting

and character of the village along School Lane. Secondly, there would be the change to the character of the residential area given the arrival of development to tin the field to the rear of Nos 22-30 Langley Common Road. With regards School Lane the development would during the construction period introduce traffic movements and construction activities and noise which would be a partial uncharacteristic adverse change. The change would be limited to a degree given the frontage houses and construction activities would mask the bulk of the construction work to thin the main body/area of the site the magnitude of effect on School Lane would be Medium during the construction period falling to Low at Year 1 and beyond. Accordingly the resulting effects would be **Moderate adverse** during the construction period falling to **Minor adverse** once construction activities have ceased. With regards the urban area behind the properties which back onto the site this area would experience a relatively localised change to the residential areas setting, an impact judged to be Low adverse resulting in a **Minor adverse** effect during construction and on in to the long term.

#### The Site – High sensitivity

5.6 The character of the site would experience a significant and irreversible adverse change from an agricultural field to an area of built form. However, all but 3 of the trees would be retained and there would be a modest improvement in the character of the western field which would be managed for nature conservation value. In consideration of this the construction to long term magnitude of effect would be High and the resulting effect would be **Substantial adverse**.

#### Assessment of Landscape Effects –Summary

5.7 The character of the site itself would experience a significant and irreversible adverse change from an agricultural field to an area of built form. Given the site's existing partial urban context and the cumulative filtering and screening effect of woodlands, trees and hedgerows in the landscape surrounding the site the proposed development's landscape and visual interrelationship with the surrounding landscape is limited and weak. As a result of this weak interrelationship the development's effect on the surrounding **J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay** LCA would be **Minor adverse** in the short and long term.

5.8 With regards the existing adjoining village it would not experience any changes to its fabric. The potential significant effects would be limited to **Moderate adverse** on the School Lane setting of the village during the construction period falling to **Minor adverse** once construction activities have ceased.

5.9 The remaining village which backs onto the proposed development area would experience a **Minor adverse** effect given change would be that of modest infill development behind most of these houses.

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## 5.0 Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the Proposals

### Assessment of Visual Effects

5.10 As noted in the LVIA methodology (and GLVIA3) the predicted effects of the development are assessed for each 'Receptor Group' rather than each individual viewpoint. However, if there is a notable variation in views within the receptor group, these are considered within the text/appraisal.

#### Group A – Views from Langley Common Road

Receptors: Motorists & Pedestrians – Low sensitivity

**Viewpoint 1 - View looking northwest from the road outside of No34 Langley Common Road** **View looking east from the junction of School Road with Wood Lane** (approximately 100m from the site).

5.11 The introduction of the proposed development would have no effect on the hedgerow and buildings in this view. During both the winter and summer months it is considered there would be no views of the development from this location.

**Viewpoint 2 - View looking northwest from the road outside of No26 Langley Common Road** **View looking obliquely at the site from the A415 as it runs alongside and past the site**

5.12 During the summer months motorists travelling in both directions along this road have no or heavily filtered views of the site. During the winter months it is thought motorists would have heavily filtered views through to the houses along Standlake Road and the Philip Dennis warehouses beyond. The introduction of the development would have the effect of increasing the quantum of built form and bringing it closer to the viewer. Given the fast nature of the road and that the views are oblique, it is thought this change would be visible, but given the existing urban context and the filtering effect of the intervening vegetation it would form a minor alteration in the view. In the long term the proposed hedgerow planting along the site's southern boundary could screen out all low level views throughout the year albeit during the winter months a minor alteration to the view would remain.

**Viewpoint 3 - View looking northwest from the road outside of Nos 8 & 10 Langley Common Road** **View looking northwest along the A415 from its junction with old Standlake Road** (approximately 165m from the site).

5.13 During the summer months the existing intervening vegetation screens out all views toward the site and, as such, it is thought the vegetation would also screen the proposed development. During the winter months the tangential nature of the view/sightline means there would be a lot of vegetation to look through before one sees the site. Nevertheless, it is thought that during the winter months motorists may have heavily filtered views to the houses and warehouses along Standlake Road.

### Group A - Summary

5.14 Given the existing housing along the road both motorists and pedestrians would have very little opportunity to see the proposed development. The greatest opportunity would be from at, or around, viewpoint 1 at the pedestrian and cycle link/entrance in to the site but even here it is considered that the existing urban context of the view and the channelled limited viewing opportunity the access provides the proposed development may go unnoticed and or be a small element in the view and as such the magnitude of effect is It is considered Very Low and the resulting effect **Negligible** in the short and long term.

#### Group B - Views from School Road

Receptors: Motorists (Medium sensitivity) and Pedestrians (Medium sensitivity)

**Viewpoint 4 - View afforded motorists approaching the site from the east.**

Receptors: Motorists & Pedestrians (approximately 70 metres from the site's eastern boundary).

5.15 At this point on School Road it is considered that during the winter months there is the potential for heavily filtered views through the intervening tree canopies to the roofscape of the eastern most houses. The prominence of the roofscape could be mitigated with the selection of mute grey colours.

**Viewpoint 5 - View afforded motorists as they travel past the eastern most part of the proposed development (alongside the site's northern boundary)**

5.16 The introduction of the development would have the impact of further urbanising the view with the introduction of the entrance road and the three houses fronting on to the road. During construction and the short term the change would be clearly discernible and would form a notable change albeit not a complete change in the view, given residential development is present on the opposite side of the road (Langley pond Farm). It is considered that the proposed houses at the front of the site would remove the current field view and the houses would become the key influence and focus in the view (a High magnitude of effect).

**Viewpoints 6 - View afforded motorists and pedestrians travelling east as they pass the north western corner of the site.**

5.17 The introduction of the development would have the impact of urbanising the view with the introduction of the most car park in the foreground and the upper storey and roofscape of the houses behind the vegetated stream corridor. During construction, the short

term and the long term the introduction of the proposed parking area and housing development would result in a complete alteration to the characteristics of the view such that the existing view would be notably changed (a Very High magnitude of effect).

#### Viewpoint 7 – View afforded motorists and pedestrians approaching the site from the west (junction of Wood Lane and School Lane).

5.18 This view has been put forward as part of this assessment as it is considered the first point from which motorists and pedestrians approaching the site from the west would have the first possibility of seeing the proposed development. At this location it is the proposed parked cars within the parking area that are likely to be discernible with possibly heavily filtered winter views to the upper storeys and roofscape of the houses beyond. It is considered that suitable indigenous hedgerow planting could significantly mitigate the prominence of the parked cars. During construction and the short term the proposed parking area and development would be a small element and minor alteration in the view (a Low magnitude of effect. In the long term a considered landscape scheme has the potential to reduce the magnitude of effect to Very Low.

### Group B - Summary

5.19 The assessment has considered four viewpoints along a circa 310 metres stretch of School Road. Over approximately 80 metres it is considered the development would be prominent and be the key influence. The configuration of the proposals would mean it would be the three houses fronting onto School Road which would be the lead change with houses behind this being cumulatively more and more hidden. Nevertheless the change as motorists and pedestrians pass alongside the development would overall be High and the resulting effect is considered a noticeable deterioration in the existing view and visual amenity of pedestrians in particular. The resulting effect is considered **Moderate adverse** in during construction and the short term. In the long term planting has the potential to help assimilate and soften the change but given the loss of the current field view the effect is considered to remain **Moderate adverse** in the long term.



# Section 6

**Summary**

| Landscape Effects  | Effects Construction/ Year 1 | Effects Year 15     | Comments  |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| LCA J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay  | Minor Adverse                | Minor Adverse       | The proposed housing development sits alongside this character and as such effects would be limited to those of changes to the existing housing area's setting. During the construction phase the development would lead to a loss of the housing area's green setting and the introduction of intrusive construction activities. During construction the magnitude of effect is considered Medium and the resulting effect would be <b>Minor adverse</b> . Once the construction effects have ceased the change would be one of a change to the existing houses' setting. Given the proposed scheme would have a density, character, pattern and massing similar to the existing houses the change is considered a localised change a Low magnitude of effect. Whilst this magnitude of change is lower than that recorded for the construction phase, given the loss of the green open setting the effect would remain <b>Minor adverse</b> effect at Year 1 and into the long term (Year 15).  |
| Adjoining Langley Common   | Minor to Moderate adverse    | Minor Adverse       | Effects would be as a result of changes to this character areas setting, i.e. the character of the village along School Road and secondly, there would be the change to the character of the residential area given the arrival of development in the field to the rear of Nos 22-30 Langley Common Road. The magnitude of effect on School Road would be Medium during the construction period falling to Low at Year 1 and beyond. Accordingly the resulting effects would be <b>Moderate adverse</b> during the construction period falling to <b>Minor adverse</b> once construction activities have ceased. With regards the urban area behind the properties which back onto the site this area would experience a relatively localised change to the residential area's setting, an impact judged to be Low adverse resulting in a <b>Minor adverse</b> effect during construction and on into the long term   |
| The Site   | Substantial Adverse          | Substantial Adverse | The character of the site would experience a significant and irreversible adverse change from an agricultural field to an area of built form. However, all but four of the trees would be retained and there would be a modest improvement in the character of the western field which would be managed for biodiversity net gain (BNG) nature conservation value. In consideration of this the construction to long term magnitude of effect would be High and the resulting effect would be <b>Substantial adverse</b> .  |
| Visual Effects   | Effects Year 1               | Effects Year 15     | Comments  |
| Group A – Views from Langley Common Road<br>Receptors: Motorists & Pedestrians – Low sensitivity                   | Negligible                   | Negligible          | Both motorists and pedestrians travelling in both directions along Langley Common Road would, given the existing housing along the road, have very little opportunity to see the proposed development. The greatest opportunity would be from at or around Viewpoint 1 at the pedestrian and cycle link/entrance in to the site, but even here it is considered that the existing urban context of the view and the channelled limited viewing opportunity the access provides of the proposed development may go unnoticed and represent only a small element in the view and as such the magnitude of effect is It is considered Very Low and the resulting effect <b>Negligible</b> in the short and long term.  |
| Group B - Views from School Road<br>Receptors: Motorists (Medium sensitivity) and Pedestrians (Medium sensitivity) | Moderate Adverse             | Moderate Adverse    | The assessment has considered four viewpoints along a circa 310 metres stretch of School Road. Over approximately 80-100 metres it is considered the introduction of the parking area and the houses would be prominent and be the key influence. The configuration of the proposals would mean it would be the three houses fronting onto School Road which would be the most apparent change with houses behind this being cumulatively more and more hidden. Whilst the access would necessitate the removal of two trees (T144 elm & T142 oak) it is considered that this would only be noticeable as viewers pass by the entrance and for motorists and pedestrians approach the attractive 'tunnel-like' character of the road would not be significantly changed. Nevertheless the change as motorists and pedestrians pass alongside the development would overall be High and the resulting effect is considered a noticeable deterioration in the existing view and visual amenity of pedestrians in particular. The resulting effect is considered <b>Moderate adverse</b> in during construction and the short term. In the long term planting has the potential to help assimilate and soften the change but given the loss of the current field view the effect is considered to remain <b>Moderate adverse</b> in the long term. |



## 6.0 Summary

6.1 The Richards Partnership have been appointed to carry out a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for a proposed residential development for up to 27 dwellings and landscaping for Land off School Road, Langley Common (the site). The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration except for access.

**The Site & its Context**

6.2 The circa 2.85 hectare site is located alongside and to the rear of residential properties that front on to School Road (to the north) and west of houses along Langley Common Road (B3349). The site consists of two fields:  
Field A: A larger field accessed off School Road, (circa 3.7 hectares)  
Field B: A smaller, narrower rectilinear field adjoins the School Lane field extending eastwards to the rear gardens of a number of properties facing on to Langley Common Road (circa 0.7 hectares). This field is accessed via a gateway and track off Langley Common or through the School Road field.  
At the time of visiting the site in February 2025 the fields appeared to be used as pasture. The site can be accessed via a gate off Langley Common and an agricultural gate off School Road.

6.3 Both fields have some large and attractive trees along their boundaries. These trees have been the subject of a tree survey undertaken by ACD Environmental, dated February 2025. The predominant tree species is oak interspersed with ash and an understorey of hedgerow species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and elder. A significant proportion of the boundary trees are considered to be A and B grade with many having “40+” years of “expected remaining contribution”. The trees within and around the site are protected by Tree Preservation Order (TRO) 1515/2016 Reference G1, G2, & G4 and two woodland areas; W1 to the west and W2 to the east (see Viewpoints A – D).

6.4 An examination of Historic maps (provided as Figure 6) show the village was initially ribbon development along the B3349 between Barkham/Wokingham and Aborfield Green to the south. Today the parish has a scattered settlement pattern with notable clusters of larger settlements in the form of Aborfield Cross, Aborfield Green and Barkham. Langley Common is something of an oddity in that it is notably smaller than these three larger towns/settlements. The study suggests development arrived in earnest during the inter-war years along both Barkham Road and School Road, slowing notably by the 1960s. Plot sizes appear to be consistent, but the house styles and sizes vary considerably. Today most houses appear to have been extended. Taken together, Langley Common has an attractive character with a myriad of architectural styles. **An interesting development in the last 20-30 years has been the arrival of infill housing development** with notable number of new houses being introduced behind the original houses facing onto School Road. This

can be seen along the northern side of School Road with Coringa behind Rickwick and Windrush and The Nook behind Handport Farm and Willow Farm behind Fieldfare and Harvest Cott.

### Landscape Planning Context

6.5 The site is not the subject of any landscape planning designations.

6.6 The Aborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan recognises the value and importance landscape plays in the character of its existing settlements and the harm that can arise from ill-conceived and constructed development. Particularly pertinent policies include:

#### Policy TB21: Landscape Character states:

1. *Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.*
2. *Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.*

#### Policy IRS2: Recognise, respect and preserve identity and rural setting of settlements (page 21)

*Development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, with regard to:*

- a) *Scale and form of the development*
- b) *Density of the development*
- c) *Tree and hedgerow planting that reinforces and reflects local biodiversity in the parishes and*
- d) *The distinctive character of the varied landscapes of the area and outstanding views.*

The Neighbourhood Plan refers to The Barkham Village Design Statement (annex II) and the Landscape b& Important Views (Annex V)

6.7 The site sits within Landscape Character Area **J2 Aborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay**. Overall the area of LCA J2 which adjoins the site is considered in good condition and contains some fine mature tree lined field boundaries which make a positive contribution to the local area. Whilst the area adjoining and surrounding the site is not designated as being of national, regional or local significance it is nevertheless an attractive landscape with some valued elements (the mature oak trees along the field boundaries). The attractive qualities of the landscape are recognised and highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan and the value of two views along School Road (views 2.2 & 2.2) contribute to the setting of Langley Common. However, **the site and its surroundings are not identified as being within a Valued Landscape** in the

Woking Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024). The site has a limited landscape and character interrelationship with the wider LCA J2 given the rolling nature of the landscape and the cumulative screening and filtering role of intervening hedgerow, trees and woodland. The landscape nevertheless is considered to be of some aesthetic value and its sensitivity to change is considered **Medium**. The site shares these same characteristics and its value in the setting of the settlement is recognised in the Neighbourhood Plan which identifies two views of Value along School Lane. In light of the site’s high susceptibility to the change envisaged its sensitivity is considered to be **High**. The adjoining urban edge is a typical urban area and its sensitivity is considered **Low**. The landscape nevertheless is considered to be of some aesthetic value and its sensitivity to change is considered **Medium**. The site shares these same characteristics and its value in the setting of the settlement is recognised in the Neighbourhood Plan which identifies two views of Value along School Lane. In light of the site’s high susceptibility to the change envisaged its sensitivity is considered to be **High**. The adjoining urban edge is a typical urban area and its sensitivity is considered **Low**.

### Visual Context

6.8 The field work undertaken in February 2025, when the trees and hedgerows were without leaf, established that **the site has a surprisingly limited zone of visual influence**. As a result of built form and trees to the west the site is not readily visible from Langley Common and as a result of topography, trees and hedgerows the site has a very weak with the countryside to the west and north of the site. Public views are only available along a relatively short stretch of School Road which runs alongside the site’s northern boundary.

6.9 The assessment identified the following two Representative Viewpoint Groups:  
Group A – Views from Langley Common Road (viewpoints 1-3)  
Group B – Views from School Road (viewpoints 4-7)



### The Landscape Approach

6.10 The underlying and lead consideration of the landscape approach has been the development should respect the site's context and its existing landscape features. To this end, the disposition and orientation of built form and the positioning of the roads have been sited so as to retain the most valued and prominent trees around the site. The only trees which would be lost are located at the entrance to the site and at the field boundary which separates the northern parcel from the eastern parcel. The loss of the three trees would be more than offset by the tree planting within the site and the adjoining 'blue land' which provides the bulk of the biodiversity net gain.

6.11 **The road layout has been led by landscape considerations and in particular the need to provide an active edge with permissive access to the trees around the site's eastern boundary.** Similarly, the houses fronting onto School Lane are set well back from the road with the ground within their root protection areas to be retained under a management company and managed as a wildlife meadow area.

### Management of the landscape proposals:

6.12 Subject to further discussions with officers at the council it is suggested the development would also bring forward a Landscape & Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) for the stream and the field to the west. It is proposed that the adjoining field to the west of the stream would be managed to enhance its nature conservation value. Circuitous permissive mown and bark mulch paths would be laid out around and across this space for residents and visitors. Of most importance interpretative boards would be provided within and at the entrances to the space explaining and illustrating why access is permissive and what target flora and fauna species the area is being managed to enhance.

### Visual Appraisal

6.13 As noted above the visual appraisal found that as a result of the site's urban context, local topography and the treed nature of the landscape to the north and west of the site has a very focused and limited zone of visual influence.

6.14 Visual effects for motorists and pedestrians travelling along Langley Common Road are assessed to be **Negligible** during construction and beyond

6.15 The assessment considered four viewpoints along a circa 310 metres stretch of School Road, a relatively quiet no through road. Over approximately 80 metres it is considered the development would be prominent and be the key influence. The configuration of the proposals would mean it would be the three houses fronting onto School Road which would be the lead change with houses behind this being cumulatively more and more hidden. Nevertheless the change

as motorists and pedestrians pass alongside the development would overall be High and the resulting effect is considered a noticeable deterioration in the existing view and visual amenity of pedestrians in particular. The resulting effect is considered **Moderate adverse** in during construction and the short term. In the long term planting has the potential to help assimilate and soften the change but given the loss of the current field view the effect is considered to remain **Moderate adverse** in the long term. This adverse effect is focused on the circa 80-100 metre length of road along the side the site and the adverse effect falls away beyond this stretch of road.

### Conclusion

6.16 As a result of surrounding built form, local topography and mature trees and hedgerows in the landscape to the north and west the site has a surprisingly limited zone of influence. The development approach has been led by landscape considerations which have carefully positioned the entrance road and route through the site so as to minimise tree loss and to provide the attractive boundary trees with an overlooked aspect. The trees lost to enable the access into the site and between the eastern and western parcels would be offset by tree planting within the site. The proposals include the adjoining field north of the watercourse as land set aside for biodiversity net gain and for informal amenity/recreational uses.

6.17 The visual and landscape harm identified in this assessment is focused on the site and a relatively short stretch of School Road alongside the site. The harm does not extend out into the wider landscape. The management of the field north of the stream would provide an attractive edge, buffer and interface between the houses and the landscape to the north. The development would bring forward management plans that would safeguard this interface and ensure the landscape continues to provide an attractive and respectful interface with its surroundings.

The Richards Partnership  
October 2025