

Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Assessment

Thamesfield, Henley on Thames

December 2024

Turley

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Client

Retirement Villages Group

Our reference

RETH3002

November 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA), and Green Belt Openness Appraisal has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Turley Landscape and VIA on behalf of Retirement Villages Group (Applicant) to assess the effect of the application proposal for the extension of the existing retirement complex to provide 17no. extra-care units.
- 1.2 For the purpose of this report, the site is referred to as the 'Application Site' or the 'Site' and the application proposal is referred to as the 'Proposed Development'.
- 1.3 The report is set out in eight sections. Section 2 provides a summary of the methodology used for the appraisal and Section 3 identifies the relevant national and local planning policy and designations. Sections 4, 5 and 6 discuss the baseline situation of the Application Site and the surrounding area in terms of landscape character, visual amenity and Green Belt Openness.
- 1.4 The penultimate section provides an appraisal of effects of the Scheme Proposal on the identified baseline situation. Finally, a summary of the appraisal and conclusion is provided in Section 8. The report should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design and Access Statement produced to support the planning application by Design Engine, the soft and hard landscaping proposals produced by Turley Design, the Planning Statement prepared by Stantec, the Heritage Statement prepared by RPS and the viewpoint visualisations prepared by PreConstruct. The report is supported by a series of appendices, which include figures and photos, and can be found within and at the end of this document.
- 1.5 In accordance with best practice, the landscape and visual and green belt appraisal was commenced at the start of the project design process and has been used to inform the development of the design proposals. In particular, early testing of the potential effects of draft scheme proposals on key representative views was undertaken using accurate visualisations prepared by PreConstruct.

2. Appraisal Methodology

- 2.1 The methodology and approach adopted in undertaking this appraisal uses structured, informed and reasoned professional judgement taking into account a combination of quantitative and qualitative factors.

Site Location and Description

- 2.2 The Application Site is situated adjacent to the A321 Wargrave Road and the eastern banks of the River Thames within Henley-on-Thames. The Site is located within Wokingham District at the border with South Oxfordshire District.



Figure 2.1: Application Site Location indicated with a solid red line

- 2.3 The Application Site comprises a Victorian country house with later additions and alterations. The house is currently in Extra Care use and is set within a private estate consisting of approx. 1.4 hectares of landscaped gardens and manicured lawns. A small picket fence separates the Site with the Eyot Centre to the south-east whilst a red brick wall provides the separation with the Remenham Row retirement village to the north-west. The north-eastern and south-western Site boundaries are strongly defined by Wargrave Road and the River Thames respectively.



Figure 2.2: View south of central courtyard space and surrounding buildings



Figure 2.3: view from croquet lawn towards the Victorian part of Thamesfield House and the 1980s extension block

Study Area

- 2.4 The study area for this report includes both the Application Site and the surrounding wider context (1km), as illustrated in **Figure 1** of **Appendix 3**. This is considered an appropriate area of study in terms of the enclosure of the Site and the scale of the Proposed Development.
- 2.5 The extent of the study area was informed by the production of a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) which identifies where in the surrounding landscape the Proposed Development is likely to be visible and is set out in **Figure 2** of **Appendix 3**. Within this there are also areas where there is no inter-visibility with the Site due to the localised screening effect of vegetation and built form. There may also be more distant areas beyond this with some inter-visibility with the Site. However, it is considered that the effects on receptors beyond these areas would be so minor that detailed assessment is not warranted. This approach is supported by GLVIA3 which states that the scale of assessment should be appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the proposed development. The Study Area for the landscape and visual assessment was therefore identified as an area within 1km from the Application Site boundary.

Surveys

- 2.6 A preliminary desk study was undertaken to establish the physical components of the Site and its surroundings. Potential key visual receptors with views towards the Site from the surrounding area were also identified. Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and aerial photography were utilised to identify these features.
- 2.7 A field study was undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design from the Turley Landscape and VIA team on the 23 February 2023, during which the visibility was good. The field study recorded the Site and surrounding context's landscape features and verified the key visual receptors identified in the desk study. It also involved travelling throughout the study area and producing a working photographic record.

Methodology

- 2.8 The appraisal is carried out in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition¹; An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment²; the Landscape Character Assessment: Technical Information Note 08/2015³; and, Visual Representation of Development Proposals⁴. The methodology is set out in full at **Appendix 1**.

¹ The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Third Edition 2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment*

² Christine Tudor, Natural England (2014) *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*

³ Landscape Institute (2016) *LI Technical Information Note 08/2015*

⁴ Landscape Institute (2019) *Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Information Note 06/19*

- 2.9 In summary, the approach is to establish the baseline condition of the existing landscape character and visual receptors of the Application Site and its surroundings. The Proposed Development is then discussed and the potential degree of 'effect' it will have is predicted. Consideration is then given to the 'residual effect' of the Proposed Development once proposed landscape planting has matured.
- 2.10 The analysis of Green Belt openness considers both the physical and visual impact of the proposals on openness in accordance with guidance provided in the Planning Practice Guidance 2021⁵.

Consultation

- 2.11 The application submission has been informed by a process of pre-application engagement with officers at Wokingham Borough Council.
- 2.12 The identified landscape and visual receptors and the location of representative views and suggested visualisation types were presented to the case officer at Wokingham Borough Council and agreed at the pre-app meeting in May 2023.

⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) Planning Practice Guidance: Green Belt - Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722

3. Planning Policy and Designations

- 3.1 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations but falls within the London Metropolitan Green Belt. Development on the Site will be expected to have regard to the policy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3.2 Park Place and Temple Combe (Grade II* Registered Park and Garden) lies immediately to the east of the Site. Slightly further afield, the Chilterns National Landscape is located approx. 730m at its closest point to the north. The Thames Path and Chiltern Way long distance walking routes pass over Henley Bridge to the north-west of the Site and continue along the western bank of the river, further south of the Site.
- 3.3 The Site lies within the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area and a large concentration of listed buildings is also located to the west within Henley town centre, within the Henley on Thames, St Marks Road and Reading Road Conservation Area. Details on the significance of these heritage assets and others within the study area are provided in the separate Heritage Statement by RPS.
- 3.4 A summary of the planning policy context is provided in **Appendix 2**.

4. Baseline Landscape Appraisal

Landscape Character Context

- 4.1 A review has been undertaken of the national and borough landscape character assessments and the associated character areas that the Application Site falls within. Consideration has then been given to whether the Application Site's landscape elements reflect and contribute to the characteristics of the recognised areas at a district level.

National Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2 Natural England has divided England into 159 National Character Area (NCA) profiles, recognising the combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity that make places distinctive.
- 4.3 At a national level the Application Site is located within NCA110: Chilterns, which is described as *'a patchwork of mixed agriculture with woodland, set within hedged boundaries'* and *'the natural and built features of the countryside are recognised as special and attractive'* by NATIONAL LANDSCAPE designations.
- 4.4 The NCA profile provides a high-level overview of the key characteristics and provides the background which underpins more detailed county and district level landscape character assessments.

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

- 4.5 Within the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment, the Application Site falls within Landscape Character Type A: River Valleys, and within Landscape Character Area A1: Thames River Valley (**Figure 4.1**).
- 4.6 The key characteristics of LCA A1: Thames River Valley relevant to the Site and its immediate context are as set out below with our emphasis added:
- ***"Dominated by the River Thames, the north of this area is defined by a pronounced sweeping meander, becoming braided and branching further south..."***
 - ***A flat floodplain landscape ranging from 30-40m AOD, dramatically accentuated and semi-enclosed by the steep, intermittently open and wooded, chalk landscapes...***
 - ***Large open geometric fields used for pasture close to the riverbank and increasingly for arable. The fields are often undivided or divided by drainage channels or post and wire fences.***
 - ***Wetland character with fragments of semi-natural habitats...***
 - ***Influenced by adjoining formal parkland landscape associated with large manor houses located on the adjoining chalk slopes...***

- *Distinctive vernacular character typified by the use of warm red brick and flint particularly used in the floodplain villages including Remenham, and the conservation areas of Sonning, Wargrave and Henley Bridge.*
- **Popular recreational setting** for rowing, canoeing and pleasure boating. Fishing, walking and cycling, along the banks with long-distance walking and running along the Thames Path National Trail. Supporting facilities including boatyards, boatsheds and towpaths...
- **Views of the landscape along the Thames and to the hills of the adjoining Chilterns NATIONAL LANDSCAPE.** In some places, views are focused along the river channel and framed by bankside vegetation..."

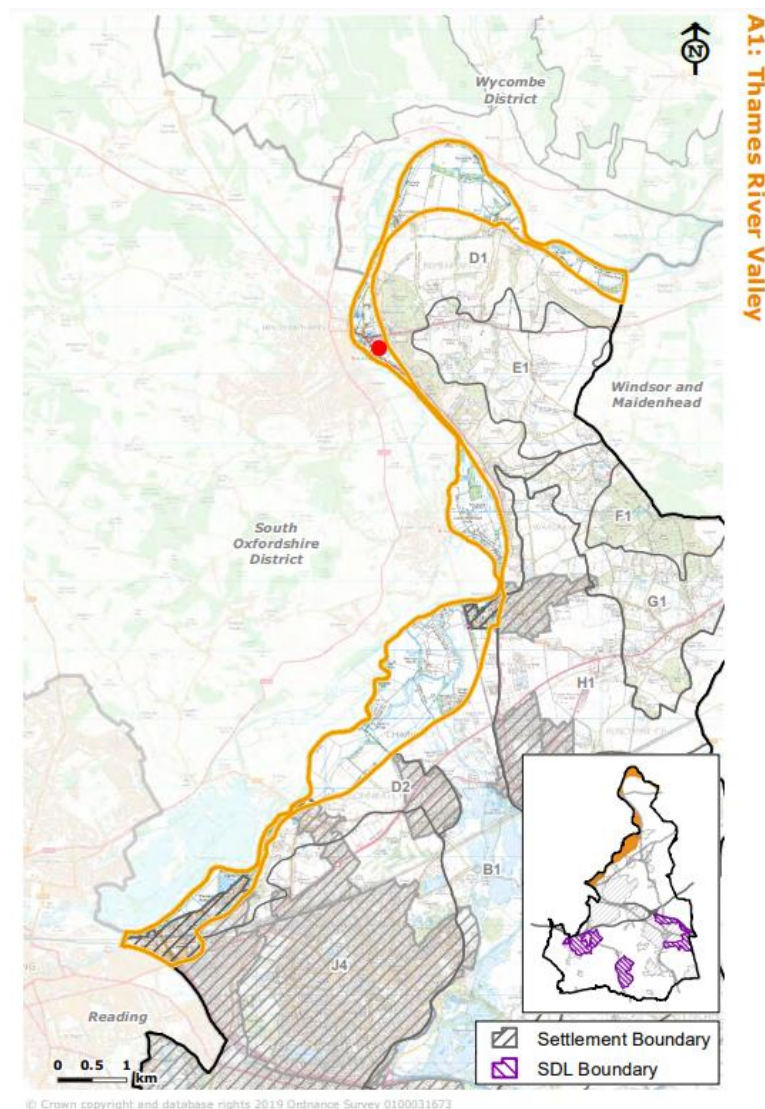


Figure 4.1: Landscape Character Area A1: Thames River Valley (Approximate Site location identified as a red dot)

- 4.7 The condition of the Thames River Valley character area is noted as good, with its associated waterside habitats and the presence of picturesque and traditional settlements on the floodplain edge.

4.8 The Landscape Strategy for the Thames River Valley is to:

“conserve and enhance the peaceful, natural character of the meandering river channel, network of streams and channels, belts of bankside woodland and distinctive willow pollards and other trees and picturesque floodplain edge settlements.”

4.9 The Landscape Strategy also notes key aspects to be conserved and actively managed and this includes ‘large country houses and their associated parklands and pleasure grounds which are important to the local landscape character.’

4.10 The identified landscape guidelines relevant to potential development on the Site include:

- *“Conserve the scenic quality and natural character of the river corridor and tributary streams particularly from development, intensification of land use and encroachment by scrub and secondary woodland.*
- *Conserve and protect the landscape pattern of mixed pasture and arable fields. Encourage appropriate management of grassland by grazing, particularly immediately by the river corridor. Consider re-creation of lost grassland habitats.*
- *Conserve, enhance and manage wetland and waterside habitats, including BAP priority habitats, from changes in land use including to arable farming...*
- *Conserve the scenic value of the riverside villages and gardens, including the four Conservation Areas and the listed buildings, including Temple Island and its surrounding Registered Park and Garden.*
- *Maintain the prevailing hydrology and water tables to enable anaerobic conditions to preserve archaeological sites in low lying wetland areas, particularly along river corridors.*
- *Maintain the rural character of settlements through control of new development, avoiding linear spread of development and amalgamation between Henley, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning.*
- *Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape while managing recreational pressure on the river and its banks. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network. Seek sympathetic integration of new recreational facilities and associated car parks into the landscape.*
- *Take care in the siting of vertical elements e.g. communication masts or other structures in this open landscape.*
- *Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges on the edge of the floodplain through hedges, wooded boundaries, occasional scrub planting, and large-species trees to provide visual screening.*

- *Conserve designed landscapes and their associated architectural heritage including the great houses, their monuments and follies and arboricultural and landscape heritage.*
- *Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – as well as sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes.*
- *Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements e.g. pylons on the visually sensitive landscape.*
- *Protect the views along and across the river channel; into and out of the Chilterns NATIONAL LANDSCAPE; and the wider visual setting of the river including parklands and mansions at Park Place and Temple Combe.*
- *Protect the strong perceptions of tranquillity in the landscape, including the experience of dark skies, through the management of development.”*

Wokingham Valued Landscapes Assessment (September 2024)

- 4.11 The Wokingham Valued Landscapes Assessment was undertaken to identify landscape areas for which there is sufficient evidence to support their identification as ‘valued landscapes’ in the forthcoming Local Plan Update. The assessment was completed in September 2024 and 13 areas were identified for recognition as Valued Landscapes.
- 4.12 The Site falls within an area identified as the River Thames Valued Landscape which extends along the east side of the River Thames and includes the adjacent floodplains. Key identified attributes of the area include its: high scenic qualities derived from the *‘distinctive river channel with associated waterside habitats and the presence of picturesque and traditional settlements on the floodplain edge’*, its historic crossing points, fine villages, wildlife and biodiversity value (including in particular its riverine habitats), conservation areas (including Remenham Conservation Area) and listed buildings, recreational value (including the Thames Path National Trail), associations with the Henley regatta and cultural associations many artists and writers.
- 4.13 The full description of the area and its valued attributes is included at Appendix 5.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Landscape Designation Review/Valued Landscape Assessment (September 2024)

- 4.14 The South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Assessment is similar to the Wokingham Valued Landscape Assessment; it identifies and maps areas of valued landscape and identifies the special characteristics and features of these areas.
- 4.15 Land on the west side of the River Thames is identified as the ‘Henley to Sonning Eye Thames Floodplain’. Part of this area lies within the study area for this assessment.
- 4.16 The special landscape qualities of the area are summarised as:

- *The low-lying River Thames floodplain with gently rising valley sides, linking to the Chiltern hills to the north.*
- *Wetland and riparian habitats provide ecological value and provide enclosure and visual interest along the river corridor.*
- *Historic riverside settlements, including Sonning Eye, and large houses along the river provide time-depth and a distinctive sense of place.*
- *Rural character, with good sense of tranquillity and few modern distractions or developments.*
- *Recreational value centred on the river, with the Thames Path National Trail, Chilterns Way and water-based recreation on the Thames itself.*
- *Strong visual relationship with the Chilterns National Landscape, which forms a wooded backdrop to the north, and wooded slopes to the southeast at Remenham (within Wokingham Borough).*

Local Landscape Character Areas

4.17 Local scale analysis has been undertaken to identify Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) which will be used to determine the effects on landscape character at a local level. Three LLCAs have been identified based on an understanding of the landscape elements such as land use, topography, built form and access. The character of these LLCAs is summarised below.

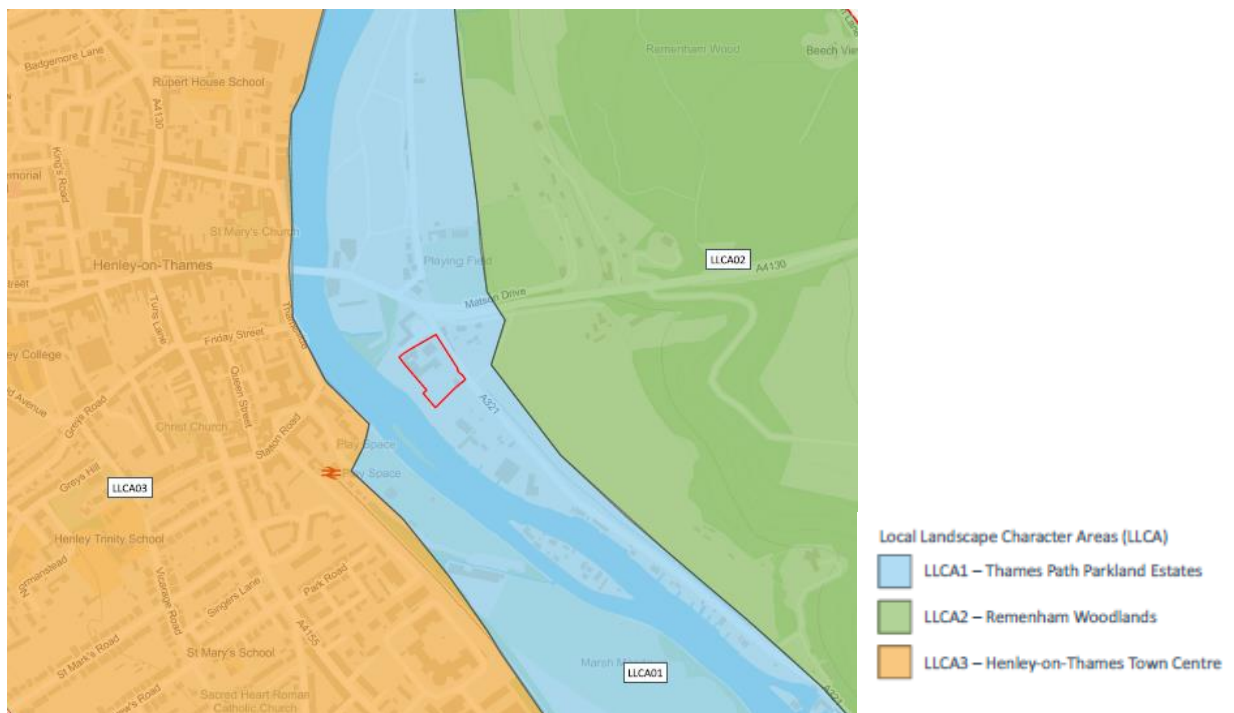


Figure 4.2: Local Landscape Character Areas (site shown as solid red line)

LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates

4.18 This Local Landscape Character Area includes the Site and extends along the Thames encompassing riverside estates and rowing clubs. The area is identified as a proposed 'Valued Landscape' in the Local Plan Updates for both Wokingham District Council and Sout Oxfordshire. Key characteristics of the area include:

- Flat, low-lying landform on the fringes of the River Thames.
- Improved grassland and manicured lawns associated with private estates and rowing clubs.
- Clusters of mature trees on river islands and scattered along the riverbank as well as rows of trees lining private tracks.
- Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area including Henley Bridge (Grade I listed) which provides the primary river crossing into Henley-on-Thames dating back to the C12.
- Long distance walking routes including the Thames Path and the Chilterns Way provide recreational connections to the wider landscape.
- Strong cultural associations with rowing reflected in the concentration of rowing clubs along the riverfront and common sight of rowing sculls on the river.

LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands

4.19 This Local Landscape Character Area is located on the rising land to the east of the Site, defined in part by Wargrave Road. The key characteristics include:

- Steep chalk slopes rising from approx. 35m AOD to over 100m AOD at Remenham Hill.
- Large swathes of woodland including Ancient Woodland with irregular pasture at the fringes and large, detached residential properties scattered along the A4130.
- Historic and cultural interest provided by the Park Place and Temple Combe Grade II* Registered Park and Garden which comprises a C19 country house surrounded by C18 and C19 gardens and parkland estate.
- Panoramic views across Henley on Thames from the edge of Remenham Wood.
- Localised influences from the A4130 which bisects the area east to west.

LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre

4.20 This Local Landscape Character Area is situated south-west of the Site on the opposite side of the river and encompasses the town centre. Key characteristics include:

- Medieval settlement legible through surviving burbage plots with narrow frontages and deep returns, and various timber-framed building arranged along the distinctive historic street pattern.

- A network of secondary routes stemming from the primary arterial routes which connect the town centre with the surrounding settlements.
- A formal urban grain characterised by regular-sized blocks arranged in a loose grid pattern.
- Henley on Thames, St Marks Road and Reading Road which includes a concentration of Grade listed buildings including the Grade II* listed Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin of C13 origins.
- Mill Meadows forms the principal recreational park located on the western bank of the Thames and comprises formal flower beds, lawns and play areas.

Landscape Receptors and Assessment of Value

- 4.21 The landscape comprises a number of receptors; these are defined within GLVIA3 as the ‘constituent elements of the landscape, its specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities and the character of the landscape in different areas’. These form the elements or ‘units’ which need to be considered when assessing the potential landscape effect of a proposed development or other change.
- 4.22 The landscape character receptors for the appraisal of the Proposed Development’s effects on landscape comprise of:
- LCA A1: Thames River Valley is considered to be of Medium-High Value⁶ due to its notable scenic qualities on the fringes of (but outside) the Chilterns NATIONAL LANDSCAPE, its proposed designation as a Valued Landscape in the Local Plan Update for WDC as well as its notable recreational value associated with rowing and other boating activities.
 - LLCA1: Thames Path Parkland Estates is considered to have a Medium-High Value, as it is covered by the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation and has a notable scenic riverside quality and recreational value associated with long distance walking routes and boating activities.
 - LLCA2: Remenham Woodlands is considered to have a Medium-High Value, as it comprises the Grade II* Park Place and Temple Combe Registered Park and Garden, and has a notable scenic quality.
 - LLCA3: Henley-on-Thames Town Centre is considered to have a Medium-High Value, due to the concentration of Grade listed buildings and Henley Conservation Area encompassing much of the town.

⁶ The pre-application consultation response from the Council’s landscape officer noted that the Council consider LCA A1 to be a ‘Valued Landscape’

Table 4.1: Summary of Landscape Value

Landscape Character Receptor	Landscape Value
LCA A1: Thames River Valley	Medium-High
LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates	Medium-High
LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands	Medium-High
LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre	Medium-High

5. Baseline Visual Amenity Appraisal

- 5.1 A baseline assessment of the local visual context and visual amenity was undertaken to understand the existing extent of visibility of the Site, key views in the vicinity of the Site and local visual receptors likely to be affected by the Proposed Development.

Existing Visibility

- 5.2 The existing visibility of the Site was established through desktop analysis followed by on-site confirmation of the localised screening effect of built form and vegetation.
- 5.3 The visibility of existing built form within the Site is largely influenced by the Site's position on the riverfront and close to the chalk hills. Mature tree belts and linear swathes of woodland in the local area also have an influence. From the north, some glimpsed and filtered views of the rooftops within the Site can be experienced from the rising land around Remenham Wood but otherwise views are generally screened by built form and trees around the White Hill / Wargrave Road junction. From the east, structural vegetation in and around the Park Place and Temple Combe Registered Park and Garden limit views of the Site to Wargrave Road and the immediate proximity. Similarly from the west, adjacent built form and groups of trees restrict views of the Site beyond. The clearest views of the Site come from the south and south-west, where the existing building is experienced across the river in its parkland setting and against the backdrop of the chalk hills. Riverside trees and wooded river islands filter views of the Site further south whilst built form within the town centre screen views from areas beyond the immediate riverside.

Visual Receptors

- 5.4 Visual receptors are people who may be affected by changes in views and visual amenity. They include people passing through an area (e.g. by foot, car, bicycle or public transport), people working in an area, and people visiting or engaged in recreational activities. The potential future zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) of the Site (with the proposed extension in place) was established using GIS mapping (included at **Appendix 3**).
- 5.5 The key visual receptors within the study area with potential to be affected by the Proposed Development have been identified as:
- Pedestrians and motorists along A4130 White Hill (around junction with Wargrave Road);
 - Pedestrians and motorists along Thameside (on west side of the River Thames);
 - Recreational users of the Thames Path between Remenham Club and Marsh Meadows; and,
 - Recreational users of the Chiltern Way between Remenham Lane and Remenham Court

Representative Viewpoints

- 5.6 The following seven viewpoints have been identified to represent typical views experienced by the key visual receptors and illustrate views from within the local landscape character areas:

01	Registered Common Land west of Remenham Wood
02	A4310 White Hill at junction with Wargrave Road
03	Thames Towing Path adjacent to Marsh Meadows
04	Thames Towing Path adjacent to Mill Meadows
05	Thames Towing Path at junction with Thameside
06	Henley Bridge at junction with Thameside
07	Thames Path (west of Remenham Court)

- 5.7 **Figure 4 at Appendix 3** (extract provided below in Figure 5.1) provides a plan of the representative viewpoint locations.

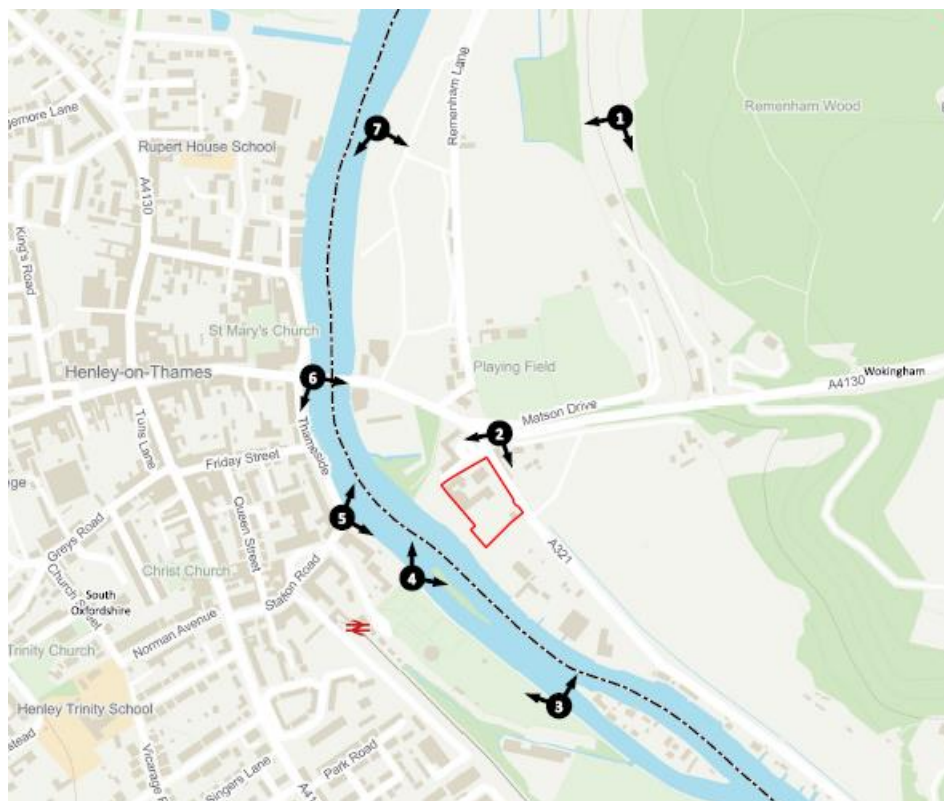


Figure 5.1 Viewpoint Location Plan

6. Baseline Analysis of Green Belt Openness

Green Belt Policy Context

- 6.1 The retention and protection of the Green Belt is a key part of national planning policy and paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that *'the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and permanence'*. Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that the five purposes which Green Belt performs are:

- 'a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.'*

- 6.2 The Application Site is located fully within the Green Belt, between urban areas at Henley to the west and Wargrave to the south, both of which lie outside the Green Belt. This baseline analysis considers the existing openness of the Application Site and its current contribution to the openness of the Green Belt in the vicinity of the Application Site. This is in order to establish a baseline position against which the impact of the Scheme Proposal on the openness of the Green Belt can be compared. In particular, this will enable us to provide commentary in relation to the NPPF paragraph 154 which states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless it corresponds with a series of exceptions which includes:

- "g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority."*

- 6.3 In Green Belt terms, the concept of 'openness' relates to the absence of built development (which includes both buildings and hard surfacing) and is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects. The Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance for considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt:

“Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;*
- the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.*

6.4 In July 2024 the government published draft proposed revisions to the NPPF. Within this, it is proposed that part g) of para 154 is amended to say:

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

6.5 Therefore, if this wording is adopted in the final version (expected December 2024), the proposed development would need to ‘*not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt*’ rather than, under the current NPPF which requires it to ‘*not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development*’.

Published Green Belt Assessment

Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Green Belt Review

6.6 The Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council Green Belt Review⁷ assessed the performance of 23 strategic parcels (plus sub-parcels) against the Green Belt purposes as defined in the NPPF.

1. The Application Site is located within Parcel W9. This is a linear parcel on the east side of the River Thames which extends from Wargrave in the south to Henley Bridge in the north. The parcel is identified in the study as overall making a Significant Contribution to Green Belt purposes with a Significant Contribution identified for Green Belt purposes 2 and 3, a Contribution to purpose 1 and Limited Contribution to purposes 2 and 4. However, the Site forms only a very small part of the Strategic Parcel, is very different to the wider parcel and its contribution to Green Belt purposes at a local level is very different to that of the wider parcel.

6.7 At a local level, the Site’s contribution to Green Belt purposes is Limited. The existing development on the Site forms a continuation of other existing development along the eastern side of the Thames, forming part of an existing area of settlement. This forms part of the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area and connects visually and in character terms with the Henley town centre conservation area on the west side of the

⁷ Green belt review (June 2016)

river. Due to its low level of openness, previously developed character and relationship with existing settlement, the Site makes only a Limited Contribution to Green Belt purposes 1 - 5

Existing openness of the Application Site

- 6.8 A detailed study of the existing openness (both physical and visual) of the Site and surrounding context is provided below and is based on the analysis undertaken during the site visit and available data provided by Design Engine architects.

Physical Openness

- 6.9 The Site is currently predominantly developed land and is occupied by buildings of one, two and three storeys with pitched roofs and associated structures, plus areas of hardstanding, grassland and ornamental and structural vegetation.
- 6.10 The existing buildings are arranged in a tight cluster around a central courtyard/service area. The single storey building and 'pavillion' in the north-western corner of the site (to be demolished as part of the application) are tight against the site boundary with Remenham Row (between c. 2.5m and 3.8m from the site boundary). The total footprint of buildings (GEA) within the Site is 2,074m² out of a total area of 8,795m². Hardstanding including tarmac, footpaths, patios and parking areas covers a further 2,780m². The total area of developed land within the Site is therefore 4,854m². The aerial photograph⁸ below demonstrates the extent of hard surfacing and buildings present within the Application Site.

⁸ Image taken from Google Earth (*Imagery ©2023 Google, Imagery ©2023 Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2023*)

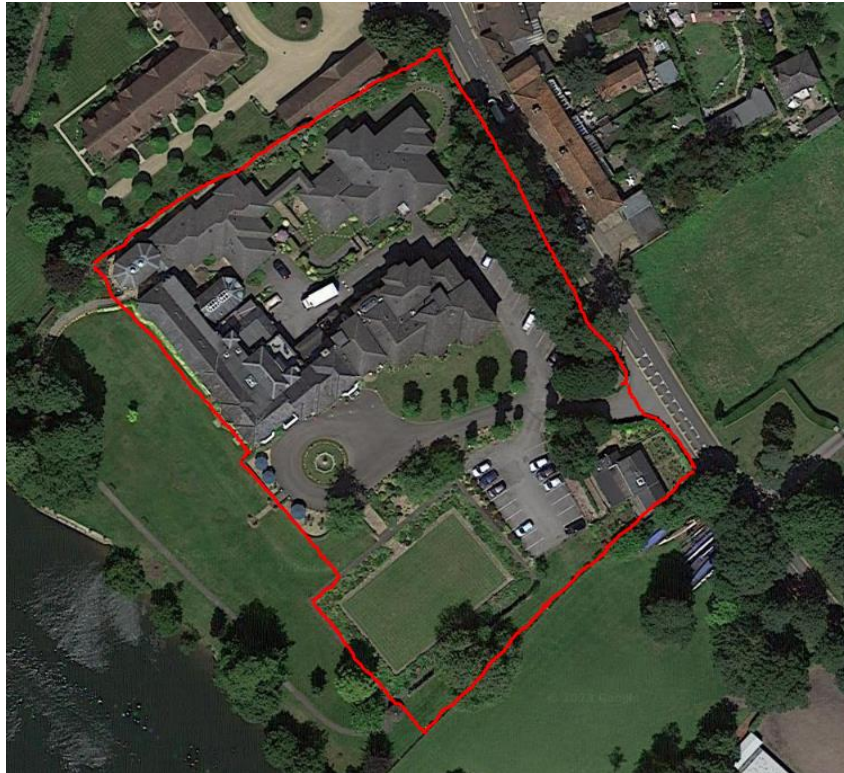


Figure 6.1: Aerial photograph of Application Site demonstrating the extent of built form within it (screenshot taken from Google Earth)

- 6.11 A further measure for assessing the openness of the Site is to calculate the existing volume of development present on Site which can then be used to compare against the Scheme Proposal in the assessment of effects. The total volume of existing buildings within the Site, is 12,828m³.
- 6.12 In the surrounding area the Site forms part of a larger area of existing development along the east bank of the River Thames as illustrated in **Figure 6.2**. The Green Belt designation washes over all this area but the physical openness of this area is also low due to the presence of substantial built development.

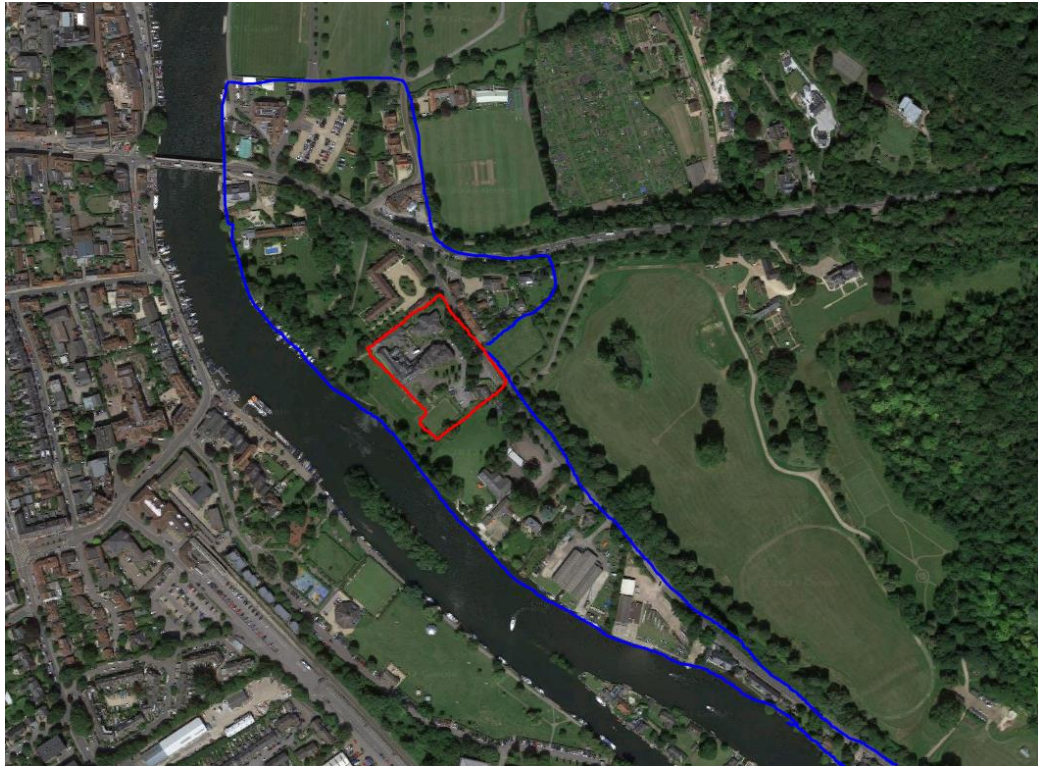


Figure 6.2: Aerial photograph illustrating area of previously developed land on east bank of the River Thames in WBC which is washed over by the Green Belt

- 6.13 As demonstrated above, due to the presence of existing development, the existing physical openness of the Site and surrounding area are very low and the contribution of these areas to the openness of the Green Belt is therefore also very low.
- 6.14 In contrast, further east, there is very little built development and the physical openness of the Green Belt is high as illustrated in **Figure 6.3**.



Figure 6.3: Aerial photograph illustrating wider development context of the Site - Land to the east of the Site contains little built development and the openness of the Green Belt is much higher than that of the Site and its immediate surrounds

Visual Openness

- 6.15 The existing built form within the Site is most visible from the tow path on the west side of the River Thames as it passes opposite the Site. In these views, the existing buildings shorten views, reducing the visual openness of the area although the wooded slopes of Remenham Hill are visible, seen rising in the background of the view. The principal area contributing to the local openness of these views is the lawn between the house and the river (which is outside the Site but falls within the blue line of the planning application).

- 6.16 Parts of the Site are also visible from localised parts of Wargrave Road. Again, in these, the existing buildings and mature vegetation on Site foreshorten views and the visual openness of the Site is low.

- 6.17 Within the immediate surrounding local area, views across the Site and the eastern bank of the River Thames are restricted by the built form and mature vegetation which is present within the area. Existing neighbouring development including Remenham Row and boat houses to the north and the Eyot Centre, private houses and boat houses and associated mature vegetation all combine to form a low level of visual permeability. Consequently, the visual openness of this part of the Green Belt is low.

7. Assessment of Effects

- 7.1 The effect of the Scheme Proposal is assessed by predicting the magnitude of the change on the landscape and visual receptors. The assessment does not attempt to predict the effects of seasonal changes throughout the year but describes the 'worst case' position in terms of the greatest potential visibility of the development i.e. in winter when the trees would have lost their leaves.

Overview of Scheme Proposal

- 7.2 The supporting Design and Access Statement prepared by Design Engine provides a comprehensive description of the scheme design and its approach. This includes a review of how the proposals have responded to the particular constraints and opportunities of the Site. A summary of the key elements of the Scheme Proposal which are of relevance to this assessment is provided below:
- The height and scale of building would reflect that of other buildings within the Site and the surrounding area;
 - The building and new landscape would be high quality design providing high quality residential accommodation;
 - The materials palette and design has been informed by a character and materials study of other surrounding buildings within the Conservation Area and would be appropriate to the local area;
 - The building location is broadly in the same position as the existing building (to be demolished) but with an increased set back from properties on Remenham Row;
 - Most existing mature trees within the Site would be retained and new planting introduced, where appropriate, in order to provide containment of the development in views from the wider landscape and to integrate the building within its setting. Further tree and ornamental shrub planting would be introduced around the proposed building.

Sensitivity of the Landscape Character and Visual Receptors

Landscape Character Receptor's Sensitivity

- 7.3 Effects on landscape character are both direct i.e. on the LCA that the Application Site is located within, and indirect i.e. changes to characteristics that occur beyond the boundary of the LCA. **Table 7.1** summarises the identified landscape receptors sensitivity to change which is described in the following paragraphs.

LCA A1 – Thames River Valley

- 7.4 The Site falls within the borough landscape character area LCA A1 – Thames River Valley which was identified as having **Medium-High Value**. The LCA has a generally flat, low-lying topography, well-treed in places and open in others. Development is concentrated along the river banks but elsewhere is sparse. The river and adjacent

towpath are a well-used recreational corridor. LCA A1 is considered to have a **Medium High Susceptibility to Change** and is therefore of **Medium-High Sensitivity**.

LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates

- 7.5 The Application Site is located within LLCA1 which has been identified as having a **Medium-High Value** in the baseline section of this LVIA. The attributes affecting the ability of the landscape to accommodate development of the type and scale proposed include the existing presence of similar scale of development within the Site and neighbouring area and a high level of tree cover within the Site and along the Thames and in the surrounding area. Together, these which provide strong containment of the development area and limit potential influence on the surrounding area. The river and adjacent towpath are a well-used recreational corridor LLCA1 is considered to have a **Medium Susceptibility to Change** and is therefore **Medium Sensitivity**.

LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands

- 7.6 This area has been identified in the baseline section as having **Medium-High Value**. The attributes that make up the character of this landscape can partly accommodate the proposed change. The LLCA is subject to influences from development within the valley floor (on both sides of the river) and the extensive presence of mature woodland offers a degree of containment to the landscape. LLCA2 is considered to have a **Medium Susceptibility to Change** and is therefore of **Medium Sensitivity**.

LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre

- 7.7 This area has been identified in the baseline section as being of **Medium-High Value**. The attributes that make up the character of this landscape can partly accommodate the proposed change. The LLCA is subject to influences from existing built development within the area which offers a degree of containment to the landscape. LLCA3 is considered to have a **Medium Susceptibility to Change** and is therefore of **Medium Sensitivity**.

Table 7.1: Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Landscape Character Receptor	Landscape Value	Susceptibility to Change	Sensitivity
LCA A1: Thames River Valley	Medium-High	Medium	Medium
LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates	Medium-High	Medium	Medium
LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands	Medium-High	Medium	Medium
LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre	Medium-High	Medium	Medium

Visual Receptor's Sensitivity

- 7.8 The Value of the visual receptor's view relates to whether the views are associated with designated landscapes, protected views or designated heritage assets and the quality of the view in terms of visual amenity. The susceptibility of the visual receptor to change considers the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view; and

extent of attention or interest that may therefore be focused on the views; and, visual amenity they experience. **Table 7.2** summarises the sensitivity of each of the previously identified visual receptors. This is based on the combined evaluation of susceptibility and value attached to the receptor together with informed professional judgement and guidance provided in GLVIA3.

Table 7.2: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Receptor and representative viewpoint (RV)	Value	Susceptibility to change	Sensitivity
Pedestrians and motorists along A4130 White Hill	Medium – views are not protected or identified in planning policy	Low – views and visual amenity is likely to be of low importance to road users	Low
Pedestrians and motorists along Thameside	Medium - views are not protected or identified in planning policy but contribute to the enjoyment of the Thames riverside	Medium – views and visual amenity is likely to be of medium importance to road users	Medium
Recreational users of the Thames Path between Remenham Club and Marsh Meadows	Medium - views are not protected or identified in planning policy but contribute to the enjoyment of the Thames riverside	High – views and visual amenity is likely to be of high importance to recreational users of the Thames Path	Medium-High
Recreational users of the Chiltern Way between Remenham Lane and Remenham Court	Medium - views are not protected or identified in planning policy but contribute to the enjoyment of the local countryside	High – views and visual amenity is likely to be of high importance to recreational users of the Chiltern Way	Medium-High

Effects during the Construction Phase

- 7.9 The key aspects of the demolition and construction phase which have potential to affect the receptors have been identified as: demolition operations; construction machinery (including tower cranes); material stockpiles; scaffolding; vehicle movements; contractor site compound, and the incremental appearance of the building itself during the construction process. Effects arising during the construction phase are short term or temporary effects and have, therefore, not been separately described. In general terms, the construction effects of the Proposed Development would be no greater in magnitude than those described below for the completed development but would generally be either neutral or adverse effects. The exception to this would be effects associated with plant and additional vehicles during

construction, which would likely be visible from a wider area than the completed development.

Effects during the Operational Phase

- 7.10 The effects of the Scheme Proposal in its first year of operation (when the development is complete and occupied) would be permanent. The effects are set out in **Tables 7.3** and the changes experienced are described in the following paragraphs.

Changes to Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Receptors

LCA A1: Thames River Valley

- 7.11 Once completed, the Scheme Proposal would directly affect a very small part of the identified LCA A1 Thames River Valley. There would be a small and localised increase in the volume and density of development, albeit within the footprint of existing development which is currently present on Site and within an area which is already developed. The Scheme Proposal would integrate with the existing buildings on the Site and immediate surrounding area and would not noticeably change the character or key characteristics of the surrounding landscape. Given the position of the proposed new building in relation to the existing buildings on Site, together with the surrounding building and mature tree cover within the surrounding area, there would be limited perception of change in the LCA beyond the immediate proximity of the Site.
- 7.12 The implementation of the Scheme Proposal would result in a **Very Low** magnitude of change to the character of the LCA A1 Thames River Valley. The type of effect would be **Neutral** with no overall harm or improvement.

LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates

- 7.13 The Scheme Proposal would represent a small-medium change to the Site which would directly affect the character of a small part of LLCA1. The Scheme Proposal would involve the demolition of an existing single storey building (with pitched roof) of residential accommodation and a ‘pavillion’ (both of unremarkable design and quality) and replace it with a new three storey block of residential accommodation and the creation of new landscaped spaces. The Scheme Proposal would be of notably higher quality design and construction and would include significant enhancements to the landscape within the Site. The framework of existing mature trees within the Site would be retained and new areas of native and ornamental planting would be introduced within a new courtyard garden area, new patio (on the site of the former ‘pavillion’) and new linear green space along the northern edge of the Site. Proposed building materials would take reference from the adjoining parts of the Conservation Area and would complement the existing palette of materials on the Site.
- 7.14 The existing character of LLCA1 is currently influenced by the existing residential accommodation on Site and by the residential properties which surround the site to the north and east. The residential use of the proposed new building is therefore considered appropriate to the existing character of both the Site and the local surrounding area within LLCA1.
- 7.15 The footprint of buildings on the Site would remain very similar to the existing footprint but the height of the proposed building would be greater than that of the

existing building. However, the overall scale and massing of the new building would be in keeping with the existing buildings to be retained within the Site. This would result in a modest intensification of built form on the Site and would change the character and appearance within the Site itself but would have negligible impact on the character of the surrounding area due to the low visibility of the proposals from the wider area.

- 7.16 The proposals would have a beneficial effect on the northern edge of the Site due to the demolition of the 'pavillion' building and positioning of the new building set back from the northern boundary. This would create more open space between the proposals and the Remenham Row development and allow the creation of a new linear green space with planting which would create an improved edge to the Site.
- 7.17 The implementation of the Scheme Proposal would result in a **Low** Magnitude of Change to LLCA1. The type of effect would be **Neutral** with no overall harm or improvement to the character of the area.

LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands

- 7.18 There would be no direct change to the character of LLCA2 –Remenham Woodlands as a result of the Proposed Development. From isolated parts of the character area on higher ground, there would be glimpsed the top of the Proposed Development. However, it is considered that the Scheme Proposal would not be any more noticeable than existing features within the Site and the key characteristics of LLCA2 would remain unchanged and the general character of the area would not be affected. The Scheme Proposal would result in a **Negligible Magnitude of Change** and a **Neutral Effect**.

LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre

- 7.19 There would be no direct effect on the landscape character of LLCA3 – Henley on Thames Town Centre as a result of the Proposed Development. From isolated parts of the character area within close proximity of the Site (principally the stretch of tow path opposite the Site), there would be glimpsed views of the top of the proposed new building seen behind the existing building which faces the river. However, this would not affect any of the features or key characteristics of LLCA3 and the general character of the area would not be affected. The Scheme Proposal would result in a **Negligible Magnitude of Change** and a **Neutral Effect**.

Table 7.3: Summary of effects on landscape receptors

Landscape Character Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Overall Level and Type of Effect
LCA A1: Thames River Valley	Medium	Very Low	Minor to Negligible Neutral
LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates	Medium	Low	Minor Neutral
LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Neutral

LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Neutral
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Effects on Visual Receptors and Representative Views

- 7.20 The likely key effects of the Scheme Proposal on the visual receptors identified during the baseline study are discussed below and summarised in **Table 7.4**. Reference is made to the changes experienced to the associated representative views within this analysis. Reduced versions of each view with the Proposed Development in place are included in the text below and full size versions of this together with the existing baseline view are included in **Appendix 4** and should be referred to alongside this assessment.

Pedestrians and motorists along A4130 White Hill

- 7.21 The A4130/White Hill road crosses the river via Henley Bridge and passes eastwards to the north of the Site and at a higher level than Wargrave Road and the Site. During summer, in views from the road, the Site is almost entirely screened by the vegetation and buildings in the foreground and middleground of views.
- 7.22 In the winter, for a short section of road close to the junction with Wargrave Road (e.g. RV2) the white rendered form of the rear elevation of the upper storey of Thamesfield House is discernible behind these trees and the outline of the more recent extensions is also discernible. However, neither make a notable positive contribution to the amenity of the view.
- 7.23 In summer, the Proposed Development would unlikely be discernible from the A4130 due to the screening effect of vegetation and/or other buildings in the view. From Henley Bridge, the Proposed Development would be predominantly screened by the boat house in the foreground of the view and surrounding vegetation. There may be occasional glimpses of part of the roof line seen beyond the vegetation (as demonstrated by the visualisation for RV6) but this would be a very small change to the background of the view and would be barely discernible to pedestrians and road users whilst crossing the bridge.
- 7.24 In winter, as the road passes close to the junction with Wargrave Road (e.g. RV2) the Proposed Development is likely to be discernible in the background of the view, seen behind the mature trees in the foreground. It would appear taller than the existing Thamesfield House and therefore screen the white rendered house behind but would be significantly lower than the tree line formed by the trees in the foreground of the view. A materials palette of soft-coloured bricks and cladding is proposed which would be visually recessive and integrate the Proposed Development with the background. Consequently, the Proposed Development is likely to be less visible in the view than the existing white rendered building on the Site.
- 7.25 The magnitude of change would range from **Negligible** (all summer views) to **Low** (winter views from close proximity viewpoints e.g. RV2) and the Type of Effect would be **Neutral** (ie no overall improvement or deterioration to the character or quality of views experienced by the receptor).

Pedestrians and motorists along Thameside

- 7.26 Thameside is a local road which passes along the western bank of the River Thames and also forms part of the Thames Path National Trail. For much of its route, pedestrians and motorists moving along Thameside would not experience views of the Scheme Proposal due to the presence of moored boats in the foreground of views and mature trees and buildings on the east side of the river.
- 7.27 The clearest views of Thamesfield House and the Proposed Development are from the southern end of the road (e.g. RV5). From this point, the existing view looks across moored boats on the River Thames towards the existing original part of Thamesfield House and surrounding lawn. Mature vegetation partly screens the house and Remenham Wood forms a strong wooded backdrop and horizon to the view.
- 7.28 The Proposed Development would result in a small change to the view. The proposed building would be visible towards the background of the view, seen behind the northern end of Thamesfield House and partly screened by the vegetation in the foreground of the view. The proposed materials palette of soft-coloured brick and cladding colours would be visually recessive and the proposed building would integrate with the background and be less visible in the view than the existing building. Thamesfield House would remain the most prominent feature in the view and views to the wooded backdrop and horizon to the view would be preserved.
- 7.29 The magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development would be **Low** and the type of effect would be **Neutral** with no overall harm or improvement to the quality or amenity of the view.

Recreational users of the Thames Path between Remenham Club and Marsh Meadows

- 7.30 South of Thameside, the Thames Path becomes a footpath which passes along the west bank of the river into Marsh Meadows, an area of public open space. At the northern end, (e.g. RV4) as the path passes opposite the Site, the existing view comprises the extended Thamesfield House and surrounding lawn which extends across the centre of the view. Mature vegetation along the riverside (some of which is evergreen) partially screens the house, particularly in summer when the vegetation is in leaf. Beyond the house, the slopes of Remenham Wood form a wooded backdrop and horizon to the view.



- 7.31 From RV4 most of the Proposed Development would be screened from view by the vegetation in the foreground of the view. A small corner of the extension would be visible beyond the trees but this would sit below the horizon line formed by the wooded ridge and would not significantly change the character or appearance of the view.
- 7.32 From further south on the footpath e.g. RV3, in summer the Site is almost entirely screened from view by the mature vegetation on the east side of the river. In winter, the older, white parts of Thamesfield House can be glimpsed in the background of the view, seen beyond the mature vegetation. The more recent brick buildings on the east side of the site blend with the vegetation and other buildings in the background of the view and are barely discernible.
- 7.33 In summer the Proposed Development is unlikely to be visible from viewpoint 03 due to the screening effect of the mature vegetation which lines the riverbanks. In winter, the proposed extension is also likely to be barely discernible in the background of the view particularly if constructed using materials with soft recessive colours which would blend with the vegetation seen behind. Overall, for users of the Thames Path travelling north, the magnitude of change to views and visual amenity experienced would be **Low** and the Type of Effect would be **Neutral**.
- 7.34 For users of the Thames Path traveling south on the east side of the Thames (e.g. RV7) and approaching Henley from the north, the Proposed Development would be screened from view by the vegetation and buildings which line the bank of the river and there would be **Negligible** change to the views or visual amenity for users of the footpath.

Recreational users of the Chiltern Way between Remenham Lane and Remenham Court

- 7.35 From the Chilterns Way footpath, as it passes through an area of elevated land west of Remenham Wood, there are long distance views across the Thames Valley towards the urban area of Henley. Woodland on high ground to the south of the town forms a wooded horizon to the view. Mature trees in the foreground and middleground of the

view screen much of the urban area beyond, including the Site (particularly in summer). From viewpoint 01 the rear elevation of the upper storey of the existing Thamesfield House is discernible in the view. However, the building does not make a positive contribution to the view as its white colour, linear form and mainly blank elevation contrasts with the more varied building profiles and softer toned materials which characterise the urban area which is seen in the background of the view.

- 7.36 The extension proposals would be discernible from viewpoint 01 and would result in a small change to the view. The proposed extension would appear taller than the existing Thamesfield House and obscure most of the existing building. However, the proposed extension would sit below the roofline of other buildings seen in the background of the view. With the proposed material palette of soft recessive brick and tile colours, it is likely that the proposed extension would be less visible in the view than the existing building; It would also be partly screened by vegetation in the middleground of the view and would integrate better with the built form seen in the background of the view than the existing building. Overall, the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of view 1 would be Very Low and is likely to be considered as an improvement.
- 7.37 Overall, the magnitude of change to views and visual amenity experienced by users of the Chilterns Way would be **Very Low** and the Type of Effect would be **Neutral**

Table 7.4: Assessment of Effects on Visual Receptors

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Level and type of effect
Pedestrians and motorists along A4130 White Hill	Low	Varying between Negligible (all summer views) to Low (winter views from close proximity viewpoint)	Minor to Negligible Neutral
Pedestrians and motorists along Thameside	Medium	Varying between Low (at southern end of route) and Negligible (remainder of the route)	Varying between Minor Neutral and Negligible
Recreational users of the Thames Path between Remenham Club and Marsh Meadows	Medium-High	Varying between Low (footpath users walking north past the site) to Negligible (footpath users walking southward approaching Henley from the North)	Varying between Minor to Moderate Neutral to Negligible
Recreational users of the Chiltern Way between Remenham Lane and Remenham Court	Medium-High	Varying between Very Low and Negligible	Varying between Minor Neutral to Negligible

Impacts on Green Belt Openness

- 7.38 Consideration is given below to the impact of the Proposed Development on the openness of the Green Belt in terms of both the physical and visual openness of the Green Belt compared with the existing situation. The analysis considers both quantitative and qualitative factors and includes consideration of the impact of the proposals on the five purposes and character of the Green Belt.

Visual Openness

- 7.39 The impact of the proposals on the visual openness of the Green Belt would be very limited. There would be minimal or no changes to most of the views experienced from the surrounding area (as described above in the visual assessment).
- 7.40 There would be a slight increase in the visual openness and visual permeability of the north-west side of the Site with the removal of the 'pavillion' building. This would create an increased width of undeveloped land and visual openness between the proposed new buildings and the existing development to the west (Remenham Row). However, there would also be a very slight reduction in visual openness due to the appearance of the proposed extension above the roof of the existing buildings which would slightly reduce views to the wooded hill behind, although the wooded horizon would remain clearly visible and fully intact.
- 7.41 The Proposed Development would be set back behind the existing Thamesfield House and away from the principal areas which currently contribute to the visual openness of the Green Belt in the local area i.e. the lawn and the river. The visual openness of both these areas and views across them from the Thames and the Thames Path would not be affected by the proposals
- 7.42 Overall, it is considered that there would be no significant changes to the perceived visual openness of the Site and the proposals would allow the visual openness of this part of the Green Belt to be maintained.

Physical Openness

- 7.43 The Scheme Proposal would result in the demolition of an existing single storey building and 'pavillion' with pitched roofs and replacement with a new building of three storeys with flat roof. The existing central service yard would be redesigned as a courtyard garden with a reduced area of hard surfacing and increased area of planting. The figures provided by DesignEngine demonstrate that there would be a very small increase in the building footprint (GEA) within the Site from approximately 2074m² to 2155m², a difference of 81m² c. 4%. This increase is so small that it would not be noticeable when viewing or moving around the Site.
- 7.44 There would also be a small reduction in the total area of hardstanding from c. 2986m² to c. 2846m². Overall, there would be a small reduction in the total footprint of development on the Site. There would also be an increase in areas of soft landscaping within the Site due to the introduction of new areas of planting within the courtyard and around the building. The effect of this reduction of hard surfacing and increase in planting would result in a slight increase in the physical openness of the Site in terms of the proportion of the Site that is free from development.

- 7.45 In terms of volume, the proposed buildings would result in an increase in the volume of buildings on Site from approximately 12,828m³ to 14,623m³. The height of the new buildings would be similar but slightly higher than that of the existing three storey buildings within the Site and there would be a discernible increase in the volume of built form within the Site compared with the existing situation. However, whilst the volume of buildings would increase, the proposed extension would be located behind existing buildings on the Site and the visibility and perception of this additional volume would be limited (as demonstrated in the viewpoint analysis above). This is particularly the case in views across the river from the west due to the removal of the 'pavillion' building which would reduce the perceived length of building frontage facing the river.
- 7.46 In summary, the proposals would result in a reduction in the footprint of development on the Site but an increase in the volume of development. On balance, it is considered that the physical openness of the Site would be preserved.

Green Belt Purposes and Character

- 7.47 With regards to the Green Belt purposes it is considered that the proposals would result in no material change to the contribution of the Site to the purposes. Due to the existing developed nature of the Site and restricted visibility of the Proposals from the surrounding area, the Proposals would not make a material difference to the character or appearance of the setting of Henley (purpose 4). Similarly, as the Site is already developed and the footprint of development is almost the same, the Proposals, would not contribute to sprawl (purpose 1), coalescence (purpose 2), or encroachment (purpose 3), and would not render previously developed land less attractive to deliver (purpose 5).
- 7.48 It is considered that the overall settlement pattern and character of developed land on the east side of the river that is washed over by the Green Belt would be preserved. There would be very little change to the footprint of development so the proposals would not increase the size or depth of the development area and the character of the area of settlement would be preserved.
- 7.49 The increase of residential uses on the Site compared with the existing operation (due to the addition of 14 extra units) would reflect the existing residential uses in this part of the Green Belt. Whilst there would be additional activity associated with the increase in dwellings within the Site compared with the existing situation, this would be perceived within the context of the existing retirement village and would not harm the character of the Green Belt.
- 7.50 The Site is an area of land which is already developed and comprises existing buildings and large areas of hard standing. The proposed building would be within an area of the Site which contains built form or hardstanding. The open lawns to the west of the Site would be maintained and landscape features would be enhanced. The development would be contained within the perceived settlement area and would not encroach on any areas of existing open land or impact the openness of views across the Site.

Conclusions on impact of the Proposals on Green Belt Openness

- 7.51 Whilst there would be a change to the physical openness of the Site itself (in terms of the volume of development present on the Site), it is considered that the Scheme Proposal would not have a greater impact on the physical openness of the wider Green

Belt and the purposes of including land within it than the existing development within the Site. Similarly, the Scheme Proposal would be perceived as part of the existing settlement and would not sever wider views across the Green Belt or result in a perceived reduction in openness to views. The Scheme Proposal would therefore not have a greater impact on the visual openness of this part of the Green Belt than the existing Site and would not alter the perception of openness as experienced in the wider countryside.

8. Summary and Conclusions

- 8.1 The LVIA and Green Belt Appraisal has been founded on a thorough study of the Application Site and its landscape setting. Through understanding these features and resources, a robust impact appraisal of the Scheme Proposal has been undertaken in line with good practice principles and planning policy. The Appraisal has been prepared to accompany a full planning application for the extension of the existing retirement complex to provide 17no. extra-care units.
- 8.2 The assessment identifies the baseline situation of the Application Site and its surroundings in terms of landscape character, visual amenity and contribution to Green Belt openness. This takes into account the baseline position of the Application Site which was assessed in February 2023.
- 8.3 The Application Site lies on the east side of the River Thames within an existing retirement village known as Thamesfield Village. It comprises a dense group of buildings clustered around a former Victorian country house and set within c. 1.4 ha of landscaped gardens and lawns. Lines of mature trees along the riverbank and around the site perimeter provide visual and enclosure and containment to the Site, particularly in summer. To the north of the Site is the Remenham Row retirement village and to the south is the Eyot Centre for watersports.
- 8.4 The Application Site is located within the Green Bel. It is not currently covered by any landscape designations but the forthcoming Wokingham and South Oxfordshire Local Plan Updates includes a proposal to identify land within the floodplain either side of the Thames as a Valued Landscape. Within the wider study area 1km radius from the Site, there are a number of designations relating to ecological, landscape, heritage and recreational value, including: Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area; Henley, St Mark's Road and Reading Road Conservation Area ; The Chilterns National Landscape; the Thames Path National Trail; and a number of listed buildings and structures.
- 8.5 The Scheme Proposal would see the demolition of an existing single storey residential building and the redevelopment of the area with a new three storey block of accommodation to provide 17 new units. The proposed built form would be sensitive to the scale and materiality of existing buildings within the Site and the adjoining Remenham Row development to the north. Landscape improvements would be introduced around the proposed building including a new courtyard garden (replacing an existing tarmac service yard). This would result in an increase in planting within the Site and the reinforcement and enhancement of existing landscape features along the northern site boundary.
- 8.6 The assessment identified that the proposals would remove a low quality building and area of landscape and replace it with a building of larger scale but improved quality and design and with significantly improved landscape spaces. The proposed building would be set behind the existing buildings on the Site and from most directions the proposals would be barely noticeable. The resultant effects on landscape character were therefore identified as Neutral effects with no overall improvement or deterioration arising from the changes.

- 8.7 The following effects on landscape receptors have been identified:
- LCA A1: Thames River Valley - Minor to Negligible Neutral Effect
 - LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates - Minor Neutral Effect
 - LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands - Negligible Neutral Effect
 - LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre Negligible Neutral Effect
- 8.8 The assessment identified that visual effects arising from the Proposed Development would generally be small. From most locations in the surrounding area the Proposed Development would be screened from view by the existing buildings and vegetation on the site and in the surrounding area. From a few localised areas there would be glimpsed views of the proposed building seen behind the existing Thamesfield House and its extensions. The soft colours of the proposed materials palette would be visually recessive and the proposed building would visually integrate with its surroundings. The resultant effects on landscape receptors were therefore identified as Neutral effects with the visual changes resulting in no overall improvement or deterioration to the quality or appearance of views.
- 8.9 The following effects on visual receptors have been identified:
- Pedestrians and motorists along A4130 White Hill (around junction with Wargrave Road) - Minor to Negligible Neutral;
 - Pedestrians and motorists along Thameside (on west side of the River Thames) - Varying between Minor Neutral and Negligible;
 - Recreational users of the Thames Path between Remenham Club and Marsh Meadows - Varying between Minor to Moderate Neutral to Negligible; and,
 - Recreational users of the Chiltern Way between Remenham Lane and Remenham Court - Varying between Minor Neutral to Negligible
- 8.10 In relation to Green Belt openness, it is considered that, in accordance with paragraph 149g in the NPPF, the partial redevelopment of the previously developed site, would not have a greater impact on the overall openness of the Green Belt, and the purpose of including land within it, than the existing development. The proposal would also comply with the proposed revised wording for policy 149g (as currently proposed in the July 2024 draft revised NPPF) which requires new development on Previously Developed Land to not result in substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 8.11 The Scheme Proposal would result in an increase in the volume of buildings and a reduction in the footprint of development within the Site. However, the Site would continue to have good visual containment from the wider Green Belt and changes would be largely contained within previously developed land which is perceived as part of the settlement, as opposed to the areas of open landscape to the east.
- 8.12 There would be a change to the spatial and visual characteristics of the Site itself with some increase in built form. A localised part of the Site would have a higher concentration of built form but the removal of the 'pavillion' building and positioning of the new building further away from the site boundary would increase the openness

between the Site and Remenham Row. The changes are not considered harmful to the function of the Green Belt and are not considered to have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The important areas of open river and lawn to the west and countryside to the east would be preserved and the form, bulk and general design of the development, is considered in keeping with the character of the Site and local surrounding area.

Appendix 1: Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal Methodology

The methodology for landscape and visual assessment is based on current best practice as set out in:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition, 2013 (Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment) (GLVIA3);*
- *Landscape Character Assessment, 2016 (Landscape Institute Technical Information Note 08/2015); and*
- *Visual Representation of Development Proposals, 2019 (Landscape Institute Technical Information Note 06/19).*

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) states that this type of appraisal provides a tool for identifying and assessing the “*the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity*” (Para. 1.1). It goes on to emphasise that the appraisal has two interlinked elements of: landscape, as a resource; and visual amenity, including views. The effects of both must be addressed in the assessment.

Baseline landscape appraisal methodology

The baseline landscape appraisal included a mixture of desk study and field work to identify and record the key landscape features and character of the landscape within the study area. A preliminary desk study of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and aerial photography was undertaken to establish the physical components of the Site and its surroundings. A review of the landscape character context of the Site was undertaken which referenced the current published landscape character studies relating to the study area at national, regional and local level. This was followed by fieldwork to assess the key characteristics of the local landscape character and identify local landscape character areas within the study area. The key landscape receptors (landscape character areas, landscape features or landscape characteristics) with potential to be affected by the proposed development were then identified and a judgement was made on the Value of each of these. This judgement is made based on the approach set out in GLVIA3 and as described below.

The Value of each of the identified landscape receptor was assessed with reference to the following criteria and the definitions of level of value set out in **Table 1.1**:

- *Any designations or policies (both national and local) which may be present; and,*
- *The presence or absence of other attributes which contribute to landscape value such as landscape condition, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, recreation value, perceptual aspects or associations e.g. with writers, artists or historic events*

Table 8.1: Value of Landscape Receptors

Value	Typical Level of Designation/ Rarity	Typical Examples
Very High	International, National	World Heritage Sites, and/or key features of World Heritage Sites. No potential for substitution.
High	National, Regional	National Parks or NATIONAL LANDSCAPES and/or key features of these, Scheduled Monuments, some Conservation Areas, and landscape areas with typically a significant number of Grade I/II* listed buildings, and/or Registered Historic Park and Gardens. No or limited potential for substitution.
Medium	Regional, Local	Landscape areas designated at local level e.g. Special Landscape Areas and other undesignated areas or features of notable scenic quality or recreational value with value perhaps expressed through non-official publications or demonstrable use. Limited potential for substitution.
Ordinary	Local	Landscape features or character areas which are not related to designated, or non-designated heritage assets, or a planning designation; and/or mentioned in guidebooks or on tourist maps; and/or referenced in art and literature; and/or is of little scenic or landscape importance. Considerable potential for substitution.
Low	Local	Landscape features or local character areas in poor condition or quality and/or identified for recovery.

Baseline visual appraisal methodology

The baseline visual appraisal established the area in which the Site, and emerging scheme proposals, may be visible; the different groups of people who may experience the views of the development (defined as visual receptors); and, the nature of these views. These factors interrelate, but for the purpose of the assessment are dealt with in that order.

The visibility of the Site was assessed by a walkover survey which established the area within the study area from which the Site is currently visible. The key visual receptors within this area were then identified (i.e. groups of people within this area who experience (or may experience) views of the Site).

In most assessments, unless specifically requested by the LPA, visual receptors are restricted to groups of people in publically accessible places. Normally, views from private residential properties are not included as changes to private views are not a planning consideration⁹ unless the development is likely to be so overbearing or dominating that they could result in unacceptable living conditions. Where this is possible, a separate residential visual amenity

⁹ Aldred's Case in 1610 established in English law that views from private property cannot be protected.

assessment is undertaken. In this case it was established that assessment of impacts on views from private residential properties was not required.

Following identification of the key visual receptors, representative viewpoints were identified to reflect typical views from the key visual receptors. The number and location of representative viewpoints was agreed with Wokingham Borough Council as part of pre-application discussions. A description and evaluation of the identified views was then undertaken which took into account the following:

- *type and relative numbers of people, and their occupation or activity*
- *location, nature and characteristics*
- *nature, composition and characteristics of the views (including directions)*
- *elements which may interrupt, filter or otherwise influence the views*
- *seasonal changes in the view*

Assessment of Landscape Effects

Landscape effects include:

- *Changes to, and/or complete or partial loss of features, elements, characteristics or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the Landscape/local Landscape area; and/or,*
- *Introduction of new elements or features that influence the character and distinctiveness of the Landscape/local Landscape area;*

The assessment of landscape effects considered the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the predicted effect.

The sensitivity of landscape receptors relates to the value attached to that receptor (which was established as part of the baseline assessment) and the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change or development proposed. GLVIA3 defines landscape susceptibility as “*the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies*” (Para. 5.40).

Judgements on the susceptibility to change of each of the identified landscape receptors were made based on the scale set out in **Table 1.2**.

Table 8.2: Susceptibility to change of landscape receptors

Susceptibility to change	Description
High	Landscape receptor ¹⁰ would be unlikely to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. Landscape receptor has little or no relationship to the type of development proposed and/or would be difficult to replace or substitute if lost e.g. ancient woodland, veteran trees and historic parkland. Landscape receptor is highly sensitive and would be fundamentally altered by the type of development proposed.
Medium	Landscape receptor would be compromised by the type of development proposed and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies would be compromised. Landscape receptor has some relationship to the type of development proposed and/or could be partially replaced or substituted if lost. Landscape receptor is moderately sensitive and characteristics of the receptor would be altered by the type of development proposed. The general features or character of the receptor would remain but would be weakened by the type of development proposed.
Low	Landscape receptor would be likely to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences for the maintenance of the baseline landscape character and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. Landscape receptor has a close relationship to the type of development proposed and could be easily replaced or substituted if lost. Landscape receptor is of low sensitivity and characteristics of the receptor would not be significantly altered by the type of development proposed. The general landscape character is resilient to change.

A judgement on the overall sensitivity of each landscape receptor (ranging from Very High to Very Low) was made based on the combined evaluation of susceptibility and value attached to the receptor together with informed professional judgement and guidance provided in GLVIA3.

The magnitude of landscape effect considered the size or scale of the effect, the geographical extent of the effect and the duration and reversibility of the effect.

Judgements on the magnitude of Landscape effect were broadly based on the descriptions of magnitude set out in **Table 1.3** below.

¹⁰ Includes landscape character areas, landscape elements or features and particular aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape.

Table 8.3: Magnitude of Landscape Effects

Magnitude of Effect	Definition
High	Permanent loss of all or most of the key characteristics of a landscape receptor and/or addition of major new elements which would be dominant features with little or no relationship to the landscape receptor. Changes would substantially alter the character of a large area.
Medium	Permanent partial loss or change to some of the key characteristics of a landscape receptor and/or addition of new elements which would be prominent features. Changes would result in a large change to the character of a small area or a noticeable change to a larger area.
Low	Permanent limited/localised loss or change to common characteristics of a landscape receptor and/or addition of new elements which would be noticeable features but largely in keeping with the existing character. Changes would result in a small change to the character of a large area or a noticeable change to a small area. Also includes temporary and/or reversible changes of larger scale or extent.
Very Low	Small scale changes to common characteristics of a landscape receptor and/or small scale additions of new elements which are in keeping with the existing character. Changes would not noticeably alter the character of the area. Also includes temporary and/or reversible changes of small or medium scale and extent.
Negligible / None	No, or barely discernible, change to landscape receptor

Consideration was also given to the Type of Effect in terms of whether it is Adverse, Beneficial or Neutral. Often, effects will include a combination of both beneficial and adverse effects. However, a judgement is made on the nature of the overall effect which is based on the following terms:

- *Adverse: overall harm to Landscape character/feature*
- *Beneficial: overall improvement to Landscape character/feature*
- *Neutral: a combination of both adverse and beneficial effects with no overall harm or improvement to Landscape character/feature*

Assessment of Visual Effects

Visual effects include:

- *Changes to, and/or complete or partial loss of features, elements, characteristics or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the view; and/or,*
- *Introduction of new elements or features that influence the character and distinctiveness of the view;*

The assessment of visual effects considered the sensitivity of the visual receptor and the magnitude of the predicted effect.

The sensitivity of the visual receptor comprised a judgement on the value attached to the views and an assessment of the susceptibility of each receptor to the type of change proposed.

A judgement on the value attached to the views was made with reference to the following criteria and the definitions of value set out in **Table 1.4**.

- *Planning designations e.g. Designated Views or Protected Vistas identified in local or regional planning policy'*
- *Other designations relating to landscape features or heritage assets e.g. key views identified in conservation area appraisals or recorded in citations for listed buildings or registered parks and gardens; and,*
- *Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors e.g. views identified in guidebooks or on tourist maps, official viewpoints (often with sign boards and interpretive material) or views referenced in literature or art*

Table 8.4: Value attached to views

Value	Typical level of designation / Rarity	Typical Examples
Very High	International, National	Views associated with sites of international importance e.g. World Heritage sites
High	National, Regional,	Designated views of national or regional importance e.g. views of noted importance to sites of national importance e.g. Scheduled Monuments, NATIONAL LANDSCAPES, Grade I/Grade II* listed buildings, and/or Registered Historic Park and Gardens
Medium	Regional, Local	Views identified or protected at local level e.g. identified in local planning policy or guidance and views associated with heritage or landscape features of regional or local importance e.g. some Conservation Areas and Grade II/II* listed buildings. May also include views which are undesigned but value perhaps expressed through non-official publications or its contribution to enjoyment of a designated or non-designated heritage asset.
Ordinary	Local	The view from the identified visual receptor is not related to designated, or non-designated, heritage assets, or a planning designation; and/or mentioned in guidebooks or on tourist maps; and/or referenced in art and literature; but contributes positively to the visual amenity experienced by the receptor.
Low	Local	The view from the identified visual receptor does not make a positive contribution to local visual amenity.

The assessment of susceptibility of visual receptors was based on the approach set out in para 6.32 of GLVIA3 which notes that:

- *‘the susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of:*
- *The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations: and,*
- *The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations’.*

Judgements on the susceptibility of a visual receptor to change are broadly based on the descriptions of susceptibility set out in **Table 1.5** below.

Table 8.5: Susceptibility to change of visual receptors

Susceptibility	Description
High	Receptors for whom the view and visual amenity is of high importance to the experience or activity including: people engaged in outdoor recreation whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views e.g. waymarked walks through the landscape; and visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience.
Medium	Receptors for whom the view and visual amenity is of moderate importance to the experience or activity including: Travellers on most road or rail routes
Low	Receptors for whom the view and visual amenity is of low importance to the experience or activity including: people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; and, people at their place of work whose attention may be focussed on their work, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life.

A judgement on the overall sensitivity of each visual receptor (ranging from Very High to Very Low) was made based on the combined evaluation of susceptibility and value attached to the receptor together with informed professional judgement and guidance provided in GLVIA3.

The magnitude of visual effect considered the size or scale of the effect, the geographical extent of the effect, and the duration and reversibility of the effect.

Judgements on the magnitude of visual effect were broadly based on the descriptions of magnitude set out in **Table 1.6** below.

Table 8.6: Magnitude of Visual Effects

Magnitude of Effect	Definition
High	Permanent loss of all or most of the key characteristics of a view and/or addition of major new elements which would be dominant features. Changes would substantially alter the character of the view.
Medium	Permanent partial loss or change to some of the key characteristics of the view and/or addition of new elements which would be prominent features. Changes would result in a large change to the character of a small part of the view or a noticeable change to a larger part of the view.
Low	Permanent limited/localised loss or change to a view and/or addition of new elements which would be noticeable features but largely in keeping with the existing character of the view. Changes would result in a small change to the character of a large part of the view or a noticeable change to a small part of the view. Also includes temporary and/or reversible changes of larger scale or extent within the view.
Very Low	Small scale changes to common characteristics and/or small scale additions of new elements to the view. Changes would not noticeably alter the character of the view. Also includes temporary and/or reversible changes of small or medium scale and extent.
Negligible / None	No, or barely discernible, change to the view.

Overall level and Type of Effect (both landscape effects and visual effects)

For both landscape and visual receptors a final judgement was made on the overall level and type of effect. This was assessed based on professional judgement and considered both the magnitude of change due to the Proposed Scheme and the sensitivity of the affected receptor. The table below has been a tool which has assisted with this process.

Magnitude of Change		Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
	High	Major	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor	Minor to Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor to Negligible	Negligible
	Very Low	Minor	Minor to Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
	Negligible/None	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

A judgement on the Type of Effect in terms of whether it is Adverse, Beneficial or Neutral. was made (acknowledging that effects often include a combination of both beneficial and adverse effects). The judgement on the nature of the overall effect was based on the following terms:

- ***Adverse:*** overall harm to the character/quality of the view and loss of visual amenity
- ***Beneficial:*** overall improvement to the character/quality of the view and improvement of visual amenity
- ***Neutral:*** no overall harm or improvement to the view or visual amenity (likely to be the result of a combination of both adverse and beneficial effects or very small changes)

Appendix 2: Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance

Legislative Framework

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) provides a basis for closer co-operation on landscape issues across Europe and was signed and ratified in the UK. This provides recognition of the importance of landscape matters and aims to improve approaches to the planning, management and protection of landscapes throughout Europe.

The ELC defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. It includes ‘townscape’, as well as all forms of rural landscape.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in March 2012 and provided a full statement of the Government’s planning policies. A revision to the NPPF was adopted by MHCLG in July 2018, with further revisions in February 2019, July 2021, September 2023 and December 2023. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is ‘*a presumption in favour of sustainable development*’ (para 11). Three overarching objectives for achieving sustainable development are identified (para 8) as: an economic objective; a social objective; and an environmental objective.

The NPPF sets out a hierarchical approach to landscape protection. Paragraph 180 states that the planning system should ‘*contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment*’ by a number of things including:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...(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 .*

No specific guidance is provided on what constitutes a ‘valued landscape’. However, paragraph 181 states that ‘*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*’.

Paragraph 182 states that the highest status of protection should be afforded to National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now referred to as National Landscapes).

The NPPF also sets out that development proposals should be sensitive to local character and the landscape setting of surrounding built environment with Chapter 12 of the Framework outlining Government's guidance regarding a requirement for well-designed and beautiful

places. Within this, paragraph 131 establishes that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It states that *'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.*

Section 13 of the NPPF sets out guidance for protecting Green Belt land and states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is *"to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence"*.

Paragraph 143 sets out five purposes of the Green Belt as follows:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

Paragraph 154 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless it corresponds with a series of exceptions which includes:

"limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) has been issued by the Government as a web based resource. This is intended to provide more detailed guidance and information with regard to the implementation of national policy set out in the NPPF.

In the Natural Environment guidance category of the NPPG, Paragraph 006 (Reference ID: 8-006-20190721) refers to green infrastructure and states:

'The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty'.

Paragraph 037 (ID: 8-037-20190721) supports the use of Landscape Character Assessment as a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It also supports the use of LVIA's to demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on a landscape.

Paragraph: 001 (ID: 64-001-20190722) describes the factors that should be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt and states that openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects.

In the Design guidance category of the PPG, (Paragraph 001 Reference ID: 26-001-20191001) the guidance supports paragraph 130 of the NPPF which states that *'permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents'*. It also refers to the accompanying National Design Guide¹¹ which sets out ten characteristics for a well-designed place:

- Context – enhances the surroundings.
- Identity – attractive and distinctive.
- Built form – a coherent pattern of development.
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
- Nature – enhanced and optimised.
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive.
- Uses – mixed and integrated.
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- Resources – efficient and resilient.
- Lifespan – made to last.

Local Planning Context

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010)

The Core strategy sets out the vision for how the Wokingham Borough will develop in the period to 2026 and how the council aims to protect and enhance the good quality of life enjoyed in the borough.

Policy CP11: Proposals Outside Development Limits (including countryside), states that:

'In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and

¹¹ Ministry for Homes, Communities & Local Government (2019) *National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places*

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and

3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;...'

The Core Strategy also includes Policy CP12: Green Belt, which notes that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development.

Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping, seeks that proposals:

- a) 'Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development*
- b) Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways*
- c) Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside*
- d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features*
- e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.'*

Wokingham Borough Development Plan – Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014)

The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) adds extra detail to the policies within the Core Strategy. Together, these two documents set out how the Borough will develop up until 2026.

Policy CC03 : Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping, states that:

'Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

a) Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development

...

c) Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside

d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.

3. Development proposals which would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of areas of green infrastructure will not be acceptable.'

The document also includes Policy TB01, which requires development for restricted defined purposes to maintain the openness, and not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

Policy TB21: Landscape Character, states that:

- i) '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.'*
- ii) 'Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.'*

Policy TB23 : Biodiversity and Development, states that:

'2. Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:

- a) Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing*
- b) Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation*
- c) Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.'*

Other Supplementary Planning Documents

Wokingham Borough Council Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012)

The Design Guide promotes best practice in the initial stages of the design process. The Design Guide sets out key design principles for new development identifying that the design response:

'The Core Strategy makes it clear that good design (as defined in Section 1.4) is important for all development proposals, regardless of the proposed use, scale of development or location.

A number of key urban design objectives, or principles, can be identified from the Core Strategy spatial objectives, vision and strategy and strategic policies, as follows:

Context and character

- Responding positively to the existing context (CP3);*
- Retaining or enhancing the high quality of the built and natural environment, including its historic character (CP1, CP14);*

- *Responding appropriately to the existing character and identity of the area (CP3, CP11); and*
- *Relating well to neighbours (CP3);*

...

Sustainable communities

- *Providing functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes that will stand the test of time (CP1, CP2, CP3);*
- *Ensuring a high quality design of development proposals (CP3);*
- *Contributing to sense of place (CP3); and*
- *Meeting the needs of users without a negative impact on others (CP3);*

Sustainable development

...

- *Maintaining or enhance biodiversity (CP3, CP7);...'*

Designations

The Site is located within the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area (within Wokingham Borough). Henley, St Mark's Road and Reading Road Conservation Area is located to the west of the Site, centred around the urban area of Henley within the South Oxfordshire District.

To the south of the Site, on the southern side of the Thames, the Thames Path a long distance footpath, runs along the edge of the river. Several heritage assets are located in close proximity to the Site, including:

- Park Place, and Temple Combe – grade II* Registered Park and Garden approximately 50m east of the Site.
- Fawley Court and Temple Island - grade II* Registered Park and Garden approximately 750m north of the Site.
- Friar Park – grade II Registered Park and Garden approximately 890m west of the Site.
- A cluster of grade II listed buildings on White Hill close to the Henley Bridge including – The Little Angel, Bird Place, Bird Place Cottage, Henley Royal Regatta and the Henley Bridge itself.
- The grade II listed River Terrace and associated walls located on the opposite side of the Thames, on Thameside.
- There are a substantial number of listed buildings within the centre of Henley grouped around the historic centre.

The Chilterns National Landscape is located to the north, west and south of Henley-on-Thames (approximately 750m north of the Site at the closest point).

The Site is washed-over by the Green Belt, between the urban areas of Henley to the west and Wargrave to the south.

Within the Local Plan Updates for both Wokingham and South Oxfordshire, land either side of the Thames within the floodplain is identified as proposed areas of 'Valued Landscape'.

Appendix 3: Supporting Figures and Photographs



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- Site Boundary
- Study Area

CLIENT:
Retirement Villages Developments Ltd

PROJECT:
Thamesfield, Henley on Thames

DRAWING:
Figure 1 - Site Location

PROJECT NUMBER:
RETH3002

DRAWING NUMBER:
01

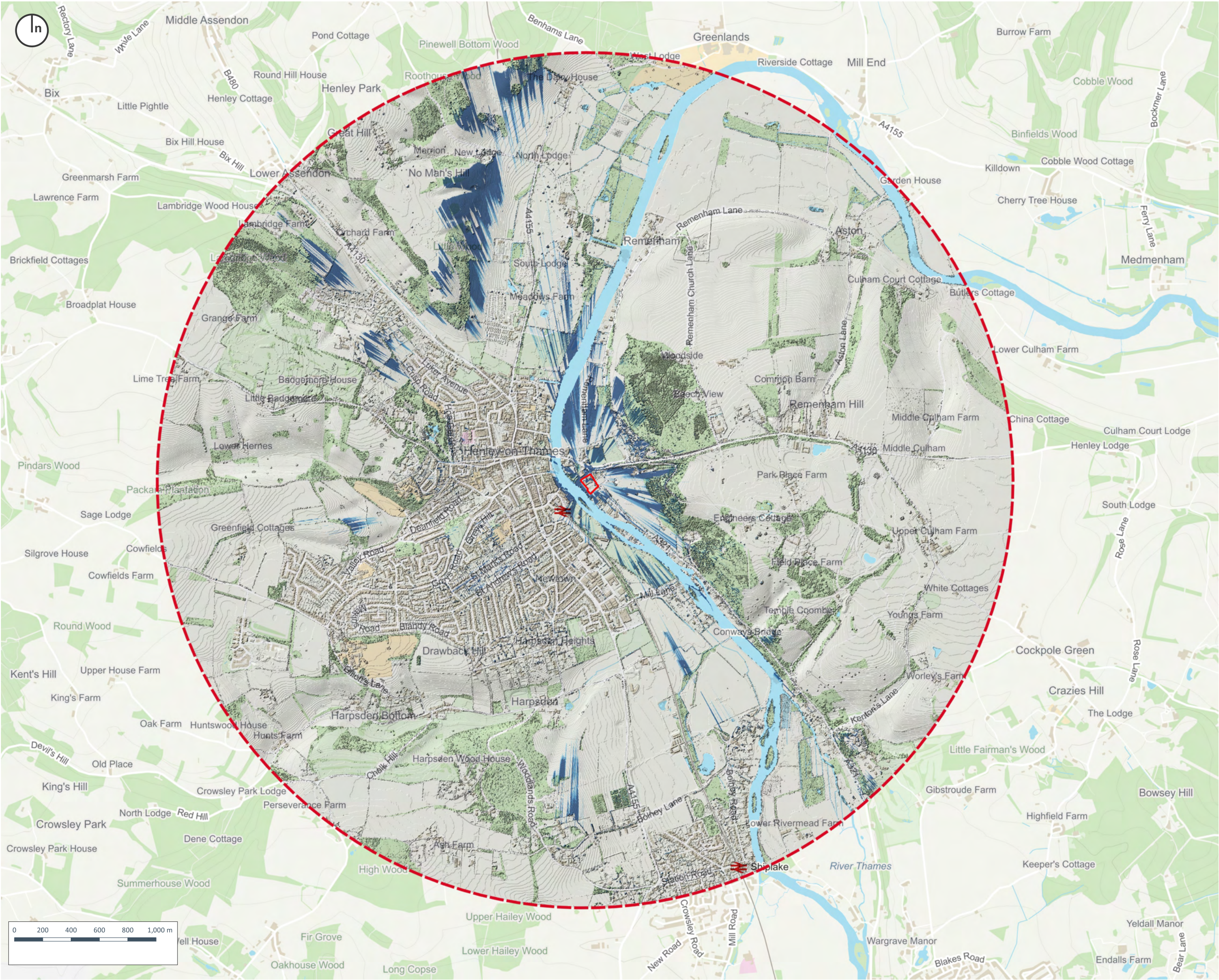
CHECKED BY:
JE

REVISION:
1.0

STATUS:
Draft

DATE:
September 2023

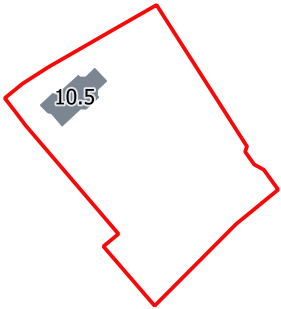
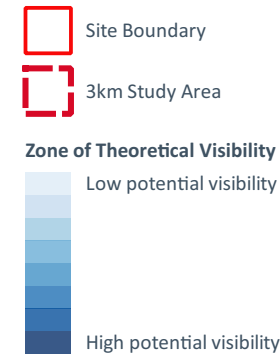
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CLIENT:
Retirement Villages Developments Ltd

PROJECT:
Thamesfield, Henley on Thames

DRAWING:
Figure 2.1 - Zone of Theoretical Visibility (3km)

PROJECT NUMBER:
RETH3002

DRAWING NUMBER:
02.1

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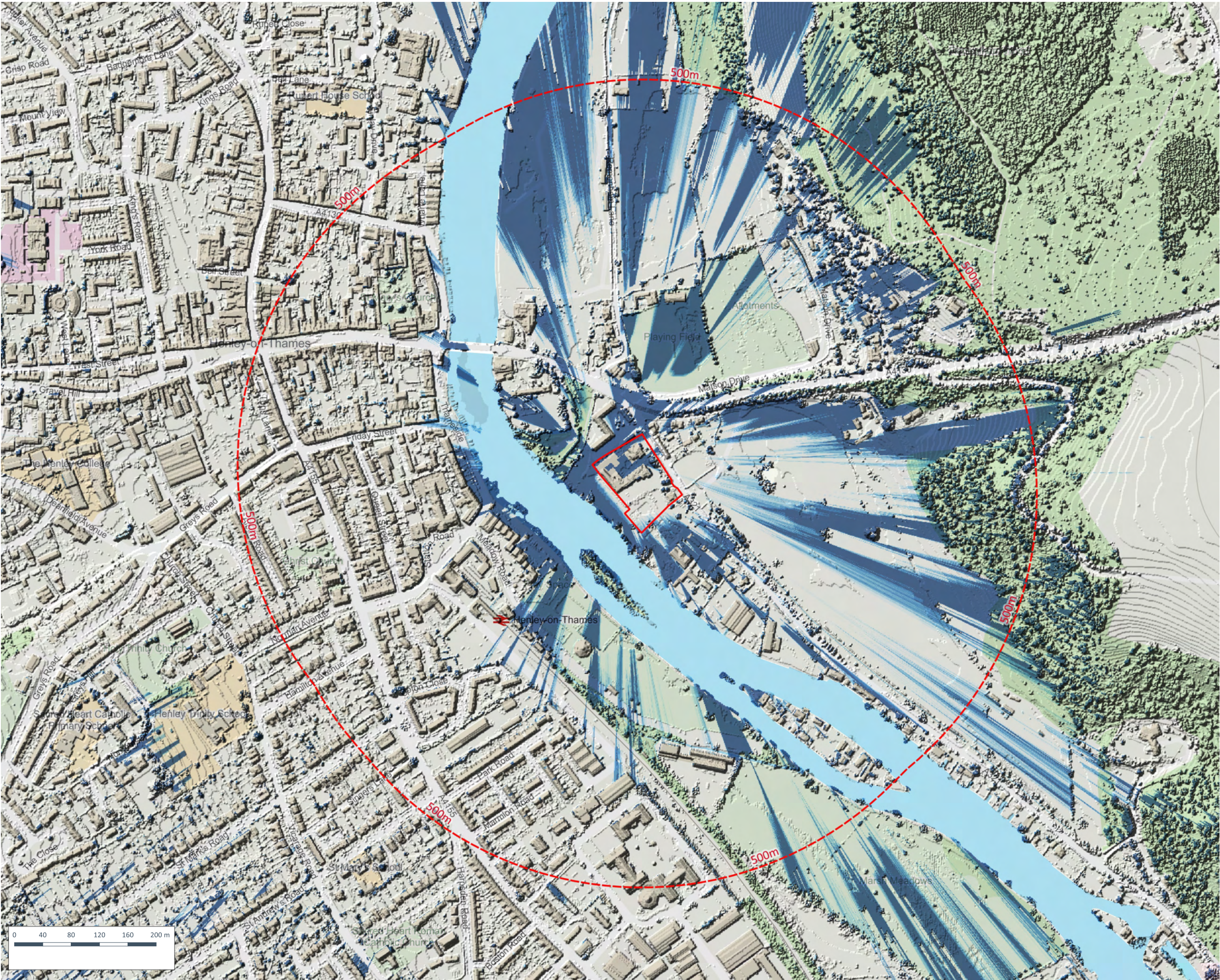
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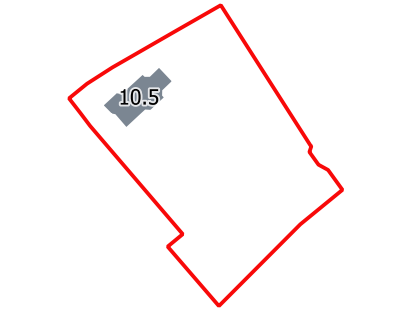
Site Boundary

Study Area

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Low potential visibility

High potential visibility



CLIENT:
Retirement Villages Developments Ltd

PROJECT:
Thamesfield, Henley on Thames

DRAWING:
Figure 2.2 - Zone of Theoretical Visibility (500m)

PROJECT NUMBER:
RETH3002

DRAWING NUMBER:
02.2

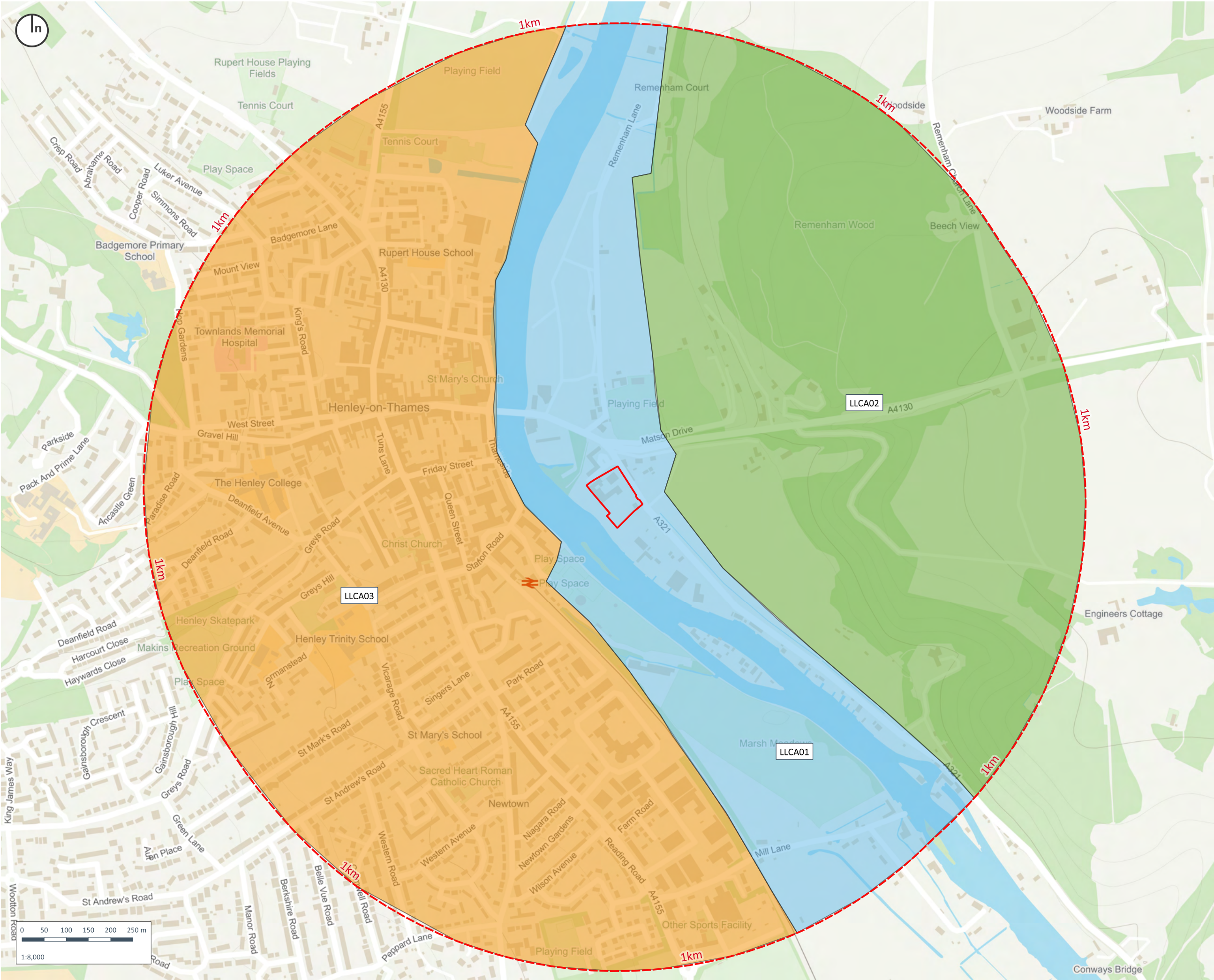
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- Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCA)
- LLCA1 – Thames Path Parkland Estates
 - LLCA2 – Remenham Woodlands
 - LLCA3 – Henley-on-Thames Town Centre

CLIENT:

Retirement Villages Developments Ltd

PROJECT:

Thamesfield, Henley on Thames

DRAWING:

Figure 3 - Local Landscape Character Areas

PROJECT NUMBER:

RETH3002

DRAWING NUMBER:

03

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1.0

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- Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Local authority districts
- Views

CLIENT:
Retirement Villages Developments Ltd

PROJECT:
Thamesfield, Henley on Thames

DRAWING:
Figure 4 - Representative Viewpoint Location

PROJECT NUMBER:
RETH3002

DRAWING NUMBER: 04
CHECKED BY: JE

REVISION: 1.0
STATUS: Draft

DATE: September 2023
SCALE: 1:8,000 @ A3

**Appendix 4: Baseline Photographs and Accurate
Visual Representations (AVRs) for
Representative Viewpoints
(prepared by Preconstruct) (separate
A3 document)**

**Appendix 5: River Thames Valued Landscape
Narrative (extract from: Wokingham
Borough Council Valued Landscape
Assessment – September 2024)**

River Thames Valued Landscape Narrative

River Thames Valued Landscape Narrative

It is a part of the river in which to dream of bygone days, and banish forms and faces, and things that might have been, but are not, confound them.

Jerome K Jerome, 1889, Three Men in a Boat

Introduction

The River Thames Valued Landscape centres on the River Thames which forms the northern boundary of the borough and the ancient boundary between the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia. The River Thames arises in Lechlade, Wiltshire, has the largest water catchment of Britain's rivers and is the longest river entirely in England (215 miles, or 346 km). It passes through Oxford, Reading, Henley-on-Thames, Maidenhead and Windsor. The navigation starts at Lechlade near its source and continues to Teddington Lock in Richmond, where the river becomes tidal. Navigation in the tidal Thames continues to the Pool of London and onwards to the North Sea.

The valued landscape roughly follows the line of the flood plain but takes in higher ground where settlements, land use or features are intrinsically linked with the landscape of the river. The valued landscape's northern boundary is determined by the borough boundary. The River Thames Valued Landscape abuts the Remenham Chalk and River Loddon Valued Landscapes to the east and south respectively.

Attributes of the valued landscape

Please note that the standard approach of referring to the left and right banks of the river is used in this text. Left refers to the left bank, and right to the right bank when facing downstream.

Landscape quality (condition) – The Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2004) identified this as a high-quality landscape and this is clear and evident from any visit to the area. There are some elements of the landscape that are industrialised to a limited extent, for example the western end of the landscape at the confluence with the River Kennet, but even here the built form has quality and historic importance and adds to, rather than detracts from, the landscape quality. In other places, housing or other built form constructed in more recent years generally detracts from the natural landscape, however the strength of character and quality given to the landscape by the River Thames and its associated landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage over-ride and over-rule the negative impacts of less well-judged development.

Scenic Quality – The LCA (2004) states that the Thames River Valley (A1) LCA is a 'landscape of overall high quality' and 'this is because the area has a strong landscape character which is in

*generally good condition.*¹ The LCA states that *'the strong character is derived from the distinctive river channel with associated waterside habitats and the presence of picturesque and traditional settlements on the floodplain edge'*². In addition, road and rail crossings provide focal points and interest when viewed from the navigation and the national trail.

Rarity – The Thames is Britain's largest river in terms of catchment area (though not in terms of length or discharge). The landscape of the Thames main river is extremely rare and the landscapes of crossing points, particularly those like Sonning and Henley-on-Thames where the settlement is perched above the river on rocky outcrops (chalk in this case) are rarer still. The bridges at such road crossings are also a rare element, as are the Conservation Areas and listed buildings often found at such points. The bridges over the Thames of the Great Western Railway (GWR) are of great historical significance and rarity. Built in 1840 (widened in 1892), the GWR bridge at the confluence with the River Kennet at the western end of the part of the River Thames Valued Landscape that lies within the borough, is one of I K Brunel's original railway bridges, with another being Maidenhead Bridge, in the neighbouring Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The other railway bridge in this valued landscape is at Wargrave, on the GWR's Henley branch line built in 1857. The bridge is an iron structure in contrast to I K Brunel's bridge which is built on skew having central elliptical arch with two round flood arches to either side. In Wargrave and Remenham, footpaths called 'Ferry Lane' approach the river affording views but no longer any crossing points. By definition, all river crossings are both intimately associated with, and owe their being, to the riverine landscape but because of the size of the river and the history of the transport corridor these bridges, road and rail, are particularly important.

Representativeness – There are other such landscapes that are similar to the River Thames in this area (such as Thames at Wallingford) but they are rare. The landscape here incorporates fine villages including the settlements of Sonning, Wargrave and Henley-on-Thames which grew up to service the trade along the river, a major trade route before the development of toll-roads in the 18th century. These villages centre on conservation areas which run from the settlements, usually on higher ground to avoid flooding, down to the river itself. The river delineates the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire and was also the boundary between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia. The river is representative of many lowland rivers but, because it is one of the largest in the country, it is a particularly fine example.

Conservation Interests – In terms of wildlife and biodiversity, the River Thames Valued Landscape offers an almost unique habitat for wildlife because of its position as the country's largest lowland river with its in-stream habitats, emergent vegetation, flood plain habitats with examples of wetland and lowland meadow habitats.

Riverine habitats represent some of the longest uninterrupted stretches of habitat in the country. They are important as habitats in their own right and for terrestrial ecosystems and habitats, feeding nutrients and water into these and acting as dispersal and migration routes for aquatic plants and

¹ Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (2004), paragraph 5.40, page 66

² Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (2004), paragraph 5.40, page 66

animals. They are also important for terrestrial species such as bats, many species of which forage along rivers. The Thames is, therefore, particularly important for wildlife.

Species which have a particular link with the features of this valued landscape include freshwater fish and invertebrate species such as river lampreys (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) and wild salmon (*Salmo salar*) which spawn in gravel bottomed tributaries migrating up rivers from the sea where the fish spend most of their adult lives.

Terrestrial species particularly at home in and around the river are the rare Daubentons Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) and amphibians such as the grass snake (*Natrix natrix*).

Habitats of principal importance:

- Wood Pasture and Parkland habitat are present in the general area including some in adjacent valued landscapes - such as Park Place, Aston - and others within. neighbouring administrative areas – for example the parkland at Fawley Court on the left bank of the Thames, just north of Henley-on-Thames. However, the pre 1800 Parkland at Culham Court is present as scattered remnants only and that at Holme Park at Sonning can now be best described as ‘defunct’.
- Blocks of scattered Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland grow on islands or ‘eyots’ in the navigation channel and bankside with particular concentrations north of Wargrave Marsh and south-west of Sonning. Other small blocks of deciduous woodland can be found, many of which are planted around the mixed deciduous woodland habitat. Ancient woodlands tend to be located on the scarp slope of the adjacent Remenham Chalk Valued Landscape.
- An area of Lowland Fen sits on the northern end of the island largely occupied by Lower Rivermead Farm, north-west of Wargrave.
- A sizeable area of Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh sits on the right bank of the river one to two kilometres upstream of its confluence with the River Loddon.

No in-stream habitats have been identified as being of special importance on Natural England, or other mapping, but it is likely that this merely represents a survey bias against such generally inaccessible habitats. It is likely that in-stream habitats will emerge as being of importance as survey methods and efforts increase. This is likely to be the case for side channels and less well-used navigations such as Hennerton Backwater.

The Ancient Tree Inventory³ shows a wide variety of Ancient and Veteran Trees with notable aggregations around the villages and conservation areas of Sonning and Wargrave and the right bank of the river at Henley Bridge and the hamlet of Remenham.

Nature reserves and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), valuable for wildlife conservation and recreation include the Suttons Business Park and Thames Valley Park East LWS which comprises a small area of

³ The Ancient Tree Inventory is an online resource made available by the Woodland Trust. The Government refers developers to this resource in online planning guidance on Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development – last updated 5th November 2018, available at: <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/>

ponds with Biodiversity Action Plan Lowland priority Fen habitat. The site is particularly valuable for birds and amphibians and sits adjacent and to the east of a large area of restored meadows on the east bank of the river. The nature reserve and meadows are managed by the Oracle Corporation and are accessible to the public.

Charvil Meadow is a good example of a flood meadow used in the past for summer hay with the aftermath grazed off before flooding in the winter. This enhanced the diversity of the wildflowers and fauna. The site is managed by Wokingham Borough Council and is accessible to the public.

Wargrave Marsh, as its name suggests, is more accessible to boaters than from the land. It sits between the river and Hennerton Backwater which is also a navigation. The marsh was an extensive area of Lowland Fen, wet grazing and Grazing Marsh but is now subject to much scrub colonisation. This was formerly towpath but there is still pedestrian access along this, on the right bank of the river.

Ratty's Refuge at the River and Rowing Museum is a very small reserve designed as a wildlife garden for the Chelsea Flower Show in 2008. It can be viewed from the terrace by the museum café.

Cultural heritage and built form - the valued landscape encompasses four conservation areas, three of them based around the riverside villages of Sonning and Wargrave and the hamlet of Remenham. The last of the conservation areas is based on the area on the right bank of the River Thames and surrounding Henley Bridge and the Leander club, the traditional home and start line of the Henley Royal Regatta.

In addition, there are over a hundred listed buildings and structures in this valued landscape area, with concentrations in the four conservation areas: Remenham; Henley Bridge with five listed buildings, Remenham Church with two listed buildings, Sonning with 47 listed buildings and Wargrave with 35 listed buildings.

Notable structures outside the conservation areas include: the Grade II listed structure and Scheduled Monument, 19th century Railway Bridge designed and built by IK Brunel. The Horseshoe Bridge is on the western edge of the River Thames Valued Landscape, dating back to 1892 and is attached to the railway bridge designed and built by IK Brunel. Sitting adjacent to East Reading in the south-west of the valued landscape it crosses the River Kennet and marks the south-western most boundary of the valued landscape. In the north-eastern part of the valued landscape sits Aston Farmhouse a Grade II listed 16th century hall house in the open countryside. Listed separately but designed as part of the listed Grade II* Fawley Court pleasure grounds across the river in Buckinghamshire, the 18th century folly on Temple Island, is another notable structure and marks the finish line for the Henley Royal Regatta.

There are also a number of listed buildings, situated across the borough boundaries but contributing to this valued landscape, including at Shiplake in South Oxfordshire, where there is a notable aggregation of listed buildings associated with the ancient village and the college. As well as listed buildings there are Buildings of Traditional Local Character including Pool Court, set back from Thames Street at Sonning and overlooking the valued landscape. The building is listed in Pevsner and

is by architect Francis Pollen. Some of these character buildings are listed in Conservation Area Appraisals.

The valued landscape forms the setting for these conservation areas as well as for the individual buildings and structures. Indeed, the form and location of many of these buildings is in major part a response to the features of the landscape in which they sit. So, for example the Henley Royal Regatta Headquarters and Rowing Museum, a Grade II post-modern structure, designed in 1984-1986 by the Terry Farrell Partnership, is purposefully located on the right bank of the river immediately adjacent to Henley Bridge the starting point for the regatta races.

From the perspective of archaeological heritage, there is an aggregation of scheduled monuments to the south of the valued landscape. They sit on high ground, perched on the northern slopes of the chalk at Charvil, and overlook the valued landscape, which forms their setting and was clearly a foraging and hunting ground for such settlements. However, although it is important to conserve the visual link between any pre-historic settlements on high ground and the river itself, these features have not been included in the valued landscape, it being limited to the landscape of the river and its floodplain at this time.

Culturally, the River Thames is itself important as a county boundary and previously the boundary between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia. After the Norman invasion, the River Thames marked the boundary of the Royal Forest of Windsor, the Crown's premier hunting forest. Although the western part of the valued landscape falls within Bishops Bear Wood 'Chase'; the private hunting forest of the Bishops of Salisbury, who had a palace at Sonning, the river proving to be an enduring demarcation and barrier to incursion.

Wharfs and crossings also form part of the archaeological heritage of the valued landscape, including evidence for a wharf at Broken Brow (where oak from the Royal Forest of Windsor was shipped for use in the hundred years war) and the remains of the 12th Century bridge, which forms part of the sub-structure of the present-day bridge over the Thames at Henley-on-Thames. Most of the towns and villages within and adjacent to the valued landscape grew up on higher ground near wharves and crossings for reasons of trade and security. Sonning is a good example, sitting high on a chalk outcrop above the river crossing and being a seat of the Bishops of Salisbury from Saxon to Elizabethan times. These towns and villages have benefitted from the transition of the river from navigation for commerce to an important tourist route and attraction.

Recreational Value – The National Trail runs along the right bank of the river from Reading, crosses over the Thames at Sonning Bridge and then runs down the left bank until Shiplake Lock, where it deviates inland until Ferry Eyot, when it re-joins the River Thames on the left bank. At Henley-on-Thames it crosses the bridge and once again joins the right bank of the River, which it follows until it deviates slightly inland through the hamlet of Aston, before it leaves Wokingham Borough east of Lower Culham Farm.

The National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 4 is a long-distance route between London and Fishguard (Wales). It runs a short distance along the right bank of the River from Reading to Sutton's Business Park where it turns inland. From the Business Park a 'link route' runs along the Thames to Sonning,

where it again moves to higher ground through the northern part of Charvil to Wargrave and Crazies Hill where it joins NCN Route 52, which arcs north-east and turning south-east, passing out of the Borough.

The Thames navigation runs from the tidal Thames, managed by the port of London Authority, to the length of the river upstream of Teddington Lock managed by the Environment Agency. This part of the river takes the navigation upstream to the furthest navigable point at Lechlade. The River Thames Valued Landscape sits roughly central to the eastern half of the non-tidal Thames and the river in the valued landscape is therefore navigable along its entire length. Because of this traditional navigation, the river is a huge, regionally important, recreational asset, but the landscape of the river is what draws people to it. It is not a natural landscape; it has been modified and managed to benefit the people who live by it, use it or gain enjoyment from it. An example of this is the course of the prestigious and world-famous Henley Royal Regatta, held annually at this site since 1839 (apart from breaks for two world wars). Here, the river landscape and townscape is modified to increase enjoyment of the races: pavilions have been built, field hedges removed, trees are not allowed to impede the view and a new museum constructed. The focus in this reach is the river, the races and the enjoyment thereof.

Angling is popular along the length of the Thames. In the non-tidal Thames, the predominant species are roach (*Rutilus rutilus*), dace (*Leuciscus leuciscus*), bream (*Abramis brama*), chubb (*Squalius cephalus*), pike (*Esox lucius*) and perch (*Perca fluviatilis*).

Other recreational features of the landscape include facilities for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside, including local walks and areas for wildlife and bird watching. Other places offering recreational opportunities include unique venues that owe their form, function or location to the River Thames landscape. Features of value in this context include traditional and longstanding places of recreation, such as The Bull and Big House pubs at Sonning (traditionally the White Hart Hotel) the former of which is mentioned in *Three Men in a Boat*, by Jerome K Jerome (1889).

Perceptual Aspects – This is a pastoral landscape, just a short distance from transport corridors and the towns, and notwithstanding disturbance from visitors, this landscape is part of a haven of tranquillity running through the south-east region from London to Oxford and beyond. There are reservoirs of dark skies particularly in the landscape of the lower reaches below Henley-on-Thames.

Although the wider landscape of the floodplain, and views into it are tranquil, this is a busy landscape. However, in many ways its busyness is characteristic. The road and rail crossings, the boat traffic, and the walkers and cyclists are key to the River Thames landscape. Indeed, there is much evidence that the river has been a transport route since at least Anglo-Saxon times. Features relating to its recreational uses are part of the character of the landscape.

Associations – There are strong cultural associations between the landscape of the River Thames at or near this point and artists and writers including Jerome K Jerome (1859-1927), Jane Austen (1775-1817), Sir John Everett Millais PRA (1829-1896), Sir Stanley Spencer CBE RA (1891-1959) – at nearby Cookham situated downstream of this reach of the river - and William Holman Hunt OM (1827-1910) – a resident of Sonning. Modern artists associated with this landscape include the Hollywood actor

George Clooney. These associations add to the value of this riverine landscape generally but particularly the setting of sites and buildings such as the White Hart Hotel – now the Great House – which was recommended by the painter and writer George Leslie Dunlop in his seminal work – ‘Our River’. In this book he also mentions Mr Sadler, the lock keeper at Sonning Lock who was a celebrated 19th Century poet, bee-keeper and rose-grower.

In Late Victorian times numerous now-respected artists and writers took up residence in local towns and villages. Charles Kerr - a London painter who painted ‘Wargrave Church’, one of 27 of his works exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1884 and 1904 was one of many residents at the St George and Dragon Inn in that town. Vicat Cole and William Gosling are also closely associated with the river and its landscape around Wargrave and painted ‘Wargrave’ and ‘Near Wargrave on the Thames’ respectively.

Alfred Glendening (1840 - 1910) also painted the river landscape notably ‘*Gathering Rushes on the Thames near Wargrave*’. Other artists and writers who lived and worked in Wargrave are Frederick Walker, Benjamin Leader, Henry Marks, Edward Duncan and Samuel Jackson. Jackson, particularly, made many paintings of the river and village.

Henley-on-Thames too has its associated artists and whilst there is no evidence that the River Thames Valued Landscape inspired any of his earlier work, the celebrated pop musician, George Harrison MBE from ‘The Beatles’ lived in Friar Park, a few hundred yards from the river, from 1970 until his death in 2001.

Upstream and Downstream of the River Thames Valued Landscape, the river has inspired painters, writers and other artists. The associations of this landscape with the arts run wide and deep.

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