

PHOENIX PARK

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

June 2025



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Abseline was commissioned in March 2025 to prepare a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) of the Proposed Development of communications masts at Phoenix Park on behalf of Ratesu Ltd. This assessment forms part of a suite of documents which accompany the application for the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.2 This assessment defines the landscape and visual baseline environments and any known future changes; assesses their sensitivity to change; describes the key features and design rationale of the Proposed Development in relation to the mitigation of landscape and visual effects; describes the nature of the anticipated changes to the landscape and views and assesses the effects arising during all stages of development.

1.2 The Site and Proposed Development

- 1.2.1 Figure 4 places the Proposed Development within its local context and Figure 1 shows the wider context. The north eastern part of the Site is currently part of a small field of rough grassland, with the south western area forming rough grassland within the Phoenix Park small scale commercial estate, off Nelson's Lane near Hurst in Berkshire. The Site forms part of an area of farmland enclosed by Nelson's Lane to the east and south, the A321/Wokingham Road to the west and Islandstone Lane to the north. Field boundaries within this area of farmland are generally formed by fence lines, bushy hedgerows or tree belts. In the south of this area, the surrounding roads are lined by hedgerow with occasional trees, but become tree lined further north. The lowland landscapes beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site are well vegetated, with large areas of woodland, tree belts and mature hedgerows with trees. Reading (the suburb of Woodley) is located approximately 2.1km west of the Site, Wokingham 1.9km to the south and the M4 is located approximately 895m south.
- 1.2.2 The Proposed Development is two masts in the location shown on the Location Plan (drawing number 51689-XX-P1-02), along with antennae and associated infrastructure, parking and landscaping. The masts would have a lattice structure, approximately 3m wide at the base, tapering to approximately 1.2m wide at a height of 50m. They would be up to 51.5m tall, with antenna mounted at 30m and 50m, which would be approximately 21.8m end to end and 12.2m wide, which would most likely be oriented in a north west direction. Elevation drawings of the masts are provided by drawing numbers 51689-XX-P3-01 to 04. Illustrative view E in Appendix 2 illustrates similar masts with a height of 30m, which demonstrates the appearance of the lower part of the Proposed Development up to the first antenna mounting.

1.3 Competence

- 1.3.1 This report has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Abseline. Key individuals working on this project have over 24 years of experience as chartered landscape architects. The Practice is a Landscape Institute registered practice and all work is prepared and reviewed internally by senior highly experienced landscape planners with Public Inquiry experience.
- 1.3.2 To inform the assessment, a site visit was made in May 2025 to locations including representative viewpoints, the Site and wider study area by the assessment team.

1.4 Study area and Scope

- 1.4.1 It is accepted practice that the extent of the study area for a development proposal is broadly defined by where it will be visible. In this case an initial study area of 10km was used for the ZTV study shown on Figure 1, in order to ensure that potential visibility from the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB) had been considered. Figure 1 illustrates very limited visibility from the designated area. Furthermore, illustrative view A shown in Appendix 2, which is located on the A4155 near Shiplake, 7km northwest of the Site and 1km closer to the Proposed Development than the Chilterns National Landscape Boundary, shows that where the

Proposed Development is visible it would be seen against the backdrop of trees and landform beyond and barely discernible.

- 1.4.2 In practice, lattice structures similar to the proposed masts (such as pylons and wind farm meteorological masts) are very hard to see beyond 4km, due to the thin profile of their components, and tend to only be visible when backdropped by sky. Illustrative view A from the A4155 near Shiplake and illustrative view D from Forest Road north of Wokingham demonstrate locations where the proposed masts would be seen against a backdrop of vegetation and therefore would be barely perceivable. Taking this into account and the prevalence of tree cover and buildings within 5km of the Site, the study area was reduced to 3km, as effects beyond this distance would be negligible given the very limited visibility and the nature of the development. Illustrative viewpoints B, from Binfield Road north of Wokingham, and C, from Sadler's End at Sindlesham, demonstrate the reduced visibility due to vegetation cover.
- 1.4.3 Viewpoints have been selected to represent a range of visual receptors, distances and directions from the site, focussing on the most open views in the study area as identified via the ZTV Study and site visit. These viewpoints are listed in section 6.3. Additional views which illustrate particular points made in this assessment are provided within Appendix 2.
- 1.4.4 A 300m study area has been used for the consideration of effects on private residential visual amenity, given that the masts are tall structures (50m) and may be considered overbearing if sited close to and in open view from homes.

Night-time Assessment

- 1.4.5 The Proposed Development does not include visible lighting and no night-time assessment is provided.

Cumulative Assessment

- 1.4.6 Cumulative assessment relates to the assessment of the effects of more than one development (as set out within Appendix 1). Operational developments are included in the baseline, consented development forms part of the future baseline, unless there is some uncertainty regarding the future construction of consented developments in which case they may be considered as the first scenario of the cumulative assessment.
- 1.4.7 The main focus of the cumulative assessment is on developments in planning. For this assessment no developments in planning requiring cumulative assessment have been identified and no further assessment is provided.

Residential Amenity

- 1.4.8 Effects on private views are a separate matter not considered as part of LVIA, which focusses on public views; and is also subject to different guidance. As set out within LI TGN 02/19 'Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)':

"Changes in views and visual amenity are considered in the planning process. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has 'a right to a view.' ...

It is not uncommon for significant adverse effects on views and visual amenity to be experienced by people at their place of residence as a result of introducing a new development into the landscape. In itself this does not necessarily cause particular planning concern. However, there are situations where the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before."

- 1.4.9 LVIA considers impacts on communities and the way they experience views from public locations. Private views and effects on residential visual amenity are a separate matter considered by RVAA. The methodology for and assessment of effects on residential visual amenity for the most affected properties within 300m is included as Appendix 3.

1.5 Assessment scenarios and potential effects

1.5.1 Effects arising from the Proposed Development are considered at the following key stages. The nature of the potential effects relevant to this assessment are described for each stage:

Construction

1.5.2 The construction of the project would take place over a four to five week period, with the main construction works, requiring the greatest amount of machinery on Site and the construction of the masts, likely to be within the first three weeks. It would involve vegetation clearance at the locations of the masts and access/parking area; installation of the access and parking area, as well as the security fencing, operations cabin and associated canopy and container storage; piling for the foundations of the masts; delivery of the mast components; erection of the masts; and planting of the screen planting around the access and parking area. Effects during construction on landscape fabric would arise from:

- Construction of the masts,
- the installation of the access and parking area, operations cabin and associated canopy and container storage within a fenced area, and
- planting of new screen planting around the access and parking area.

1.5.3 Effects during construction on landscape character would arise from:

- Short-term change of farmland to construction site; and
- Changes to landscape fabric as described above.

1.5.4 Effects during construction on visual receptors would arise from:

- Short-term movement of vehicles and plant within and travelling to and from the Site to deliver and install the receiver mast and antenna components, and other site infrastructure; and
- Increasing coverage of the Site with the components of the Proposed Development, with similar effects to the operational stage.

1.5.5 Given the distance to the closest designated landscape, the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB), there would be no effects on the designated landscape during construction.

Operation

1.5.6 The Proposed Development would be in operation for 10 years, which falls on the threshold of Medium-term and Long-term duration as set out in the assessment methodology (Appendix 1). Effects during operation on landscape fabric would arise from:

- The presence of the masts as stand alone elements within the Site and the access and parking area within security fencing; and
- growth of new planting.

1.5.7 Effects during operation on landscape character would arise from:

- The medium-term change of farmland and an area of commercial development to the receiver mast site and associated infrastructure; and
- changes to vegetation cover.

1.5.8 Effects during operation on visual receptors would arise from:

- Changes to views towards the Site to include the masts, both from static locations and when moving along routes through the landscape.

1.5.9 Given the distance to the closest designated landscape, the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB), there would be no effects on the designated landscape during operation.

Decommissioning

- 1.6 Effects during decommissioning would be short-term and similar to those arising during construction except in reverse in terms of the Site being reinstated to farmland.

1.7 Supporting information and terminology

- 1.7.1 Supporting appendices and figures have been prepared as listed below. These are important to the assessment and should be read alongside this report.
- 1.7.2 Key terms used within the assessment are described in Section 2 and Appendix 1 which set out the methodology. A glossary is provided within Appendix 1.

2 Methodology

2.1.1 The full methodology is described in Appendix 1, which also references the key guidance documents which inform the approach. A summary of key points is provided below.

2.2 Distances

2.2.1 Where distances are given in the assessment, these are approximate distances between the nearest receiver mast and the nearest part of the receptor in question, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

2.3 Visualisations

2.3.1 The method of visualisation selected has been informed by Landscape Institute Technical Note 06/19 Visual representation, with annotated photographs (Type 1) visualisations being selected as being the most appropriate approach due to the difficulties of accurately portraying the visual appearance of the proposed masts. For each of the viewpoints, diagrammatic versions of the masts have been superimposed onto the view, showing the heights of the masts and indicative boxes showing the maximum width of the attached antennae, at the proposed heights of 30m and 51m, as a worst case scenario, given that the final orientation of the antennae is still to be confirmed.

2.4 Sensitivity

2.4.1 Sensitivity judgements take account of consideration of the value and susceptibility of the receptor as illustrated by the diagrams below. Where sensitivity is judged to lie between levels, an intermediate assessment will be adopted. As comparison of the two diagrams indicates, a slightly greater weight is given to susceptibility in judging sensitivity of visual receptors.

Landscape Sensitivity

		Susceptibility		
		High	Medium	Low
Value				
National	High			
Regional			Medium	
Community				Low

Visual Sensitivity

	Susceptibility		
	High	Medium	Low
Value	High	Medium	Low
National			
Regional			
Community			

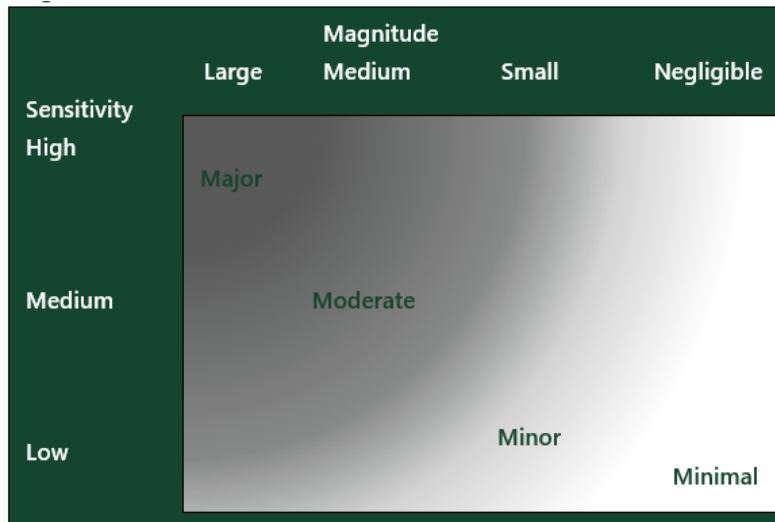
2.5 Magnitude

2.5.1 Magnitude of change (Large, Medium, Small, Negligible) judgements take account of the degree of change arising from the proposed development at any particular location in terms of its size or scale; extent of the area or receptor that is influenced, and the duration and reversibility of the change.

2.5.2 The maximum scale of change on the receptor is the primary factor in determining magnitude. However, for particularly widespread and/or long-lasting effects the magnitude judgement may be slightly greater than the scale of change; or for effects that are constrained in geographic extent and/or short-lived the magnitude of change may be slightly lower than the scale of change.

2.6 Level of Effect

2.6.1 The level (Major, Moderate, Minor, Minimal) of any identified landscape or visual effect reflects a professional judgement as to the relative importance of the effects identified, taking account of the sensitivity of the receptor and the predicted magnitude of change as illustrated by the diagram below.



2.7 Positive/Adverse

2.7.1 Landscape and visual effects can be positive, adverse or neutral (different but neither better nor worse taking all factors into account). Taking a precautionary approach in making an assessment of the 'worst case scenario', the assessment considers that all effects which would result in a notable difference to the existing features, character, views or special qualities would be adverse unless indicated otherwise. It should be noted however that people's individual responses to change arising from development can vary markedly.

3 Planning policy

3.1 National planning policy

3.1.1 Key elements of national planning policy relevant to this assessment include the following.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

3.1.2 Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ focusses on good design and includes the following at paragraph 135:

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

...

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place ..."

3.1.3 Section 15 of the NPPF is headed 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' and includes paragraph 187 which requires that:

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

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, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including ... trees and woodland; ... "

3.1.4 Paragraphs 188 and 189 also note that: *"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites"* and that *"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues."*, and that *"The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."*

Planning Practice Guidance for Natural Environment (2025)

3.1.5 This document covers the key issues in implementing policy to protect biodiversity and landscape fabric (including green infrastructure, Ancient Woodland and veteran trees), and a section on landscape. This section notes that:

"Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed."

3.2 Local planning policy

3.2.1 Current local planning policy is described in the following adopted and emerging policy documents:

- Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document²

¹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024). National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aaf8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

² Wokingham Borough Council (2010). Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document. Available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>

- Wokingham Borough Development Plan: Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan³
- Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan⁴

Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document

3.2.2 Key policies relevant to this assessment include:

- **CP1 – Sustainable development** – which indicates that development proposals will be consented where they maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, amongst other factors.
- **CP3 – General principles of development** – which requires development to be of appropriate, scale, mass, built form, height and character without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users and have no detrimental impact on landscape features.
- **CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)** – which seeks to maintain the quality of the environment and restrain development outside of development limits.

Wokingham Borough Development Plan: Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan

3.2.3 Key policies relevant to this assessment include:

- **CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping** – which requires development proposals to demonstrate protect and retain trees, hedges and landscape features, and promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining countryside.
- **TB21: Landscape Character** – which requires proposals to demonstrate compliance with the Landscape Character Assessment, and retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan

3.2.4 The Local Plan Update was submitted for examination in February 2025. Key emerging policies relevant to this assessment include:

- **SS1: Sustainable development principles** – which is similar to the adopted policy and requires proposals to conserve and enhance landscape character.
- **SS2: Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy** – which identifies that the countryside is not a location where additional development is planned, but limited types of development could be supported.
- **SS5: Development in the countryside** – which requires development in the countryside to be of an appropriate scale and be sited to minimise visual impact.
- **C7: Digital infrastructure and communications technology** – which requires proposals for digital infrastructure or communications technology to minimise impacts on local character and amenity, and minimise visual impacts.
- **NE4: Trees, woodland and hedgerows** – which seeks to protect existing trees, woodland and hedgerows.
- **NE5: Landscape and design** – which requires development to take a landscape led approach which protects and enhances the character and distinctiveness of landscapes.
- **NE6: Valued landscapes** – which identifies valued landscapes within the Borough and requires development within these areas to protect the special features, characteristics and qualities identified for each landscape.

³ Wokingham Borough Council (2014). Wokingham Borough Development Plan: Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. Available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20MDD.pdf>

⁴ Wokingham Borough Council (2025). Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan. Available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2024-10/Local%20Plan%20Update%20-%20Regulation%2019%20Plan.pdf>

- **DH2: Safeguarding amenity** – which requires development to be sensitively designed to avoid visual intrusion or dominance amongst other factors.

3.3 Policy considerations

- 3.3.1 Taking account of these policies, this assessment considers effects on landscape and visual receptors in Section 6. It also considers effects on residential visual amenity in Appendix 3. Baseline studies also inform this assessment as set out below.

3.4 Other relevant guidance and documents

- 3.4.1 Other published documents relevant to this assessment include the following documents which have informed this assessment and/or the design of the Proposed Development in relation to the mitigation of landscape and visual effects:
- National Character Area profiles⁵
 - Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019)⁶
 - Bracknell Forest Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2015)⁷
 - Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Landscape Character Assessment (2004)⁸
 - Wokingham Borough Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024)⁹
 - Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012)¹⁰
- 3.4.2 Baseline studies are further considered in Section 4.2.
- 3.4.3 Character areas identified in the landscape character assessments are assessed as the receptors in the consideration of effects on landscape character within their respective areas of coverage. The document relating to valued landscapes within Wokingham Borough is used to inform the judgements on landscape value for each landscape character area, but these are not assessed as a landscape designation.

⁵ Natural England (2012-2015). National Character Area Profiles. Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130>

⁶ Wokingham Borough Council (2019). Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/evidence-studies>

⁷ Bracknell Forest Borough Council (2015). Bracknell Forest Borough Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/bracknell-forest-local-plan/evidence-base>

⁸ Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (2004). Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-guidance/supplementary-planning-guidance-spgs/landscape-character-assessment>

⁹ Wokingham Borough Council (2024). Valued Landscapes Assessment. Available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2024-09/Valued%20Landscape%20Assessment%20September%202024%20%28reduced%29.pdf>

¹⁰ Wokingham Borough Council (2012). Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD. Available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/CD13.03%20Borough%20Design%20Guide%20Interactive%20SPD%20%281%29.pdf>

4 Baseline

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 LVA is an iterative process; baseline studies have informed both design and early assessment before the final design and final assessment were prepared as documented in this report. This section provides a review of documented baseline studies (as listed at 3.4.1 above) and a baseline description of the Site and its landscape and visual context. The baseline description of the individual landscape and visual receptors is provided alongside the assessment in Section 6 for ease of reference.

4.2 Baseline studies

National Character Area profiles

- 4.2.1 Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) profiles define broad areas that share similar landscape characteristics at a national scale across England and provide baseline descriptions of character for each NCA. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are also suggested for each area which *"offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future"*. Given the broad extent of the NCAs, these provide context to the district scale assessments, but do not form the basis of assessment in their own right.

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

- 4.2.2 This document provides a baseline assessment of local landscape character within Wokingham Borough, and provided an update to the 2004 landscape character assessment that formed part of a hierarchy of assessment with the 2003 Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment. This study identifies 14 distinct Landscape Character Types (LCTs). These LCTs are further broken down into 28 geographically specific Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), for which key characteristics, valuable landscape attributes, landscape condition, key issues, and landscape strategy and guidelines are defined. The LCAs defined by this study are the primary landscape receptors upon which effects are assessed in this chapter.

Bracknell Forest Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2015)

- 4.2.3 This study follows a similar methodology to the Wokingham Borough Assessment. It identifies eight landscape types and 11 LCAs. It provides a similar baseline description of local landscape character. It informs the assessment of effects on character within Bracknell Forest.

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Landscape Character Assessment (2004)

- 4.2.4 This study provides a baseline description of local landscape character within the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, with 14 distinct landscape types and 32 discrete character areas identified, and informs the assessment of effects on character within that area.

Wokingham Borough Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024)

- 4.2.5 This assessment reviews the landscape characteristics and attributes of Wokingham Borough, and identifies 13 'valued landscapes' across the Borough, using a methodology derived from a combination of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3)¹¹ and Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations¹². The Assessment provides maps and supporting narratives for each of the identified 'valued landscapes', and forms the basis of emerging policy NE6: Valued Landscapes in the emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update. Whilst the boundaries of the 'valued landscapes' broadly reflect the LCAs identified in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character

¹¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition

¹² Landscape Institute (2021). Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations. Available at: <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2021/05/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations.pdf>

Assessment, this is not always the case as some attributes, such as rivers, geology, old roads or other historic features, may cross LCA boundaries. The LCAs form the consistent units for the assessment of effects on landscape character, but the outputs of the Valued Landscapes Assessment are used to inform the judgements on landscape value for each LCA.

Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012)

- 4.2.6 The Design Guide aims to enhance the quality of development and make sure proposals are of the highest quality of design. It provides guidance on how to achieve this for different forms of development and in different locations e.g. new residential development or development in rural areas. Whilst there is no specific guidance in relation to masts, and much of the guidance relates to houses or commercial development, this guidance has informed the design of the Proposed Development as relevant.

4.3 Site and context

- 4.3.1 The Site is located within an area of well settled farmland close to the village of Hurst in Berkshire. The immediate parcel of small-scale agricultural fields, surrounded by local roads and the A321 to the west, contains the Phoenix Park commercial estate, an animal rescue centre, and numerous individual residential properties. In its wider context, the Site sits within a gently undulating but generally low-lying agricultural landscape, with the broad valley of the River Loddon located to the west with Reading beyond, and the landform rising to the south east, beyond the M4. Woodland blocks and belts are prominent, particularly to the north around Haines Hill. Villages and hamlets are connected by rural roads, with public rights of way relatively sparse. Smaller fields and tree cover are more common close to the villages, with larger and more open fields away from these. Roadside hedges and trees are common and tend to constrain views for drivers along many of the routes.
- 4.3.2 The Site and 3km study area lie fully within National Character Area (NCA) 115: Thames Valley. NCA115 is described as a *“mainly low-lying, wedge-shaped area, widening from Reading, which includes Slough, Windsor, the Colne Valley and the south west London fringes. The River Thames provides a unifying feature through a very diverse landscape of urban and suburban settlements, infrastructure networks, fragmented agricultural land, historic parks, commons, woodland, reservoirs and extensive minerals workings.”* The Site and its immediate context are representative of the diversity of this NCA. At the local level, the Site lies within the Hurst Farmed Clay Lowland LCA. It is described as flat, predominantly pastoral landscape with a small-scale field pattern and sparse settlement as houses are often hidden behind hedgerows. The landscape character assessment indicates that the landscape becomes more open beyond the boundaries of this LCA, which is true to the south.
- 4.3.3 Nearby settlements include Hurst (1.0km to the north west), Wokingham (1.9km to the south), and Woodley/Reading (2.1km to the west). As shown by Figure 4, there is a limited rights of way network close to the Site, linking the farms and villages together. There are no longer distance recreational routes within the 3km study area. Key transport routes through the study area include the M4 to the south east and the A329 (M) to the south west. The A321 passes to the west of the Site, and both the A329 and the London Waterloo to Reading train line pass through the edge of the study area to the south west, within the urban area.
- 4.3.4 The nearest nationally designated landscape is Chilterns National Landscape (AONB), located approximately 7.8km to the north west of the Proposed Development. As set out in Section 1.4, very limited visibility of the proposed masts is indicated from the designated area by the ZTV and at a distance of over 7.8km, where the Proposed Development is visible it would be seen against the backdrop of trees and landform beyond and barely discernible. The Chilterns National Landscape is not taken forward for detailed assessment. There are no locally designated landscapes within Wokingham Borough.

5 Design and Mitigation

5.1 Relevant Guidance

- 5.1.1 Design guidance (as listed at 3.4.2 above) has informed the evolving design and mitigation of landscape and visual effects as set out below. Relevant guidance from the Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document includes:
- New development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area.
 - New development must be carefully composed in relation to important views into or out of a village, so that the setting of the village in the landscape is maintained or enhanced.
- 5.1.2 In the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment, relevant guidance in relation to Hurst Farmed Clay Lowland LCA includes:
- Conserve remnant standard trees within hedgerows.
 - Conserve and manage hedgerows.
 - Conserve and protect the small-scale pasture fields.
 - Maintain and enhance the character of enclosed rural lanes.
 - Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes, avoiding the introduction of visually prominent large-scale or vertical structures into this intimate scale landscape.
 - Protect the perceptions of rural tranquillity in the landscape, through the management of development.

5.2 Mitigation measures

- 5.2.1 Measures included within the design to prevent or reduce landscape and/or visual effects include the positioning of the masts to ensure they are not located within direct views from surrounding residential properties, as well as to retain existing vegetation and avoid cluttering of the small-scale field pattern.

6 Landscape and visual effects

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 This section sets out the effects that the Proposed Development would have on landscape and visual receptors. Some receptors are only briefly discussed and for these receptors effects "*have been judged unlikely to occur or so insignificant that it is not essential to consider them further*" (GLVIA3, para. 3.19).
- 6.1.2 Effects on landscape character and visual receptors are set out before those on designated areas as it is common for designations to encompass both character and visual considerations within their special qualities or purposes of designation.
- 6.1.3 Effects during construction and decommissioning would be Negligible while the masts are not on Site, and similar to the operational stage once a part or wholly constructed receiver mast is present. On this basis effects during all stages of the Proposed Development are assessed to be the same as the operational stage considered below.

6.2 Effects on landscape fabric

- 6.2.1 Areas of grassland and bramble scrub will be lost to accommodate the development. These will be the dimensions of the fenced areas around the base of the proposed masts and the permeable access and parking area. New planting will comprise the creation of mixed scrub in the north-east corner of the Site, native hedgerow to the perimeter of the compound, and enhancement of the existing grassland. Further details can be found in the ecology and arboricultural reports accompanying the planning application.

6.3 Geographic distribution of effects

ZTV study

- 6.3.1 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study has been prepared to indicate the potential visibility of the Proposed Development; inform viewpoint selection and site assessment work; and ensure that this assessment focusses on the most important effects. Where receptors are outside of the area of visibility indicated by the ZTV study, no effects would arise and they are not considered further.
- 6.3.2 Figure 1 shows a ZTV study which takes account of principal woodlands (modelled at 15m height) and buildings modelled at 7m height), providing a conservative model of a more realistic visibility pattern across the study area. The ZTV indicates the most widespread visibility to the east, west and north west, extending to approximately 2.5-3km. To the north and north east, woodland areas associated with Haines Hill fragment visibility and beyond 2.5km this is shown to be further fragmented by additional layers of woodland. To the east, large areas of woodland also fragment visibility, with very little visibility indicated beyond approximately 4km. To the south east, visibility is indicated between Binfield and Wokingham to the edge of Bracknell approximately 5km from the proposed masts. To the south, woodland south of the M4 limits visibility to a maximum of approximately 2km. To the west, the urban edge of Reading and its suburbs limit visibility to within 2.5km. Beyond these areas, there are patches of intermittent visibility indicated to the north and north west, particularly on higher ground or from more open locations, to the east between 5-8km, and to the south west along the valley of the River Loddon and around Sindlesham.

Viewpoint Analysis

- 6.3.3 Viewpoint analysis has been undertaken from eight viewpoints. The table below provides a summary of the scale and nature of the changes to views at each viewpoint.
- 6.3.4 The viewpoint locations are shown on Figures 1-4. Visualisations, in the form of annotated photographs, are provided with reference to the viewpoint numbers listed below.

Viewpoint analysis summary

No.	Viewpoint	Distance, Direction	Scale and nature of change
1	Wokingham Road	0.3 km, W	Large, Adverse
2	Nelson's Lane (East)	0.2 km, NE	Large, Adverse
3	Footpath near Oakley Farm	0.5 km, SE	Large/medium, Adverse
4	Footpath east of Church Hill, Hurst	0.9 km, NW	Medium/small, Adverse
5	Lines Road	1.0 km, W	Small, Adverse
6	Little Hill Road	2.0 km, SW	Negligible, Neutral
7	The Straight Mile	1.4 km, NE	Small/negligible, Adverse
8	Binfield Road	2.9 km, NE	Negligible, Neutral

Outcomes

6.3.5 Each of the viewpoints is a 'sample' of the potential effects, representing a range of visual receptors including people at the viewpoint and nearby, at a similar distance and/or direction. From the ZTV and viewpoint analysis it can be seen that changes to views would arise as follows:

- The extent of Large and Large/medium scale visual changes, where the proposed development would form a major alteration to key elements, features, qualities and characteristics of the view such that the baseline will be fundamentally changed, would generally be limited to locations within approximately 500m.
- Beyond this area, Medium and Medium/small scale changes to views would arise within up to 1km, in locations where the extensive vegetation cover allows views towards the Site, decreasing to Small scale beyond as the proposed masts are increasingly seen in the context of a vegetated background.
- Beyond approximately 2-2.5km from the proposed masts, the proposed masts are increasingly only partially seen in glimpses above and between existing vegetation and visual changes reduce to Negligible.

6.3.6 The ZTV and viewpoint analysis also inform the consideration of effects on character. Typically, the scale of change to character at a particular location will be slightly less than the changes to views, as character derives from a more holistic experience of the landscape, not just views. The degree to which a proposal changes character depends on a combination of:

- The degree to which it is 'in keeping' with the existing character;
- proximity and visibility; and
- the importance of views towards the site to the existing character.

6.3.7 These factors vary by character area and are considered below.

6.4 Effects on Landscape Character

6.4.1 Descriptions for each of the assessed character areas are provided below, based on review of the baseline documents discussed in Section 4.2. LCAs are prefixed WB, WRB and BF to identify the authority that they fall within (Wokingham Borough, Windsor Royal Borough and Bracknell Forest respectively).

WB I4 Hurst Farmed Clay Lowland (includes Site)

6.4.2 As shown on Figure 3, this character area includes the site and is a relatively small LCA that extends from Nelson's Lane in the south east to Hurst in the north west and from woodland south west of Haines Hill to Lines Road and development along the A321 to the south west. Viewpoints 1, 2 and 4 are located within this LCA.

- 6.4.3 The Landscape Character Assessment describes this LCA as *"A flat predominately pastoral landscape dominated by pony paddocks. The small scale field pattern and overgrown hedges result in an intimate character. There are a number of small watercourses and a network of water-filled drainage ditches frequently filled with rushes and wetland vegetation. Settlement is sparse, with post-war farmsteads and houses often hidden behind vegetation, linked by a dense network of rural roads."* In addition, there is a prominent line of pylons that passes through the LCA.
- 6.4.4 Key characteristics identified in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment include:
- *"A flat to gently rising landform ...*
 - *Watercourses permeate the landscape ...*
 - *Wooded context provided by dense, overgrown rough hedgerows with hedgerow trees aligning winding rural roads ...*
 - *Small-scale regular and irregular fields ...*
 - *Predominantly a pastoral landscape dominated by horse grazing and exercising paddocks ...*
 - *Low density settlement pattern of closely spaced farmsteads, although many are post war bungalow style and many are hidden behind vegetation ...*
 - *Peaceful rural landscape with an intimate character ..."*
- 6.4.5 The Wokingham Valued Landscapes Assessment identifies approximately the north eastern third of this LCA as being located within the Haines Hill Valued Landscape. Taking this into account, this LCA is considered to be of Regional/community value. In terms of susceptibility of the LCA to proposed masts, the existing pylons already introduce tall lattice structures into the LCA. It is also a small-scale landscape with visual enclosure created by tall hedgerows, tree belts and woodland. It is considered to have Medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed and Medium sensitivity.
- 6.4.6 Figure 3 indicates theoretical visibility throughout the majority of LCA WB I4. Site work indicates that the vegetation along the roads surrounding the Site, Nelson's Lane, the A321/Wokingham Road and Islandstone Lane, in combination with the wooded context, overgrown hedgerows and hedgerow trees limit visibility within the LCA. As illustrated by viewpoints 1 and 2, this results in close views from within the immediate context of the Site, with occasional views of the tops of the proposed masts above vegetation from more open areas of the LCA (see Viewpoint 4). Effects on this area arise from the limited physical changes to the Site to accommodate the masts and access/parking area, and relatively close views of the masts, which would be seen standing above the woodland once sufficient distance is gained such that the masts can't be fully screened by woodland. Effects of Large/medium scale arise across a Limited extent of the LCA. Taking account of the duration of operation the effects are of Medium magnitude. Effects would be Moderate and Adverse.

WB I1 Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland (0.2km, south)

- 6.4.7 As shown on Figure 3, this character area is located to the south of the Site and extends to the A329 (M) and Bracknell. Viewpoints 3 and 7 are located within this LCA.
- 6.4.8 The Landscape Character Assessment describes this LCA as a *"simple farmed landscape dominated by open arable fields and some pasture, with mature hedgerow trees marking former hedge lines. Wooded horizons created by large deciduous blocks line a subtle ridgeline, cut by a network of small tributary streams. Settlement is focused on ribbon development along the local roads, scattered farmsteads and manor houses. The strong rural character is only affected by the M4 and A329 (M) which cut through the area."*
- 6.4.9 Key characteristics identified in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment include:
- *"Large scale rolling to gently undulating landform ...*
 - *Waterlogged clay soils have resulted in numerous farm ponds, drainage channel and small watercourses ...*
 - *Large geometric blocks of deciduous woodland ...*

- *Agricultural landscape defined by large, open, geometric arable fields of irregular shape ...*
- *Pastoral farming ... and a number of stud farms ...*
- *Sparse settlement comprising ribbon settlement along the ridgeline and scattered manor houses and farmsteads ...*
- *Historic parks and gardens ...*
- *Straight and narrow roads with banks and ditches ...*
- *Rural and peaceful character ...*
- *The open landscape allows framed and distant views over the surrounding area ...*

6.4.10 The Wokingham Valued Landscapes Assessment identifies approximately half of this LCA, south of the M4, as being located within the Billingbear or Alexander Pope Valued Landscapes. Taking this into account, this LCA is considered to be of Regional/community value. In terms of susceptibility of the LCA to proposed masts, the motorways exert a strong influence on the LCA and it is also relatively large scale and open, with relatively open views. It is considered to have High/medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed and Medium sensitivity.

6.4.11 Figure 3 indicates theoretical visibility across a large proportion of LCA WB I1. As shown by viewpoints 3 and 7 and illustrative views B and D in Appendix 2, from the majority of the LCA, visibility would be of the tops of the proposed masts at most, with a greater degree of visibility in those areas closest to the Site. These changes to character would be Medium scale in the vicinity of viewpoint 3, reducing to Small scale as far as the M4. In the remainder of the LCT, the addition of the masts would give rise to Negligible changes to character.

6.4.12 Considering the above changes to character together, Medium to Small scale changes to character would occur across a Localised extent of the LCT, giving rise to impacts of Medium/small magnitude. Effects would be Moderate/minor and Adverse.

WB C2 Hurst River Terrace (0.5km, west)

6.4.13 As shown on Figure 3, this character area is located to the west of the Site and extends in a narrow band from the A329 (M) in the south to Twyford in the north. Viewpoints 5 and 6 are located within this LCA.

6.4.14 The Landscape Character Assessment describes this LCA as a *"relatively flat lowland agricultural landscape lying to the east of the floodplain of the River Loddon. Arable fields tend to be large, with areas of horse and pony grazing. The area has a strong connection to the river valley, with water-filled ditches and ponds throughout. A network of rural roads connects farms and the small settlements of Whistley Green and Hurst."*

6.4.15 Key characteristics identified in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment include:

- *"Flat lowland landscape with gently shelving slopes down to the Loddon river valley ...*
- *Network of water features ...*
- *Simple agricultural landscape ...*
- *Open character with relatively few boundaries marked by vegetation ...*
- *Villages located around historic cores ...*
- *Regular pattern of river terrace farmsteads ...*
- *A rural and tranquil area ...*
- *Wooded horizons ..."*

6.4.16 The Wokingham Valued Landscapes Assessment identifies minor peripheral areas of this LCA, in the north and south, as being located within the Haines Hill or River Loddon Valued Landscapes. Taking this into account, this LCA is considered to be of Community value. In terms of susceptibility of the LCA to proposed masts, whilst the motorways exert some influence in the south of the LCA, it is also relatively open, low lying, and rural. It is considered to have High/medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed and Medium sensitivity.

- 6.4.17 Figure 3 indicates theoretical visibility throughout much of LCA WB C2, but reduced to the north west of Hurst. As shown by viewpoints 5 and 6, from the majority of the LCA, visibility would be of the tops of the proposed masts at most, above existing woodland. These changes to character would be Small scale in the more open areas in the vicinity of viewpoint 5. In the reminder of the LCT, the addition of the masts would give rise to Negligible changes to character.
- 6.4.18 Considering the above changes to character together, Small scale changes to character would occur across a Limited extent of the LCT, giving rise to impacts of Small/negligible magnitude. Effects would be Minor and Adverse.

Other Landscape Character Areas

- 6.4.19 Effects on the following character areas are assessed to be to be Negligible for the reasons set out below and are not considered in detail:
- Character areas beyond 2.25km from the Proposed Development given that visual changes decrease to Negligible beyond this distance as set out at 6.3.5 above.
 - WB J1 Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay (1.9km, south), due to limit visibility, as shown on Figure 3 and by illustrative view C in Appendix 2.
 - WB K1 Stanlake Farmed Sand and Clay Lowland (770m, north east), due to limit visibility as a result of the woodland blocks and belts associated with Haines Hill.
 - WRB 7a Shurlock Row (1.4km, east), due to the limited visibility as a result of intervening layers of vegetation, as shown by Viewpoints 7 and 8.

6.5 Visual Effects

- 6.5.1 Three types of visual receptors are considered within this assessment:
- Groups – Based around settlements or rural areas and representing effects on the community within public spaces including streets and local recreational routes in that place. Views from groups of homes may also be noted in the descriptions, but as noted at Section 1.5, effects on these are a separate matter.
 - Routes – Users of longer distance transport and recreational routes through the study area.
 - Specific viewpoints – Visitors to locations which are recognised and valued for the views available.
- 6.5.2 Within the study area, none of the landscape is designated and typically views are of Community value. The susceptibility of visual receptors to changes to views varies with their activity, with tourists, walkers and local residents close to their homes deemed to be of High susceptibility. Those more intent on their mode of travel and journey (cyclists and A-road users) are judged to be of Medium susceptibility. Taking these factors into account, unless otherwise identified, the sensitivity of the visual receptors considered below is judged to be:
- Local residents, road users and visitors in rural areas and settlements - High/medium sensitivity;
 - Cyclists, rail travellers and A-road users – Medium sensitivity, and
 - Motorway users – Medium/low sensitivity.

Immediate context of Site (includes Site)

- 6.5.3 This receptor group includes the area immediately around the Site, up to and including Nelson's Lane to the east and south, the A321/Wokingham Road to the west and Islandstone Lane to the north. Public access within this area is very limited, with no public rights of way crossing the land. Visual receptors include users of the roads (excluding the A321 which is considered separately below), residents along the roads and workers/visitors to Phoenix Park. Views from the periphery of this area are frequently screened by roadside vegetation, with only occasional gaps allowing views into the area, as shown by viewpoint 1 on Wokingham Road and viewpoint 2 on Nelson's Lane. Within Phoenix Park, the commercial properties are generally single storey and have very little enclosure by vegetation or built structures. Residential properties along the roads are frequently enclosed by tall vegetation, with occasional properties having more open views. Effects on these properties are considered separately in the Residential Visual Amenity Assessment at Appendix 3.

- 6.5.4 There would be some relatively close views of the proposed masts for road users on Nelson's Lane and Islandstone Lane, through gaps in roadside vegetation or where the vegetation is lower such as the western end of Nelson's Lane. In these views, the existing pylons and overhead lines located to the south of the Site are a prominent feature. Visibility elsewhere along the roads would be limited. There would also be some close views for residents of properties along these roads surrounding the Site and for workers at/visitors to Phoenix Park. Large scale changes would occur across an Intermediate extent, giving rise to impacts of Large magnitude. Effects would be Major/moderate and Adverse.

Rural area between 0.2km and 2.5km, north of M4 (0.2km, east)

- 6.5.5 This receptor group includes the area east of Nelson's Lane and up to 2.5km from the closest proposed receiver mast and south of Nelson's Lane as far as the M4. Public access within this area is limited, with a single public right of way running north to south to the east of Grange Farm and another running east to west to the east of Oakley Farm and Churchmans Farm. Other visual receptors include users of the roads through the area. As shown by viewpoint 3 on the public footpath east of Grange Farm, hedgerows are generally lower within this area, but views towards the Site look over the tall vegetation along most of Nelson's Lane. Further from the Site, as shown by viewpoint 7, the layering effects of intervening hedgerows and tree belts combines to limit views towards the Site. The existing pylons and overhead lines located to the south of the Site continue through this area and are frequently visible in views.
- 6.5.6 Closer to the Site, the proposed masts would be visible above vegetation along Nelson's Lane. They would appear slightly taller than the existing pylons. Within these closer views, the changes to views would be of Large/medium scale due to the proximity of the proposed masts. Moving further from the Site, these views would become less frequent, as intervening vegetation would often screen views of the proposed masts, as well as more distant such that the proposed masts would become a much more minor element of the view. The changes to views at this distance would be of Small/negligible scale. Large/medium scale changes would occur across a Limited extent, giving rise to impacts of Medium magnitude. Effects would be Moderate and Adverse.

Rural area between the A321, M4/A329 (M) and B3030 (0.3km, west)

- 6.5.7 This receptor group includes the area west of the A321, extending to the M4/A329 (M) to the south, the B3030 to the west and Hurst to the north. This area has greater public access than other visual receptor groups assessed above, but still has a relatively modest rights of way network. Visual receptors include users of the public rights of way and roads within the area, as well as residents of hamlets and isolated properties across the area. As shown by viewpoints 4 and 5, views towards the Site look over the tall vegetation between the Site and this area. Further from the Site, as shown by viewpoint 6, the layering effects of intervening hedgerows and tree belts screens views towards the Site. The existing pylons and overhead lines located to the south of the Site continue through this area and are frequently visible in views.
- 6.5.8 Closer to the Site, the proposed masts would be visible above intervening vegetation to varying degrees. Medium/small to Small scale changes would occur in the east of the area, where the tops of the proposed masts would be visible above the wooded skyline. Further south and west within this area, the layering effects of intervening hedgerows and tree belts combines to limit views towards the Site. Medium/small scale changes would occur across a Localised extent, giving rise to impacts of Medium/small magnitude. Effects would be Moderate and Adverse.

Hurst (0.5km, north west)

- 6.5.9 As shown by Figure 4, Hurst lies to the north west of the Site, along the A321. The main area of the village is over 1km from the Proposed Development, but there are clusters of properties along both the A321 to the south of the main area of the village and around the church (which is within a Conservation Area) to the south west. As shown by the topography plan at Figure 2, the church and surrounding properties are on slightly elevated landform, with the main area of the village located on lower lying ground. Vegetation around properties and along local roads and field boundaries screen views out from much of the village, but

there are more open areas around the village church and Conservation Area, with some views towards the Site, as shown by viewpoint 4.

- 6.5.10 Visibility of the proposed masts would be limited to occasional views from more open areas to the south east of the village, such as the public footpath on the edge of the village at viewpoint 4. In these views, the proposed masts would be partly visible above the wooded skyline, in views where overhead lines of varying scales are already visible. Within the village itself, visibility of the proposed masts would be very limited. Considering the changes to views together, Medium/small scale changes would arise for a Limited extent of the village, outside the main extents of the village, giving rise to impacts of Small magnitude. Effects would be Minor and Adverse.

A321 (0.3km, west)

- 6.5.11 As shown by Figure 4, the A321 runs through the study area from Twyford in the north to Wokingham in the south. The route is frequently tree lined and passes through the centre of Hurst as well as through the built-up areas of Twyford and Wokingham. Visibility along the route is indicated predominantly from where it crosses the M4 in the south to the edge of Hurst in the north. Although visibility is also indicated between Hurst and Twyford, as discussed in relation to Hurst above, vegetation around the village and along the roads limits views towards the Site.
- 6.5.12 Views of the Proposed Development for southbound road users would be restricted by roadside vegetation and built development until passing viewpoint 1, where there would be a very limited glimpse of the full height of the proposed masts 280m away. This would be a Large scale change to the view. For northbound road users there would be visibility for a stretch of the route between the northern end of the vegetated embankment of the bridge over the M4 and a tree belt south of Pound Lane, and then again between Pound Lane and the tree belt that runs west from the Site, where the roadside hedgerows have fewer trees and allow some views over them.
- 6.5.13 Changes to views would be Large scale for a Limited extent of the route as the road passes close to the site in the vicinity of viewpoint 1 and the fields with lower hedgerows to the south of that. The magnitude of impact would be Large/medium and effects would be Moderate and Adverse.

M4 (0.9km, south)

- 6.5.14 As shown by Figure 4, the M4 runs through the study area between Reading/Winnersh and Wokingham, continuing north eastwards into the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Within the study area, the M4 is frequently in cutting and is generally lined with vegetation. Views of the Proposed Development would be limited to the stretch between junction 10 in the west and the overbridge at The Straight Mile in the east. These views would be restricted by roadside vegetation and the cuttings, and therefore limited to occasional glimpses where there are gaps in the vegetation. When travelling in either direction, these views would be at most Medium/small scale at the closest point to the Site.
- 6.5.15 Changes to views would be Medium/small scale for a very Limited extent of the route. The magnitude of impact would be Small and effects would be Minor and Adverse.

Other Visual Receptors

- 6.5.16 Based on the geographic distribution set out in Section 6.3, some visual receptors within the study area as shown on Figure 4 would experience negligible effects and do not require detailed assessment:
- Visual receptors beyond 2.5km given that visual changes decrease to Negligible beyond this distance as set out at 6.3.5 above.
 - Visual receptors south of the M4 and A329 (M), including users of the A329 (M) due to limited visibility as shown by Figure 4 and illustrative views B, C and D at Appendix 2.
 - Visual receptors west of the B3030 (1.4km, west) due to limited visibility as shown by Figure 4, viewpoint 6 close to the B3030 and the further reduction in visibility as a result of extensive roadside vegetation not included within the ZTV study.

- Haines Hill and the areas beyond it to the north east (655m, northeast) due to limited visibility as shown by Figure 4 and the further reduction in visibility as a result of extensive roadside vegetation not included within the ZTV study.

6.6 Designated Areas

- 6.6.1 Given the distance to the closest designated landscape, the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB), effects on the special qualities of the designation are considered to be Negligible.

7 Summary

7.1 Scope and purpose

- 7.1.1 This assessment describes the existing landscape and views, considers their sensitivity to change and identifies changes likely to arise from the proposed development, providing judgements of the importance of the effects arising.

7.2 Design

- 7.2.1 Mitigation included within the design includes the site selection, location of masts away from direct views from residential properties, and retention of existing vegetation that provides visual screening.

7.3 Effects on character

- 7.3.1 The Proposed Development would be in operation for 10 years, which falls on the threshold of Medium-term and Long-term duration as set out in the assessment methodology. It would not result in a permanent change to the landscape.
- 7.3.2 Changes to landscape character would arise in the immediate vicinity of the Site, due to the physical presence of the masts and access/parking area, and to the scale and proximity of the proposed mast experienced in these nearby areas. In other areas, the extensive vegetation cover would mean that the addition of the proposed masts into views would not alter landscape character.
- 7.3.3 These localised changes would give rise to Moderate and Adverse effects on the host LCA I4 Hurst Farmed Clay Lowland; Moderate/minor, adverse effects on the adjacent LCA I1 Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland, and Minor and Adverse effects on the adjacent LCA C2 Hurst River Terrace.

7.4 Visual effects

- 7.4.1 The Proposed Development would be in operation for 10 years. It would not result in a permanent change to any views.
- 7.4.2 The most affected visual receptors would be people within the immediate context of the Site – either living at or visiting the properties along the roads that encircle the Site; driving along those roads or within the Phoenix Park on their way to and from their place of work. These receptors would experience Major/moderate and Adverse effects as a result of relatively open views of the proposed masts from limited locations in close proximity to the Site.
- 7.4.3 Moderate adverse effects would be experienced by users of the A321 as they travel past the closest point to the Site. This would be limited to very short stretches of the route.
- 7.4.4 Beyond this immediate context, effects would generally reduce to Moderate or Moderate/minor and Adverse for receptors people within the rural area between 200m and 2.5km from the proposed masts, north of the M4, and also between the A321, M4/A329 (M) and B3030, where views of the proposed masts would be possible in localised areas above existing vegetation.
- people within the settlement of Hurst, where visibility is limited by buildings and trees;
- 7.4.5 Minor, adverse impacts would arise for people within the settlement of Hurst, where visibility is limited by buildings and trees, particularly in the main area of the village, and users of the M4.

7.5 Effects on designated areas

- 7.5.1 There are no designated landscapes within the study area.

7.6 Assessment summary tables

Main assessment – Only non-Negligible effects are included.

Receptor	Distance, Direction	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Level of Effect
Character areas				
WB I4 Hurst Farmed Clay Lowland	Includes Site	Medium	Large/medium	Moderate, Adverse
WB I1 Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland	0.2km, south	Medium	Medium/small	Moderate/minor, Adverse
WB C2 Hurst River Terrace	0.5km, west	Medium	Small/negligible	Minor, Adverse
Visual receptors				
Immediate context of Site	Includes Site	High/medium	Large	Major/moderate, Adverse
Rural area between 0.2km and 2.5km, north of M4	0.2km, east	High/medium	Medium	Moderate, Adverse
Rural area between the A321, M4/A329 (M) and B3030	0.3km, west	High/medium	Medium/small	Moderate, Adverse
Hurst	0.5km, north west	High/medium	Small	Minor, Adverse
A321	0.3km, west	Medium	Large/medium	Moderate, Adverse
M4	0.9km, south	Medium/low	Small	Minor, Adverse