

Appeal against Refusal of Outline Planning Permission for *up to 93 residential dwellings (Approval sought for details of access only, with scale, layout, appearance and landscaping all reserved for future consideration) (Revised Scheme)*.

Application reference: 20/0538/OUT

Appeal reference: APP/Y1110/W/22/3292721

Proof of Evidence – Character and Appearance

June 2022

Author:

Nick Bunn, BA (Hons), PGDip, MA, CMLI

Redbay Design

Studio Five

Cockington Court

Torquay

TQ2 6XA

T:01803 605735

Contents

0.0	SUMMARY	2
1.0	INTRODUCTION	6
	SCOPE OF WORK.....	6
	STURCTURE OF THIS PROOF OF EVIDENCE	8
	THE SITE AND IMMEDIATE CONTEXT	9
2.0	FINDINGS OF THE LVIA.....	10
	BASELINE STUDY.....	10
	THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT AVOIDANCE/MITIGATION MEASURES	15
	EFFECTS TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	19
3.0	OUTLINE PROPOSALS	24
4.0	RULE 6 PARTY MATTERS	27
	LANDSCAPE VALUE.....	27
	VIEWPOINTS	27
5.0	CONCLUSIONS	33
	APPENDICIES	34
	APPENDIX I – SENSITIVITY TABLE AND MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE DIAGRAM.....	34
	APPENDIX II – RULE 6 VIEWPOINT PHOTOGRAPHS	35

0.0 SUMMARY

- i. On behalf of Redbay Design I was initially asked to carry out an appraisal of the site comprising of all five fields in order to advise on its ability to accommodate development given its location adjacent the current urban boundary of Exeter and within the landscape setting of the city. I first visited the site and the surrounding area in May 2019, when the initial viewpoint photography was taken. This informed the preparation of a strategic Indicative Block Plan (Place By Design drawing number 1836_300M)¹ that identified areas for potential development within fields 1 and 2 to form the basis of pre-application discussions with Exeter City Council (ECC). The LVIA² was revised and updated with additional viewpoints, winter photography and wireframe photomontages³ at the request of ECC during the pre-application discussions and during the planning application.
- ii. All judgements made in the LVIA and the Addendum regarding any potential impacts to the character and visual amenity of the area were based on the Block Plan (drawing 1836_300M). It is noted that an Indicative Masterplan (Place By Design drawing 1863_1100)⁴ was prepared for the planning application after the LVIA had been produced which was informed by the findings and recommendations within the LVIA. During the planning application the Indicative Masterplan was amended (illustrated on Place by Design drawing 1863_1101B)⁵ which was subsequently refused planning permission by ECC and is subject to this appeal.
- iii. The baseline study of the LVIA sets out that the conclusions made in the Fringes Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study are quite broad-brush and that more site-specific appraisals of individual land parcels would more accurately ascertain their ability to accommodate development. It went on to establish that the development site (fields 1 and 2) has more capacity to accommodate development than the elevated surrounding slopes, including those within the wider site (fields 3-5)⁶. This was agreed with in the independent review of the LVIA carried out on behalf of ECC by a Chartered Landscape Architect⁷. The baseline study established that the study area has a **Medium sensitivity** to the development proposed within fields 1 and 2 due to its location within the Landscape Setting of Exeter but adjacent to and at a similar position on the slopes to the neighbouring suburban residential development that currently forms the urban boundary of the city⁸.

¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

² Core Document ref: CD-PA9

³ Core Document ref: CD-PA12

⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA32

⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA33

⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 28, 2nd paragraph

⁷ Core Document ref: CD-DD7

⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 29

- iv. The development proposed for the site (fields 1 and 2) would introduce development onto the site where there currently is none, extending the suburban edge of Exeter and the urban boundary of Exeter into the landscape setting of the city. Development of the site would occupy a similar elevation to the adjacent residential properties at Celia Crescent so would not appear to extend development considerably up the slope. As the development would be contained within the site it would not appear on the ridgetop or break the skyline, so the upper slopes beyond the site would continue to form the landscape setting of Exeter. One of the principal mitigation measures is the retention of almost all boundary trees/hedges (other than what is required removal in the construction of access points) which will continue to contribute to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes that form the setting. It is expected that development of the site would appear as part of the settled but wooded mid-slopes and present a transition from the settlement into its landscape setting in this location rather than there being a hard edge between one and the other. The mitigation measures incorporated into the outline scheme at this stage are consistent with the guidelines for the future management of the landscape in this location. With this in mind the LVIA considered the effects to the landscape character of the area as a result of the development proposed would be **Slight-Moderate Adverse**⁹.
- v. The baseline study concluded that overall, the visual amenity of the Exeter has a **Medium sensitivity**¹⁰ due to the activity of users along roads and pavements. The informal users of the surrounding slopes that form the setting of the city do however have a **Medium-High sensitivity**¹¹ due to users having more opportunity to experience distant views back across Exeter from an elevated location.
- vi. The ZVI on Figure 5¹² illustrates that there are three distinct and separate areas that allow for view of the site and the proposed development; the immediately surrounding residential area within 1km of the site, the immediately surrounding slopes that are used for informal recreation within 300m of the site, and the outer edge of Exeter within up to 3km of the site to the south east.
- vii. The LVIA established that the impact to the visual amenity of the surrounding residential areas would be **Moderate Adverse**¹³ to both Juniper Close and Celia Crescent due to the creation of access points for the proposed development that would cause a noticeable change to views in these locations. These changes would however be restricted to the views from specific locations in close proximity to these access points so would not be available to the general public.

⁹ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – pages 34-35

¹⁰ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 30, 1st to 3rd paragraphs

¹¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 30, 4th paragraph

¹² Core Document ref: CD-PA12

¹³ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – pages 36, 3rd and 4th paragraph, and page 37, 1st paragraph

- viii. The proposals would introduce roofs of the proposed development into middle distance of far-reaching views across Exeter from the surrounding elevated slopes, which the LVIA considered to cause a noticeable to change and result in a **Moderate Adverse**¹⁴ impact to the visual amenity of these locations. These slopes are currently used informally for recreation by the local community and are not widely promoted or officially recognised so the views from these locations are not likely to be experienced by the general public. It is noted that this may change as the latest version of the proposals as indicated by the Parameters Plans and Indicative Masterplan includes permissive access being allowed to these areas so views would be more readily available to the public.
- ix. Beyond that, the LVIA considered views available from the outer, northern edge of Exeter where the well-wooded appearance of the slopes is a constant presence. The site can only be viewed from certain locations due to the intervening buildings and vegetation within the city. These locations tend to be specific transport corridors or elevated areas where the site is viewed a distance and is difficult to discern as the boundary tree/hedges merge with the well-wooded appearance of the wider slopes. As the development proposed would be contained within the site by the boundary trees/hedges, which would continue to contribute to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes, it would not be a prominent feature. Where it is perceptible it would be seen in the context of the already settled mid-slopes and present a transition into the landscape setting from the settlement. Therefore, the LVIA considered that the proposals would have a **Minimal Adverse**¹⁵ impact to the visual amenity of the northern outer edge of Exeter where views towards the site would be most available to the general public.
- x. A selection of the additional viewpoints identified by the Rule 6 Party have been visited and assessed as part of this proof of evidence. The judgements of the effect to the visual amenity of these areas are broadly consistent with the judgements made in the LVIA and not significant adverse effects have been found as likely to arise.
- xi. It is considered that although the drawings were prepared after the LVIA had been produced the latest versions of the Parameters Plans¹⁶ and Indicative Masterplan¹⁷ do incorporate the mitigation and impact avoidance measures set out in the LVIA and accords with the judgements made regarding the impact to the landscape character (landscape setting of Exeter) and visual amenity of the area.

¹⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 38 and 1st paragraph of page 39

¹⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 40, 2nd paragraph

¹⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA22 to CD-PA26

¹⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PA33

- xii. The independent review of the LVIA carried out on behalf of ECC by a Chartered Landscape Architect was broadly in agreement with the judgements made in the LVIA stating that:

“the effects of the proposed development have been assessed by the LVA author and through a review and found to be very localised, having a moderate impact on the valued landscape characteristics and minimal impacts on views from within the landscape and of the setting of the city. The proposed siting within the context of retained traditional hedgebanks will allow the development to be relatively smoothly assimilated into the local landscape.”¹⁸

- xiii. The case officer recommended approval of planning permission on grounds pertinent to landscape and visual matters that:

“the proposal is not on a ridgeline, against the skyline or isolated away from the built boundary. The site is very well enclosed by trees/hedgerows that will be retained and enhanced. The application will have minimal harm on the landscape setting of the city and the character and distinctiveness of the hills to the north as a whole and contiguous landscape.”¹⁹

- xiv. Overall, it is considered that the development site (Fields 1 and 2) is capable of accommodating the proposed development without significant effects to the general character of the landscape setting of Exeter, or the visual amenity of the wider area.

¹⁸ Core Document ref: CD-DD7 – page 5, paragraph v and page 24, paragraph 87

¹⁹ Core Document ref: CD-DD1 – page 15-16, conclusion of *Impact on Landscape Setting/character and distinctiveness of the hills to the north of the city* in *Table of key planning issues*.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.1 I am an experienced Landscape Architect and have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute since May 2018. I hold a Masters Degree and Post Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Birmingham City University, and an Honours Degree in Spatial Design (Interior and Landscape) from University Collage Falmouth (now Falmouth University).
- 1.2 I am Associate Director of Redbay Design and have 9 years' experience of carrying out Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs), as well as dealing with a variety of landscape planning matters including issues of landscape character and visual amenity. I have prepared LVIAs and similar reports as well as landscape design proposals to accompany planning applications for a wide range of projects for developers and private clients throughout the south west region of the UK, often in sensitive edge of settlement and rural locations.
- 1.3 On behalf of Redbay Design I was initially asked to carry out an appraisal of the site comprising of all five fields in order to advise on its ability to accommodate development given its location adjacent the current Urban Boundary of Exeter and within the landscape setting of the city. As part of this appraisal, I first visited the site and the surrounding area in May 2019, when the initial viewpoint photography was taken. This informed the preparation of a strategic Indicative Block Plan (Place By Design drawing number 1836_300M)²⁰ that identified areas for potential development within Fields 1 and 2 to form the basis of Pre-Application discussions with Exeter City Council (ECC). It was this Block Plan that was subject of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) that I prepared in August 2019 to aid those Pre-Application discussions.
- 1.4 In response to the Pre-Application discussions the LVIA and accompanying Figure Document were updated in December 2019 to include an additional viewpoint to the east of the site (included as VP 3i and 3ii from Cheynegate Lane) and to provide winter viewpoint photography, taken by myself, from all locations to allow for a seasonal comparison and analysis. It was this Revision A of the LVIA²¹ and Figure Document²² that then accompanied the planning application made to ECC in May 2020 (Ref: 20/0538/OUT).
- 1.5 Following a request from ECC during the planning application a further viewpoint was added (included as VP 7 from Hillyfield Road) and wireframe photomontages provided from key viewpoint locations identified by ECC (VP's 4, 5, 6 and 7, produced by Place By Design). The photography for this additional viewpoint location and wireframe photomontages was taken by me in May 2021 and included in Revision B of the Figure

²⁰ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

²¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA9

²² Core Document ref: CD-PA9a

Document²³ which was then submitted to ECC as part of the planning application along with an Addendum to the LIVA²⁴ in June 2021.

- 1.6 All judgements made in the LVIA and the Addendum regarding any potential impacts to the character and visual amenity of the area were based on the Block Plan (drawing 1836_300M)²⁵. It is noted that Parameters Plans and an Indicative Masterplan (Place By Design drawing 1863_1100)²⁶ were prepared for the planning application after the LVIA had been produced which was informed by the findings and recommendations within the LVIA. During the planning application these Parameters Plans²⁷ and Indicative Masterplan were amended (illustrated on Place by Design drawing 1863_1101B)²⁸ which was subsequently refused planning permission by ECC and is subject to this appeal.
- 1.7 The LVIA was prepared in line with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) produced by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment in 2013.
- 1.8 The original viewpoint photographs (Spring 2019) were taken and presented as panoramic images in order to illustrate the site and its wider context. This was before the latest guidance on taking and presenting viewpoint photography was published. The winter photographs in 2019 were then taken and presented in the same format for consistency and so that a comparison could be made as to the nature of the views in different seasons. Note that the wireframe photomontages have been produced using a single frame photograph (taken in Spring 2021) and are presented at a larger size along with photographic and location information, it is understood that they were also provided separately presented at full A3 size although not by Redbay Design, which is consistent with the latest guidance (TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals produced in September 2019 by the Landscape Institute)²⁹. Viewpoint photos have been taken using a zoom lens set at 35mm focal length and presented with a 53.5 degree field of view to illustrate how the site is seen on the ground in the context of the wider landscape setting.
- 1.9 The viewpoints provided are representative of the visual amenity and experience throughout Exeter as per GLVIA3 at paragraph 6.19 on page 109 which states
“representative viewpoints, selected to represent the experience of different types of visual receptor, where larger numbers of viewpoints cannot all be included individually and where the significant effects are unlikely to differ - for example, certain points may be chosen to represent the views of users of particular public footpaths and bridleways.”

²³ Core Document ref: CD-PA12

²⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA11

²⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

²⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA32

²⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PA22 to CD-PA26

²⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA33

²⁹ Core Document ref: CD-PA34

- 1.10 It should also be noted that viewpoint photography is provided as part of the LVIA to illustrate and communicate the nature of the visual experience of receptors within the study area. They do not form the sole basis of the assessment of impact to the visual amenity, regardless of how many are included and how they are presented. Any judgements made take into account the assessors' observations on the ground as much as reference to the viewpoint photography.
- 1.11 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal in this Proof of Evidence is true and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

STURCTURE OF THIS PROOF OF EVIDENCE

- 1.12 Following a brief description of the site and its context I will go on to summarise the findings of the LVIA. This will have an emphasis on the landscape setting of Exeter and how this would be affected by development of the site in terms of its character and the visual experience/amenity within the study area. As the judgements made in the LVIA were based on the Indicative Block Plan (1863_300M)³⁰ I will then go on to discuss if/how the latest version of the Parameters Plans³¹ and Indicative Masterplan (1863_1101B)³² accords with those findings, as this was produced after the LVIA following extensive dialogue between the applicant and ECC during the planning application, although Redbay Design were not involved in those discussions.
- 1.13 The Rule 6 Party have raised specific points regarding the impact to the landscape setting of Exeter arising from the development proposed as well as concerns with the judgements made in the LVIA. Where these issues have not already been discussed in this Proof of Evidence they will be addressed independently.

³⁰ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

³¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA22 to CD-PA26

³² Core Document ref: CD-PA33

THE SITE AND IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

- 1.14 The overall site is located adjacent existing residential development that forms the northern suburban edge of Exeter which currently occupies the lower to mid slopes of the hills, with the site forming part of the landscape setting of the city. The site is split into five fields that currently contain no development so contribute to the landscape setting of the city. The site as a whole occupies the upper slopes of those hills ranging from a height of approx. 100m AOD to 144m AOD with a general southerly aspect across the five fields. The fields are used as pasture and have a grassland character although at the time of the site assessment there were no animals on the land and it was being used recreationally by the local community, which I believe is still the case. Field boundaries are defined by either well established hedgerows containing a mix of native species with individual trees or tree belts consisting of predominantly Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Elm (*Ulmus procera*), and Birch trees (*Betula pendula*). There are some particularly fine examples of mature Oak trees.
- 1.15 The development proposed is to be contained within the lower two fields of the site referred to as fields 1 and 2. These fields range in height from approx. 100m AOD to 122m AOD with a combined approximate area of 9.6 acres (3.9 hectares).
- 1.16 Beyond the boundaries and its immediate surroundings, the site is bound to the north and east by the upper slopes of the hills and wider landscape setting made up of undulating agricultural fields defined by boundaries of well-established hedges and trees along with areas of woodland giving the hills a well wooded appearance interspersed by open grass fields. To the south and west is fairly high-density suburban development occupying the lower to mid slopes of the hills. The site is separated from the existing residential development at Spruce Close to the south east by an area of open space. In general, the southern half of the study area contains the city of Exeter while the northern half forms its landscape setting, with the M5 running north-south defining the eastern edge of the city.

2.0 FINDINGS OF THE LVIA

- 2.1. This should be read in conjunction with Revision A of the LVIA³³, the Addendum to the LVIA³⁴, and Revision B of the Figure Set³⁵. The judgements made in these documents refer to the Indicative Block Plan (1863_300M)³⁶.
- 2.2. The evidence given in this proof adopts and relies on the analysis and judgements made in that LVIA and as the author of the LVIA I stand by those conclusions.

BASELINE STUDY

- 2.3. The baseline study carried out as part of the LVIA (Section 2.0)³⁷ sets out the existing situation in the study area and its ability to accommodate development such as that proposed for the site in order to establish the sensitivity of the landscape character and visual amenity. The baseline study identifies each landscape receptor that is likely to be affected by the proposals individually before considering them together in order to make a judgement about the value of the landscape setting and its susceptibility to the type of development proposed which when combined gives the general sensitivity for the character of the area, in this case the landscape setting of the city. Given the nature of visual receptors within the study area they were collected into groups with similar characteristics/users with representative viewpoint photos used to illustrate the nature of views and a general sensitivity applied to each grouping, rather than each individual receptor. Further information regarding how the sensitivity of receptors is determined is set out below with more detail available in the Methodology provided in the LVIA³⁸. A summary of the baseline study and the sensitivity of the landscape and visual amenity of the study area is given below.

Landscape Character

- 2.4. In general, the landscape character of the study area can be described in two halves. The southern half contains the city of Exeter while the northern half forms its landscape setting. The site is located in an elevated position that at its lowest levels (Fields 1 and 2) abuts the northern edge of the suburban residential development that occupies the lower-mid slopes and currently forms the Urban Boundary of Exeter. From the urban edge the land rises to 122m AOD at the top of Field 2 and reaches 144m AOD at the highest point within the overall site at the northern most corner of Field 4, then continues to rise beyond the site up to around 150-160m AOD further to the north and north west. The open nature of the site and the well-established trees and hedges that define the site boundaries contribute to and merge into the wooded

³³ Core Document ref: CD-PA9

³⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA11

³⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA12

³⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

³⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 - page 6 to 30

³⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 43

appearance of the slopes that form the landscape setting of Exeter. As such the site and the surrounding slopes forming the setting contain many of the characteristics identified as contributing to the Exeter Slopes and Hills Landscape Character Area as well as the Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes Landscape Character Type, as described in the Tables on pages 8-13 of the LVIA. The site is also already influenced by the neighbouring suburban residential development due to its proximity to the lower Fields 1 and 2, and in views from the higher part of Fields 3-4 when looking over this development in views across the city beyond. From within Exeter the hills that form the landscape setting present a prominent and distinctive feature that strongly influences the townscape and are often apparent from throughout the city. Having said that, the lower parts of the site (Fields 1 and 2) occupy a similar level to the neighbouring suburban residential area so are often obscured by the intervening development on the lower-mid slopes in combination with the boundary vegetation, with the rest of the site and the slopes beyond continuing to rise behind.

- 2.5. It is the presence and nature of the slopes, including the site adjacent the current Urban Boundary, that has led to them being identified as part of the landscape setting for the city so are covered by Policy Area LS1³⁹ and included in the Exeter Fringes Landscape Sensitivity Capacity Study in 2007⁴⁰. As explained on pages 14-15 of the LVIA, in this study the site falls on the southern edge of the landscape setting area with Fields 1 and 2 straddling the boundary between Zones 4 and 6. Field 1 falls within Zone 6 and Field 2 falls within Zone 4. Both Zones 4 and 6 are considered to have a *High Landscape Sensitivity* in that document due to being a *prominent hill side with high intrinsic sensitivity which forms a strong positive rural backcloth to the city*. The study concluded that both of these Zones have a *Low Housing Capacity because of its prominence, rural character and intrinsic sensitivity*. The profile for Zone 4 (Field 2) explains that it has *no capacity for housing* while Zone 6 (Field 1) is described as having a *very limited capacity for housing*.
- 2.6. It is considered that while The Exeter Fringes Study provides a good starting point to understand the sensitivity of these zones around the city and their contribution to the landscape setting it does make quite broad-brush conclusions and more specific studies/assessments are useful on a site-by-site basis. The zones cover large areas that range in elevation up to 50m in some places, indeed across the development site alone (Fields 1 and 2) the land rises by 22m and then a further 22m (44m in total) within the wider site, rising further beyond. This is across two zones although predominantly within Zone 4. Field observations found that while these entire zones do in general contribute to the landscape setting of the city the land parcels contained within range in visibility depending on a number of factors such as elevation, prominence on the slopes and the level of screening provided by the trees occupying the slopes. In this case, a large part of the development site (Fields 1 and 2) actually occupies a similar elevation to the adjacent development at Celia Crescent so is not visible due to the

³⁹ Core Document ref: CD-DP5

⁴⁰ Core Document ref: CD-SPD14

scale of the fields and the screening provided by boundary trees/hedges which merge into the surrounding well-wooded appearance of the slopes in combination with the neighbouring development. Therefore, it is fair to say that the site is much less visible than the rising slopes beyond so would have more capacity to accommodate development than the upper most slopes. As a result, it could be argued that both Fields 1 and 2, that make up the development site, have more capacity to accommodate development than the Fringes Study suggests.

- 2.7. In the LVIA the sensitivity of landscape character is categorised as high, medium, or low, according to the degree to which a particular landscape or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development without detrimental effects on its character. This is judged by considering the susceptibility of receptors against the value placed on it.
- 2.8. In this case it is considered that the landscape of the study area has a general Medium value as it contains valued landscape components combined in an aesthetically pleasing composition forming the landscape setting of Exeter, as recognised by local planning policy. The assessment of sensitivity on page 28 and 29 of the LVIA takes account of factors such as landscape quality, scenic quality, representativeness conservation interest, recreational value, and perceptual aspects as per those included in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 (Page 84). This forms part of our standard practice and is evident in the prose on these pages. With all this in mind it is considered that the site and the study area is valued at a **Local** level⁴¹.
- 2.9. Field observations made for the LVIA found that the site is influenced by its location adjacent the suburban development on the low-to-mid slopes and is well screened by the boundary trees/hedges that contribute to the well-treed appearance of the landscape setting, although would be more apparent from the immediately surrounding landscape during winter months when the boundary vegetation loses its leaves. As a result, there is potential for development to be accommodated within the lower part of the site (Fields 1 and 2) while still maintaining the landscape setting of Exeter due to maintaining the upper fields within the site (Fields 3-5) free of development. Therefore, the landscape would have an overall **Medium** susceptibility whereby development could be accommodated on the site (Fields 1 and 2) within the landscape setting but *undue consequences may arise*. This resulted in the LVIA attaching a **Medium sensitivity** to the landscape character of the study area when considering development proposed within the lower part of the site (Fields 1 and 2)⁴².
- 2.10. The receptors that are most relevant to the development in Landscape Character terms are:
 - LCA Exeter Slopes and Hills
 - LCT 3A Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes
 - Zones 4 and 6 – Exeter Fringes Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2007

⁴¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – pages 28 to 29

⁴² Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 29

- Policy Area LS1 Landscape Setting
- Suburban edge of Exeter

Visual Amenity

- 2.11. The Baseline Study identified the existing users (or receptors) of the landscape within the Study Area in publicly accessible locations to establish the potential changes to the visual amenity of those users and their experience of the landscape setting as a result of the development proposed.
- 2.12. The existing visibility of the site was initially assessed by a desktop study of Ordnance Survey explorer map in order to establish the extent to which the proposals would affect the visual amenity of the study area. This work was based around the production of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)⁴³, a computer-generated map using landform data to project the greatest extent that proposal would be visible from. This was tested over a 4km radius using multiple points across the site (Fields 1 and 2) set at 8m high. This was produced before any development proposals were in place as it is recognised as the typical height of a two-storey residential property. The ZTV was used as a desktop tool as it uses bare ground data only and is therefore a worst-case scenario and any intervening hedges, woodlands and buildings reduces visibility considerably.
- 2.13. This was followed by photographic and fieldwork analysis of the visibility of the site from the surrounding landscape. The object was to determine which locations offer the clearest views of the site and are most accessible to the public.
- 2.14. The ZTV suggests that potential views of the proposed development would be available from around the site and from within the city to the south, but not from the surrounding landscape to the north. Field observations established that the actual views available of the site follow this pattern but are severely curtailed by the topography of the area in combination with intervening vegetation and buildings, as indicated by Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) on Figure 5.
- 2.15. Views of the development site (Fields 1 and 2) can be obtained by three distinct areas. Firstly, from the immediately surrounding residential areas within 1km of the development site (VP's 01a-c) including Cheynegate Lane to the east (VP 03). This would include the residential properties but they are not included in this report as the views are not available to the public. As stated in para 6.17 of GLVIA3 *effects of development on private property are frequently dealt with mainly through 'residential amenity assessments'* which are separate from LVIA's and are subject to a specific methodology.
- 2.16. There are also some views from the slopes immediately surrounding the development site that are used informally for recreation, within 500m of the development site

⁴³ Core Document ref: CD-PA12 – Figure 5

including those within the wider site (VP's 02a-d). Beyond that the third area is a band between 1-3km south east to south of the site within the urban area from elevated locations (VP's 04-07). From within this band views of the site from public vantage points are restricted to specific locations or short sections along roads where gaps between buildings and vegetation allow. Where the site (Fields 1 and 2) can be seen in these distant views it tends to merge into the wider well-wooded appearance of the wider landscape setting and the site itself is difficult to discern in itself. Viewpoint photographs are included in Figure 06 of the Figure Set⁴⁴ with a brief summary description provided on pages 24-27 of the LVIA⁴⁵.

- 2.17. Sensitivity is categorised as high, medium, or low, according to the degree to which a particular viewpoint or receptor can accommodate change arising from a particular development without detrimental effects on its visual amenity. This is judged by considering the susceptibility of the visual receptor to the type of change or development proposed with the value attached to that location with particular regard to the type and nature of users. Visual sensitivity also considers the following factors:
- Location and context of the route/PRoW
 - Number of viewers/users
 - Nature of the route/PRoW and activity/movement of users
 - Value attached to the route/PRoW and/or views
- 2.18. From within close proximity there are very few opportunities for direct views in to the development site (Fields 1 and 2) from publicly accessible locations due to being obscured by the established trees/hedges that define the site boundaries. The site does become more visible in views from within close proximity through gaps in the boundary vegetation when it loses its leaves. Where there are views towards the site, they would only be available to the local community of these residential areas rather than the general public. This principally relates to Juniper Close and Celia Crescent but also Pendragon Road at more of a distance to the south west. These locations would most likely be used by local residents accessing properties or people engaged in activities that are not focused on appreciating views of the surrounding landscape. Therefore, the LVIA considered the visual amenity of users of these locations are considered to have a **Medium sensitivity**⁴⁶.
- 2.19. The slopes surrounding the development site (Fields 1 and 2) that form part of the landscape setting of Exeter appear to be used informally for recreation. They have no official recognition as a recreational resource, but they are accessible from the nearby residential areas and field observations found that people are using these areas as desire lines indicate routes through and around the peripheries of the fields that occupy these slopes. From these locations views are available looking across the city of Exeter towards the distant landscape setting to the south. Although not officially recognised the LVIA considered that activity of people in these locations and the

⁴⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA12

⁴⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA9

⁴⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 30, 2nd and 3rd paragraph

nature of views available meaning that people would have plenty of opportunity to linger and experience gives the visual amenity of users of these slopes a **Medium-High sensitivity**⁴⁷.

- 2.20. Although the site sits in an elevated location identified as part of the landscape setting of Exeter there are actually very few opportunities to view the lower part of the site (Fields 1 and 2) from public locations within the city. The well-wooded slopes that form the landscape setting of Exeter are an almost constant presence forming the background to views throughout the city. However, views of the development site (Fields 1 and 2) are often obscured by intervening buildings and vegetation. Where opportunities do exist to obtain views towards the development site it tends to be from elevated locations and/or transport corridors. In those views the development site is difficult to identify in its own right as the boundary trees/hedges merge in to the surrounding well-wooded appearance of the slopes, even during the winter due to the sites position on the slopes and the amount surrounding vegetation still providing good screening. Where the site is perceptible it lies at the edge of the residential development that occupies the settled lower-mid slopes below the wooded ridgeline above, often with open or wooded slopes in between. People in these locations are likely to be travelling in vehicles at up to around 30mph, cyclists and pedestrians on roadside pavements. It is likely that their attention would be on day-to-day activities rather than necessarily appreciating views of the surrounding landscape, therefore, the LVIA considered the visual amenity of users of these locations to have a **Medium sensitivity**⁴⁸.
- 2.21. The receptors that were considered most relevant to the development in Visual Amenity terms were collated into the three groups:
- Surrounding residential areas within 1km (publicly accessible locations) – *Medium*
 - Surrounding slopes used for informal recreation – *Medium-High*
 - Exeter (within around 1-3km south east and south of the site) - *Medium*

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT AVOIDANCE/MITIGATION MEASURES

The Proposals

- 2.22. A description of the principle of development within the lower parts of the site (Fields 1 and 2) proposed as part of the Outline Planning Application along with an assessment of potential effects is given in Section 3.0 of the LVIA and provided below.
- 2.23. The outline planning application sought planning permission for residential development across the two lower fields (Fields 1 and 2) that form the development site. At the time of writing the LVIA this was illustrated on the Indicative Block Plan drawing 1963_300M produced by Place By Design⁴⁹. At that stage the precise number of dwellings was not known but the proposed Block Plan did indicate development

⁴⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PD9 – page 30, 4th paragraph

⁴⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 30, 1st and 2nd paragraph

⁴⁹ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

areas with a suggestion of building densities within each area. The Block Plan was informed by the Key Sensitivities diagram (Figure 7)⁵⁰ that was produced by Redbay Design following the initial site assessment.

- 2.24. As the scheme was prepared for outline planning permission at the time of writing the LVIA there was no further information provided about the detail of the proposals. Therefore, the judgements in the LVIA were made based on the general mass, size, scale, and height expected of the type of development being proposed. Certain assumptions were made such as the form/architectural style of the buildings and use of appropriate materials that respect the surrounding character and context. It is noted that Parameters Plans⁵¹ and an Indicative Masterplan (drawing 1863_1101B)⁵² were produced later and submitted as part of the planning application, which will be discussed later in this Proof of Evidence. While the Indicative Masterplan would only be illustrative if outline planning permission were to be granted any scheme being proposed as part of a reserved matters application following on from that would have to comply with the principles set out in the Parameters Plans so they would provide an element of certainty and control over future proposals for development of the site.
- 2.25. The proposed development will be accessed via improvement of existing access points. One from Spruce Close, across the open green space into Field 1 that was initially intended to make use of the existing field gate in the south eastern boundary of the site, although this was later altered. The second will be created into Field 2 through the south western boundary in the location of at the time was an existing pedestrian path from Celia Crescent, although this has since been widened to allow vehicular access including the removal of trees on the boundary. An internal road was illustrated that crossed the two fields within the site with spur roads leading from it providing access to the different development areas. The Block Plan indicated 6 areas of development broken up by the internal access roads and areas of open space such as an *arrival village green*, *LAP*, and *attenuation basin*. The development areas were also set back from the highest, most visible part of the site at the north western end of Field 2. The building density of the development areas would reduce as they ascend the site, meaning that the highest density would be contained and enclosed within Field 1 which is lowest and most screened by the boundary vegetation with the lowest building density located towards the north western end of Field 2 which is more visible. Other than what would require removal for the creation of access into and throughout the site, all other boundary vegetation was intended to be retained.

⁵⁰ Core Document ref: CD-PA9a and CD-PA12

⁵¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA22 to CD-PA26

⁵² Core Document ref: CD-PA33

Impact Avoidance/Mitigation Measures

- 2.26. As set out in the LVIA⁵³ the following measures were incorporated into the production of the Block Plan⁵⁴ in order to lessen potential adverse impacts arising from the development proposed:
- i. The initial Block Plan was informed by the Key Sensitivities diagram (Figure 7) produced by Redbay Design following the initial site assessment. This set out the visual sensitivity of different areas within the site based on elevation, openness and level of screening provided by boundary vegetation. It also highlighted that all existing hedgerow and trees on the external and internal site boundaries should be retained.
 - ii. The proposed development areas indicated on the Block Plan are to be broken up by the internal access roads as well as areas of open green space containing various features/uses. These development blocks will decrease in density as they ascend the site, meaning that the highest density would be contained and enclosed within Field 1 which is lowest and most screened by the boundary vegetation with the lowest building density would be towards the north western end of Field 2 which is more visible. This is appropriate for the edge of settlement location where development tends to reduce in density as it meets the landscape setting.
 - iii. Development areas towards the north western edge of the Field 2 have been set back from the highest, most visible part of the development site. It was initially intended that built form within these development areas would be located no higher than the 115-116m contour (AOD) which is similar to the ground level around the highest buildings adjacent the site at Celia Crescent. It is clear from the original Indicative Masterplan⁵⁵ produced later and initially submitted as part of the outline planning application that built-form would have the potential to exceed this contour although an open buffer at the highest north western end of Field 2 would be maintained.
 - iv. All existing external and internal boundary vegetation is to be retained other than the short sections that require removal in the creation of access points into and throughout the site. To ensure the existing vegetation is protected and retained buffer zones were included on the Block Plan between the development zones and the boundaries. These areas will be protected during construction and remain free of development. The extents of these buffer zones will be confirmed during detailed design of the layout and will incorporate any Root Protection Areas (RPA's) required but were to be a minimum of 5m wide.
 - v. It was suggested that the creation of the new entrance road into the south eastern boundary crossing the existing open space off Juniper Close should avoid RPA's of

⁵³ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 32

⁵⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

⁵⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA32

all existing trees if possible. If not, any trees lost should be replaced by new tree planting.

Potential Effects

- 2.27. The following effects were identified in the LVIA⁵⁶ as being likely to arise as a result of the development proposed for the site, based on the outline principles described above. The effects were considered to be once construction is complete and mitigation measures have taken effect so would be residual:
- i. The presence of residential development within the site where there currently is none extending the built form of the settlement edge into the landscape setting.
 - ii. Likely alterations to the landform of the site to accommodate the proposed development. It is expected that while the alterations may be apparent they would be localised to around individual buildings and the overall character of the landform would still be recognisable as is the case with the existing development adjacent the site.
 - iii. The pattern of the proposed development with its transition from higher to lower density while ascending the slope of the site is expected to respond to the general pattern of the existing development surrounding the site in this location on the edge of the settlement.
 - iv. It is expected that the scale, style and materials of the proposed buildings would be appropriate for this location responding to local vernacular and the surrounding context.
 - v. Almost all of the existing boundary vegetation would be protected and retained, maintaining the level of screening that is currently provides of the site as well as the contribution these trees make to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes forming the landscape setting of Exeter.
 - vi. The creation of a new access road leading from Spruce Close across the existing open space at Juniper Close with a new entrance point into the development itself through the south eastern boundary of the site. The existing trees within the open space will be retained if possible or replaced with new tree planting should they be lost during construction.
 - vii. The contribution that the site vegetation makes to the character and appearance of the landscape setting would be supplemented by additional tree planting as part of a landscape strategy prepared for a future planning application that would also help to break up the appearance of the buildings contained within the development areas illustrated on the Block Plan.

⁵⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 33

EFFECTS TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 2.28. Impacts to the landscape character of the area are judged by comparing the magnitude of change arising from the development against the sensitivity that was established during the baseline study. Magnitude of change is measured on a scale of High, Medium, or Low by considering the scale of effect (range of Negligible to Large) to the baseline situation with the duration it is likely to occur (range of Short-term to Permanent) and the extent (range of Limited to Wide) of the receptor that will experience the change. A full description of the criteria is given in the Methodology provided in the LVIA on page 45⁵⁷.
- 2.29. A description of the development proposed as illustrated on the Block Plan and a judgement of the effects to the character of the area consisting of the suburban edge of Exeter and its Landscape Setting covered by *Zone 4 and 6 of the Exeter Fringes Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* and *Policy Area LS1 Landscape Setting* within *LCA Exeter Slopes and Hills/LCT 3A Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes* is provided in Section 4.0 of the LVIA⁵⁸ and summarised below.
- 2.30. The proposed development would introduce development onto the site where there currently is none, resulting in an extension of the suburban edge and the Urban Boundary of Exeter into the landscape setting of the city. The development proposed would be contained within the site, below the more elevated surrounding slopes so would not appear on the ridgetop. Nor would it break the skyline so the backdrop to the city would remain as a wooded ridge. The open nature of the surrounding fields would remain, particularly those elevated above the site to the north east through north west, and the trees/hedges on the site boundaries would be retained which would contain the development and continue to contribute to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes as a whole. Development of the site would be at a similar elevation to the adjacent development at Celia Crescent so would not appear to extend development considerably up the slope. It was expected that the proposed development would make use of external materials that are consistent with and respect the local context so would not appear so noticeable as new development or an obvious extension.
- 2.31. As a result, the proposals would be experienced as residential development set within wooded slopes, occupying the already settled mid slopes in this location. The upper slopes within the wider site and beyond the site would remain undeveloped. The proposals would appear as residential development amongst trees on the slope presenting a transition from the settlement into its landscape setting rather than there being a hard edge between one and the other.
- 2.32. With this in mind the proposals were considered likely be a recognisable new feature but would be less prominent in its own right, when experienced in this context on the

⁵⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PA9

⁵⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 34

edge of suburban development and the landscape setting. The potential impacts resulting from the proposals can be mitigated through the approach to the layout and the retention of boundary vegetation so that the scheme as a whole will integrate into its surrounding context and continues to contribute to the well-wooded slopes forming the setting of Exeter. This would result in a **small-medium scale, permanent effect** to an **intermediate area** (up to 3km), producing a **Low-Medium magnitude of change**. When this is compared to the **Medium sensitivity** the effect on the character of the area and the landscape setting of Exeter was considered in the LVIA to be **Slight-Moderate Adverse**⁵⁹.

EFFECTS TO VISUAL AMENITY

- 2.33. Impacts to the visual amenity of the area are judged by comparing the magnitude of change to the visual experience arising from the development against the sensitivity that was established during the baseline study. In the visual assessment the magnitude is measured on a scale of High, Medium, or Low. It is determined by considering the scale of effect (range of No Change to Large) including the distance from the receptor and the degree of change in the field of vision against the duration of change apparent from each receptor (range of Short-term to Permanent) and the extent of the receptor affected (range of Limited to Wide) which may be a single viewpoint or a sequence of points that may have transient views, for instance along a road. This has involved a combination of site, and desk-based analysis. A full description of the criteria is given in the Methodology provided in the LVIA on page 50.
- 2.34. A summary of the judgements made in the LVIA regarding the impacts to the visual amenity is provided below. The additional viewpoints (VP's 3 and 7) will be incorporated into the summary along with the judgements/comments made in the Addendum to the LVIA⁶⁰. A description of the view and what would arise from the proposed development along with a judgement on the scale of change to each specific viewpoint is provided for each photograph location in the figure set⁶¹. This is then applied to the visual experience of the receptors identified during the baseline study in section 5.0 of the LVIA (page 36). Here the magnitude of change arising from the development that has taken place is established which is then compared against the sensitivity established during the baseline study in order to understand the impact to the visual amenity of the receptor. The change is considered once construction is complete and any mitigation is established so would reflect any residual impact.
- 2.35. Based on the principle of development as suggested by the Block Plan⁶² the ZVI⁶³ produced as part of the LVIA illustrated that there would be very few direct views of the development due to the screening provided by the boundary trees/hedges, even

⁵⁹ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 34 to 35

⁶⁰ Core Document ref: CD-PA11

⁶¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA12 – Figure 6, Panels A to X

⁶² Core Document ref: CD-PA31

⁶³ Core Document ref: CD-PA12 – Figure 5

within close proximity of the site. There is potential that the development would be able to be seen in the context of the landscape setting of the city from certain locations within Exeter between 1-3km to the south east as well as some opportunity to see the development within the site from the surrounding slopes that form that landscape setting.

Surrounding residential areas within 1km including Cheynegate Lane (VP's 1a-c & 3)

- 2.36. The LVIA considered that the most obvious change to visual amenity from publicly accessible locations arising from the development proposed for the site would be as a result of the new entrances to be created. The presence of the development itself within the site in combination with the provision of the new access road across the open space potentially involving the removal of established trees resulted in a **Moderate Adverse** effect to the visual amenity of Juniper Close (VP 1a)⁶⁴. It was felt that this judgement adequately took into account the visibility of the proposed development and the change to the view during the winter. Given the presence of development within the site and the removal of boundary vegetation required in combination within the likely proximity of users to built-form and less opportunity for mitigation through additional screen planting, and how the development would become more visible during the winter due to leaf loss on any retained vegetation the LVIA considered that the effect to the visual amenity of Celia Crescent to also be **Moderate Adverse** (VP 1b)⁶⁵.
- 2.37. Beyond these locations opportunities to obtain views of the development would be limited to particular elevated locations such as at the play area at Pendragon Road (VP 1c) to the west of the site. Views towards the site are often obscured by intervening buildings and where they can be obtained the visible element of the proposed development would be where it becomes apparent above the existing houses introducing additional roofs defining the skyline. Given the limited opportunity to obtain views towards the site and the proposed development the LVIA considered that the effect to the visual amenity of the surrounding residential areas to be **Slight Adverse**⁶⁶.
- 2.38. Views towards the site from the east are even more restricted, limited to a very small number of specific views through field gates from along Chenegate Lane (VP 3). In the views the proposed development would be seen a filtered through the gaps in the intervening vegetation, and where the proposals do become apparent they would be seen in the context of the existing development at Spruce Close so would cause less of a change to the view. For these reasons the LVIA considered the effects to the visual amenity of Cheynegate Lane to be **Minimal Adverse**⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 36, 3rd paragraph

⁶⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – last paragraph on page 36 and 1st paragraph on page 37

⁶⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 37, 2nd paragraph

⁶⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 39, 3rd paragraph

Surrounding slopes used for informal recreation (VP's 2a-d)

- 2.39. As development within Field 1 would be at a lower level and contained by the retained boundary vegetation it would likely be well screened in views from the nearby slopes although due to the close proximity is still likely to be visible from the slopes to the east through gaps in the vegetation, particularly during winter due to leaf loss (VP's 2a-b). The development in Field 2 is likely to become visible from the slopes to the north west (VP 1c) as a ridge line above the boundary vegetation, as well as through gaps in the vegetation, particularly during the winter but its prominence would be reduced by being set into the site away from the boundary and leaving the highest part of the site undeveloped with potential for additional tree planting to provide further screening. This judgement was made before any precise locations of buildings proposed within the site was known, so was based on the Block Plan⁶⁸ and the intentions of the mitigation/impact avoidance measures suggested. Where the development proposed for the site is visible it is often seen to varying degrees in the context of the existing suburban residential development that currently forms the edge of the Exeter. With these factors in mind and that views would be available from a localised extent of the fields due to the undulating topography the LVIA considered that the effects to the visual amenity of the slopes immediately adjacent the site would be **Moderate Adverse**⁶⁹, even taking account of increased visibility during the winter. The proposed development would not be visible from the wider landscape setting to the north of Exeter.

Exeter (within around 1-3km south east and south of the site) (VP's 4-7)

- 2.40. As described in the Baseline Study the well-wooded slopes that form the landscape setting of Exeter are an almost constant presence forming the background to views throughout the city. However, views towards the site itself are often obscured by intervening buildings and vegetation within the city so opportunities are often limited to specific sections of certain transport corridors (VP 4) or elevated residential areas (VP's 5-7). Given the distances involved in combination with the sites position on the slope and the boundary vegetation that is to be retained which merges into the well-wooded appearance of the slopes the LVIA considered that development of the site would be perceptible in the wider context of the landscape setting, even during the winter. As views of the site are only available from localised areas, and at a distance, the LVIA considered that the effects to the visual amenity of Exeter would be **Minimal Adverse**⁷⁰. Although VP 7 from Hillyfield Road was included at a later date at the request of ECC following field observations it was considered to be consistent with the judgements already made for similar viewpoints within this part of Exeter, as stated in the Addendum to the LVIA⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

⁶⁹ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 38 and 1st paragraph of page 39

⁷⁰ Core Document ref: Cd-PA9 – page 40, 2nd paragraph

⁷¹ Core Document ref: CD-PA11

- 2.41. Wireframe photomontages⁷² were produced at the request of ECC for these viewpoint locations as they were identified as being key to understanding and illustrating the effects to the Landscape Setting of Exeter and impacts to visual amenity. The Addendum to the LVIA⁷³ explains that they actually show the development of the site to be less visible than expected in the views taken in Spring but when accounting for the development becoming more visible during the winter the small scale of change attributed to these views, and therefore the judgements of effects to visual amenity made in the LVIA and outlined above, were considered appropriate.

⁷² Core Document ref: CD-PA12

⁷³ Core Document ref: CD-PA11

3.0 OUTLINE PROPOSALS

- 3.1. Parameters Plans and an Indicative Masterplan (drawing 1836_1100)⁷⁴ were submitted with the planning application that were prepared after the LVIA had been produced although they had been informed by the Block Plan (1836_300M)⁷⁵ along with the findings and recommendations of the LVIA. During the planning application the Parameters Plans⁷⁶ and Indicative Masterplan⁷⁷ were amended following extensive discussions with ECC that Redbay Design were not involved in. If and how the latest versions of the Parameters Plans and Indicative Masterplan accords with the findings of the LVIA will be discussed here. It is understood that the while the Indicative Masterplan would only be illustrative if outline planning permission were to be granted any scheme being proposed as part of a reserved matters application following on from that would have to comply with the principles set out in the Parameters Plans so they would provide an element of certainty and control over future proposals for development of the site.
- 3.2. Another key piece of information submitted with the planning application was an indication of the house types to be provided, along with their densities, heights, and materials. In terms of the densities, this was pretty much as expected when preparing the LVIA with a higher density in Field 1 and a lower density in Field 2 as it ascends the slopes towards what would be the edge of the city boundary. Where this differs slightly to what was expected when preparing the LVIA was the heights of the proposed buildings. The LVIA was based on the expectation of a standard height of a two-storey dwelling, being approximately 8m as set out in the process for producing the ZTV. While the proposals are described as two storey those at the higher level within Field 2 would have a maximum ridge height of 9.5m and those in Field 1 would have a maximum ridge height of 11m as they could contain a room in the roof. While in the most extreme case this is quite a considerable difference it would actually be consistent with some of the taller buildings in the neighbouring development and being located in the lower part of the site they would still be contained by the wooded slopes and ridge line of the landscape setting above and behind the site. This would therefore not alter the judgements made in the LVIA. The external materials selection appears to be a contemporary take on the existing development neighbouring the site, being predominantly red brick with other visually recessive materials such as timber cladding under slate roofs which would be in-keeping with the local vernacular and not visually prominent within the context of the landscape setting so would be appropriate for development in this location.

⁷⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA32

⁷⁵ Core Document ref: CD-PA31

⁷⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA22 to CD-PA26

⁷⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PA33

- 3.3. In terms of the actual development site, or the areas of built-form, on Fields 1 and 2 when compared between the first Indicative Masterplan and the latest versions of the Parameters Plans and Indicative Masterplan are very similar and broadly follow the original Block Plan incorporating the mitigation and impact avoidance measures set out in the LVIA. There appear to be three main differences that will be addressed in turn.

Permissive Access to Fields 3-5

- 3.4. This is welcomed and would make what currently takes place on an informal basis more formal while also maintaining these fields as free of development in perpetuity and so protecting the more sensitive part of the overall site that makes a more valuable contribution to the Landscape Setting of Exeter. In terms of the findings of the LVIA it would not alter the judgements made as neither version includes development in this location. While there would be a change due to the permissive access proposed the effects would be minimal when compared to the current condition and use, as well as the context and proximity of the existing suburban edge of Exeter. It would therefore continue to contribute to the Landscape Setting of Exeter, particularly when experienced from within the city as a backdrop in distant views. While development within the site would be visible from these locations, as addressed in the visual impact assessment, the overall character of open fields occupying slopes close to the settlement edge would remain.

Removal of housing land above 115m contour in Field 2

- 3.5. This actually brings the Parameters Plans and Indicative Masterplan more in line with the mitigation and impact avoidance measures set out in the LVIA which stated that *development would extend no higher than the 115-116m contour (AOD)* as illustrated as the area of *High Visual Sensitivity* on the Key Sensitivities drawing in Figure 7 of the Figure Set⁷⁸. This would therefore be a better reflection of what was expected when the LVIA was prepared so the findings of the LVIA are considered to be appropriate for the latest revised version of the Parameters Plans and the Indicative Masterplan (drawing 1836_1101B)⁷⁹.

Alteration of the proposed access through the open space at Spruce Close

- 3.6. The alteration to the proposed access route through the open space is welcomed. While this would still cause a noticeable change to the open space it would ensure that that majority, if not all, of the established trees within the green space could be retained and that a much larger proportion of the space could be maintained for recreational use. It would require breaking through a section of the boundary

⁷⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA9a and CD-PA12

⁷⁹ Core Document ref: CD-PA33

vegetation include the removal of some trees and understorey planting/shrubs although this would be a relatively short section and has been established that this contains a lot of Elm and Ash that are likely to require removal in any case, regardless of the proposed development. This would also be mitigated to some extent by the additional tree planting that would take place within the development.

4.0 RULE 6 PARTY MATTERS

- 4.1. This section addresses or elaborates on matters raised but the Rule 6 Party in their Statement of Case⁸⁰ that have only been touched on or are not covered in the discussion above. These points will be addressed in turn.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

- 4.2. The Rule 6 Statement of Case states the LVIA makes a judgement of the value of the landscape without reference to the latest guidance⁸¹, Technical Guidance Note 02/21⁸² which was published after the LVIA was produced. As explained in paragraph 2.8 of this proof, the judgement of value reached in the LVIA considers factors identified in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 (page 84) as contributing to the value of a landscape including landscape quality, scenic quality, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, and perceptual aspects⁸³. While this may not include every factor listed in Box 5.1 those most relevant to the site and the study area were pulled out, discussed, and considered in the judgement of the value. This latest guidance itself states that “*they are not comprehensive or intended to be prescriptive*” but provide a range of factors that can be considered when establishing the value of a landscape⁸⁴.
- 4.3. The LVIA considered that this landscape is of Medium value which contributed to the judgement that the landscape setting is valued at a Local level. It is when this is compared to the Medium susceptibility that results in the Medium sensitivity that was established in the Baseline Study of the LVIA as can be seen on the Sensitivity Table⁸⁵ that is used internally to assist in making these judgements. This is appropriate, particularly given that as the value starts to rise it begins to fall into the parameters of a landscape that would be worthy of being valued at a similar level to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Park that are valued at a National level, which is not the case here.

VIEWPOINTS

- 4.4. The Rule 6 Party have identified the following viewpoints that they feel should have been included in the LVIA:
- A. Spruce Close residential view
 - B. Celia Crescent residential view
 - C. Beacon Heath (100m NW of appellant viewpoint)
 - D. Eastern Fields
 - E. Hillyfield Road
 - F. Fairfield Avenue

⁸⁰ Core Document ref: CD-ID7

⁸¹ Core Document ref: CD-ID7 – page 4 and 5, paragraph 4.3

⁸² Core Document ref: CD-PA35

⁸³ Core Document ref: CD-PA9 – page 28 and 29

⁸⁴ Core Document ref: CD-PA35 – page 6 paragraph 2.4.1 and page 7 paragraph 2.4.4

⁸⁵ Appendix I on page 34 of this proof

- G. Harts Lane
- H. Roman Avenue
- I. Elm Park Way
- J. Coasts Road
- K. Sullivan Road
- L. Luddwell Valley Park
- M. Clyst St Mary village footpath to Bishops Court Lane
- N. Exeter International Airport
- O. Barley Valley Park
- P. Sky Park
- Q. Marlborough Cross, Bishops Court Lane
- R. Ide Lane
- S. Hambeer Lane, Little John's Cross
- T. Aylesbear bench
- U. Woodbury Road layby (B3179)
- V. Old Dawlish Road
- W. Greendale Farm Shop A3052
- X. Shillingford St. George
- Y. Haldon Belvedere
- Z. Estuary View, Woodbury Common

- 4.5. This is quite an excessive number of views to be included in an LVIA particularly where GLVIA3 allows for representative viewpoint to be used to demonstrate the experience of a range of visual receptors, as stated at paragraph 6.19 on page 109:

“representative viewpoints, selected to represent the experience of different types of visual receptor, where larger numbers of viewpoints cannot all be included individually and where the significant effects are unlikely to differ - for example, certain points may be chosen to represent the views of users of particular public footpaths and bridleways.”

- 4.6. I visited a selection of the viewpoints on 8th June 2022 in order to ascertain the nature of these viewpoints and the visual experience in these locations. Representative viewpoint photographs have been included as Appendix II of this Proof of Evidence.
- 4.7. The residential views at Spruce Close (A) and Celia Crescent (B) were not visited as they are private and not available to the public. Paragraph 6.17 of GLVIA3 states that *effects of development on private property are frequently dealt with mainly through 'residential amenity assessments'* which are subject to a specific methodology that differs to the standard LVIA methodology, although there are similarities. The effects to the visual amenity in these locations was covered by VP's 1a and 1b in the LVIA.
- 4.8. A desktop study revealed that the viewpoint locations identified in the list above as C-K would all be located within the ZVI indicated on Figure 5 of the LVIA Figure

Document⁸⁶. These would therefore be represented by VP's 4-7 so have been covered by the LVIA. It is considered that the nature of the view from these locations and the scale of change arising from the proposed development would be consistent with the judgements made for VP's 4-7 which representative of the visual amenity and potential impacts that are likely to arise to this part of Exeter within around 1-3km south east and south of the site.

- 4.9. Of the remaining viewpoint locations on the list a selection were visited and photography provided, which are underlined above and included in the table below. These were chosen as key locations or as representing the general visual experience of the area and the methodology from the LVIA applied to understand the potential impact to the visual amenity in these locations.

⁸⁶ Core Document ref: CD-PA12

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Scale of Change	Magnitude of Change	Impact
L. Ludwell Valley Park (3.8km south)	High-Medium As would be used by walkers engaged in recreational activity that involves appreciating the surrounding landscape with plenty of opportunity to obtain views, albeit at some distance from the site across the city.	Small Adverse Development is to be avoided from the highest part of the site and the remainder of the development would be well contained and obscured by the retained boundary vegetation. Where/When the proposed development may be visible, such as during winter, it would be seen behind the existing residential development and would not break the skyline. The overall character of the view with development extending on to the mid-slopes around Exeter would not change.	The small scale would be a permanent effect to views that can be obtained from higher parts of the park where intervening vegetation allows which could cover up to an intermediate area within the park, producing a Low Magnitude of change .	Slight Adverse
O. Barley Valley Park (5km south west)	High-Medium As would be used by walkers engaged in recreational activity that involves appreciating the surrounding landscape with plenty of opportunity to obtain views, albeit at some distance from the site across the city.	Small-Negligible Adverse Development would be well contained and obscured by the retained boundary vegetation. Where/When the proposed development may be visible, such as during winter, it would be seen behind the existing residential development and would not break the skyline. At this distance the development would be barely perceptible and the overall character of the view with development extending on to the mid-slopes around Exeter would not change.	The small-negligible scale would be a permanent effect to views that could be obtained from up to an intermediate area of the park where intervening vegetation allows, producing a Low-Negligible Magnitude of change .	Minimal Adverse
P. Sky Park (4.8km east south east)	Medium-Low As users would be workers and visitors at the Sky Park who are engaged in other activities. While views towards the site	Small Adverse The proposals would extend residential development further on to the mid-slopes in this location, as can be seen elsewhere in this view. The	The small scale would be a permanent effect to views that can be obtained from localised parts of Sky Park where intervening vegetation and	Minimal Adverse

	can be obtained from some distance looking towards and across Exeter this is not intrinsic to the activity of users and people do not travel to this location to enjoy the view of the landscape.	development would be well contained by the boundary vegetation to be retained and would not break the skyline as the rising slopes behind would continue to form a backdrop and the landscape setting to the setting. The development would be seen at a distance and the overall character of this view would not change.	buildings allow, producing a Low-Negligible Magnitude of change.	
T. Aylesbeare bench (10.4km south east)	High As people in this location would be enjoying this particular view albeit a very distant view of the site.	Negligible The proposals would extend the residential development further on to the mid-slopes in this view although would be well contained by retained boundary vegetation and would not break the skyline. At this distance the proposals would be barely perceptible in their own right and would appear as part of the mass of Exeter so the overall character of the view would not change.	A permanent effect to the view but would produce a Negligible Magnitude of Change at this distance.	Neutral
U. Woodbury Road layby (B3179) (7.8km south south east)	Medium-Low As people would be travelling along this road in vehicles at speeds of up to 60mph so would be engaged in the activity of driving and views would be transient in nature where the site is seen at some distance.	Negligible The proposals would extend the residential development further on to the mid-slopes in this view although would be well contained by retained boundary vegetation and would not break the skyline. At this distance the proposals would be barely perceptible in their own right and would appear as part of the mass of Exeter so the overall character of the view would not change.	A permanent effect to views that are available from localised short sections of the road and through fields gates but would produce a Negligible Magnitude of Change at this distance.	Neutral

V. Old Dawlish Road (8.7km south south west)	Medium As the majority of people would be travelling along this road in vehicles at speeds of up to 60mph so would be engaged in the activity of driving and views of the site would be transient in nature and at a distance. Although users of the nearby footpath would High-Medium sensitivity due to the recreational nature of the activity.	Negligible Development is to be avoided from the highest part of the site and the remainder of the development would be well contained and obscured by the retained boundary vegetation and would not break the skyline. At this distance the proposals would be barely perceptible in their own right and would appear as part of the mass of Exeter so the overall character of the view would not change.	A permanent effect to views that are available from very limited short sections of the road through fields gates and available to more extent from the footpath but would produce a Negligible Magnitude of Change at this distance.	Neutral
Y. Haldon Belvedere (Lawrence Castle) (11km south west)	High As appreciation of the view is intrinsic to this location and people are likely to travel to this location with the intention of enjoying this view where the site is seen at distance looking towards and across Exeter.	Negligible Development is to be avoided from the highest part of the site and the remainder of the development would be well contained and obscured by the retained boundary vegetation and would not break the skyline. At this distance the proposals would be barely perceptible in their own right and would appear as part of the mass of Exeter so the overall character of the view would not change.	A permanent effect to localised views when looking north east from this location but would produce a Negligible Magnitude of Change at this distance.	Neutral
Z. Estuary View, Woodbury Common (11.4km south east)	High As appreciation of the view is intrinsic to this location and people are likely to travel to this location with the intention of enjoying this view where the site is seen at distance looking towards and across Exeter.	Negligible The proposals would extend the residential development further on to the mid-slopes in this view although would be well contained by retained boundary vegetation and would not break the skyline. At this distance the proposals would be barely perceptible in their own right and would appear as part of the mass of Exeter so the overall character of the view would not change.	A permanent effect to the view but would produce a Negligible Magnitude of Change at this distance.	Neutral

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. Overall, it is considered that the development site (Fields 1 and 2) is capable of accommodating the proposed development without significant effects to the general character of the landscape setting of Exeter, or the visual amenity of the wider area. This takes account of the effects to the additional viewpoints identified by the Rule 6 Party. Although the LVIA was produced with little information regarding the proposals the latest versions of the Parameters Plans⁸⁷ and Indicative Masterplan⁸⁸ have been informed by the sensitivities of the site and incorporates mitigation measures derived from field observations as part of the LVIA to lessen effects while helping to integrate the development into the surrounding character of the area and the landscape setting of Exeter.
- 5.2. The independent review of the LVIA carried out on behalf of ECC by a Chartered Landscape Architect was broadly in agreement with the judgements made in the LVIA stating that:
- “the effects of the proposed development have been assessed by the LVA author and through a review and found to be very localised, having a moderate impact on the valued landscape characteristics and minimal impacts on views from within the landscape and of the setting of the city. The proposed siting within the context of retained traditional hedgebanks will allow the development to be relatively smoothly assimilated into the local landscape.”*⁸⁹
- 5.3. The case officer recommended approval of planning permission on grounds pertinent to landscape and visual matters that:
- “the proposal is not on a ridgeline, against the skyline or isolated away from the built boundary. The site is very well enclosed by trees/hedgerows that will be retained and enhanced. The application will have minimal harm on the landscape setting of the city and the character and distinctiveness of the hills to the north as a whole and contiguous landscape.”*⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Core Document ref: CD-PA22 to CD-PA26

⁸⁸ Core Document ref: CD-PA33

⁸⁹ Core Document ref: CD-DD7 – page 5, paragraph v and page 24, paragraph 87

⁹⁰ Core Document ref: CD-DD1 – page 15-16, conclusion of *Impact on Landscape Setting/character and distinctiveness of the hills to the north of the city* in *Table of key planning issues*.

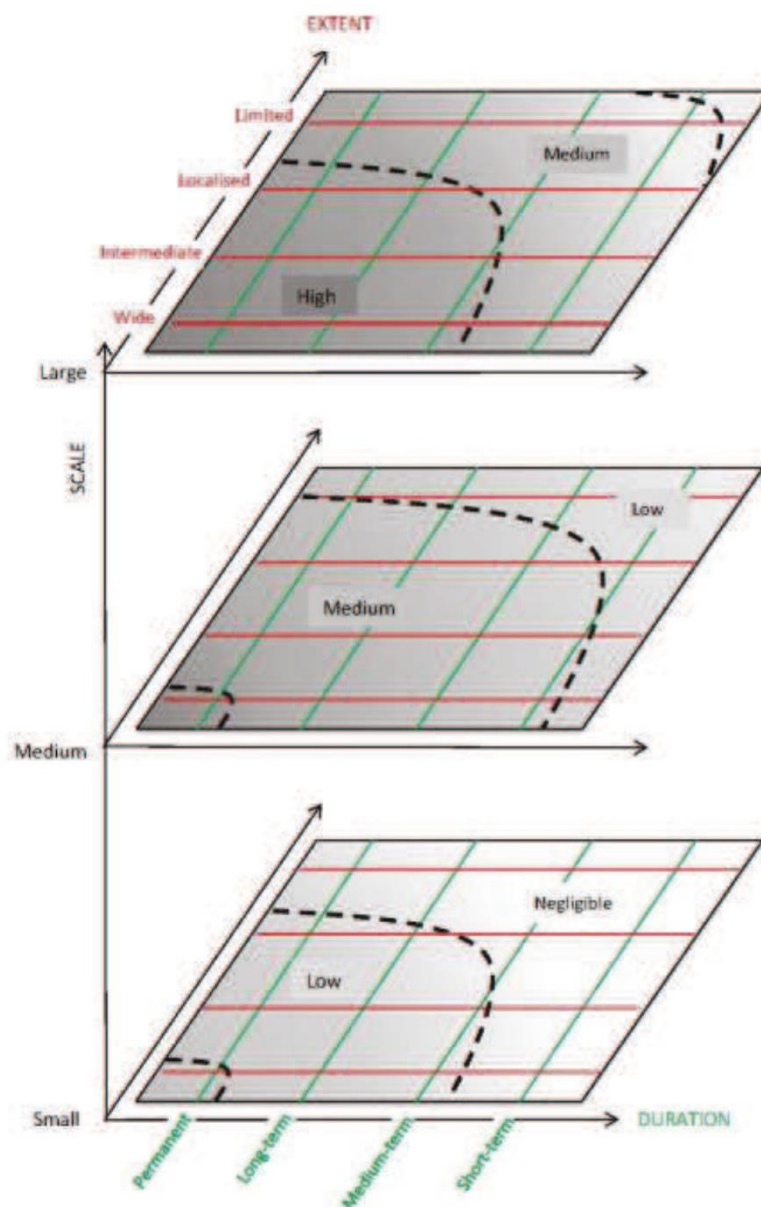
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – SENSITIVITY TABLE AND MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE DIAGRAM

Sensitivity Table

		Susceptibility		
		High	Medium	Low
Value	National/International	High	High-Medium	Medium
	Local/District	High-Medium	Medium	Medium-Low
	Community	Medium	Medium-Low	Low
	Limited	Low	Low-Negligible	Negligible

Magnitude of Change Diagram



APPENDIX II – RULE 6 VIEWPOINT PHOTOGRAPHS

Produced June 2022