

**Proposed Residential Development,
off Spruce Close, Exeter, Devon**

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Redbay Design Landscape Consultants have been commissioned to conduct a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the proposed residential development at land adjacent the suburban residential area on the fringes of Exeter, Devon. The site is currently comprises two undeveloped, open fields defined by hedgerows. This assessment will identify the specific impacts raised by the proposal; consider the effects of these impacts upon landscape character and the visual amenity of the area. The report outlines appropriate landscape enhancement measures and where appropriate inputs into the design of the proposals to help minimise the impact to the physical landscape and features of the site.

This report has been prepared to inform and support an outline planning application for the proposed residential development to be submitted to Exeter City Council.

1.1 The Site

The location of the site, consisting of two fields is illustrated on Figure 1. The 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 that provide the landscape setting of the city. The site itself occupies slopes further up those hills ranging from a height of approx. 100m AOD to 122m AOD with a general southerly aspect. There is currently access into Field 1 through the south eastern boundary over an area of open space from Spruce Close and into Field 2 through the south western boundary from Celia Crescent. The site is split into two fields with an approximate area of 9.6 acres (3.9 hectares) that currently contain no development, so contribute to the landscape setting of the city. 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. 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.

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 and areas of woodland, and to the south and west by 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.

1.2 Proposed Development

The planning application requests outline planning permission for residential development across the site with associated open space and infrastructure. As this is an outline planning application there is not a detailed layout showing individual building locations but there is a block plan indicating areas of development. The proposed scheme would extend across the whole site including both fields but the development areas as illustrated do not occupy the entire site extending up the boundaries. The overall scheme is likely to consist of a range of house types, sizes and densities as well as public open space and landscape features (retained existing and proposed).

The proposals will involve the formalising of existing access points from Spruce Close and Celia Crescent to allow for vehicles and increased use.

Materials

As the application is for outline planning permission there is limited information about the detail of the proposals. Therefore the judgements being made are based on the general mass, size, scale and height of the proposed development. Although no detail is provided it is assumed that the proposed development would make use of appropriate materials that respect the surrounding character and context.

Landscaping

Certain landscape mitigation measures have been incorporated into the proposals, principally the retention of existing boundary vegetation. Additional tree planting has also been illustrated on the block plan indicating the intention that any development taking place would include new tree planting. Further planting and landscape features would be considered alongside a detailed building layout as part of a Reserved Matters or Discharge of Conditions application should outline permission be granted.

1.3 Methodology, Scope and Study Area

This study identifies landscape and visual receptors with the potential to experience effects resulting from the proposed development. It will include a description of the existing situation in order to understand the current state of the character and visual amenity of the study area, highlight key landscape and visual issues and inform preparation of design proposals to address the issues raised and minimise the potential effects. It will then go on to assess the residual effects on the individual landscape and visual receptors identified that are likely to arise from the re-development, taking into account any mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the scheme, to understand the potential impact of the proposals on the Character and Visual Amenity of the area.

The Baseline Study is based on desktop research and site work carried out in May 2019. Photographs and viewpoint location data were collated during the site work, taking into account review of the desk study data and previous knowledge of the study area. Further information on methodology is outlined in Appendix 1.

The OS base mapping was analysed to identify landscape and visual receptors such as designated areas, users of public rights of way and visitors to open spaces and areas of countryside. Specific views from within individual residential properties are not covered by the LVIA as they are private and not available to the public. The landscape character and actual visibility of the site was then reviewed in the field.

All distances to or from the site and AOD values are approximate based on those taken from OS base mapping.

The study area for visibility as well as the presence of landscape related designations and landscape character areas was set at a 4km radius around the site, due to the scale of the development proposed in consideration of the wider area topography and intervening vegetation.

1.4 Sources of Information

Landscape and visual receptors were identified by searching online information including:

- Exeter City Council Core Strategy – Adopted February 2012
- Devon’s Landscape Character Assessment (Devon County Council)
- Exeter Fringes Landscape Sensitivity and capacity Study – Adopted 2007
- Visual Land Parcel Evaluation for Potential Residential Site in Exeter – September 2013
- Exeter City Council Housing Land Review – November 2013
- www.magic.gov.uk – national landscape designations and character areas

2.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

2.1 Landscape Character

Landscape character is illustrated on Figure 02. Photo sheets illustrating the overall character and representative views of the area and how this relates to perception of the site are included in Figure 05 Panels A-I.

National Character Areas (NCA)

National landscape character is set out in Natural England's Character Map of England. The site and western half of the study area which is most relevant to this report is covered by **NCA 148 Devon Redlands**:

The Devon Redlands National Character Area (NCA) has a very strong, unified character. The underlying red sandstone and consequent red soil dominate the landscape through ploughed fields, cliffs and exposures, and are visually evident in the traditional stone and cob farmsteads, hamlets and villages that are scattered across the area. Not only does the soil visually characterise the area but its fertility also makes it the agricultural heart of Devon. Mixed agriculture has shaped this landscape since medieval times, an era that left a dense pattern of deep and narrow lanes imprinted in the landscape. The gently rolling hills that feature across the NCA support a network of hedgerows enclosing relatively small fields that are either grazed or under arable cultivation. Hedgerow trees and small copses often give a wooded appearance to the hills...

Land in the west of the NCA rises to the flat, flint-topped Haldon Hills, now mainly under coniferous plantation with some remnant lowland heath. These hills form a prominent landscape feature which is visible across the Redlands and beyond. They provide a distinctive landscape setting for the Roman city of Exeter, now a regional centre with a significant amount of planned growth to the east. The character of this part of the NCA is fast changing.

Key Characteristics:

- *Hilly landscape of villages, hamlets, farmsteads, hedgebanks and winding sunken lanes, rising in height towards the fringes of the NCA. Steep-sided but flat-bottomed river valleys cut through the hills, opening onto wide flood plains which are important for wintering wildfowl nearer the coast.*
- *Red soils derived from the Permo-Triassic sandstone and red-tinged cob buildings give the name to this NCA.*
- *Large woodlands confined mainly to steep valley sides. In upper valleys small, broadleaved woodlands and copses give a strong sense of enclosure and provide valuable habitat for wildlife. There is a high concentration of ancient semi-natural woodland in the northern part of the NCA.*

- *Mixed farming predominates, but as the land rises in the transitional areas towards Dartmoor and Exmoor pasture becomes widespread. Fields tend to be small and irregular with dense hedgerows on top of earthbanks in the transitional areas, while there is a larger, more open field pattern elsewhere.*
- *A high frequency of designed landscapes.*
- *Cob, red sandstone and thatch buildings are distinctive of the area.*
- *Distinctive area of the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths on infertile, acidic soils supporting important populations of birds such as the hobby, nightjar and Dartford warbler, and butterflies such as the studded blue. The area is also nationally important for relict prehistoric landscapes and features.*
- *Estuaries with reedbeds and salt and grazing marshes.*
- *Striking red sandstone cliffs with well-developed wave-cut platforms and stacks.*
- *Significant urban development around the estuaries and along the coast. The motorway and trunk road network linking Devon and Cornwall with the rest of the country cuts through the landscape, exposing the red sandstone. It converges around Exeter, a historic city and now a key regional centre.*
- *The Haldon Ridge, a coniferous plantation with remnant heath, forms a landscape setting for Exeter and the settlements around the Exe.*

These Key Characteristics are identified at a broad scale so would be largely unaffected by the proposals but have been included for reference. Those that are underlined are most relevant to the site and the surrounding study area. Due to its larger scale the NCA will not form part of any assessment.

Regional Landscape Character Area (LCA)

The County Council has identified 68 Devon Character Areas, named to an area sharing a unique and distinct identity recognisable on a county scale e.g. ‘Southern Dartmoor and fringes’.

The LCA covering the site and the landscape on the northern fringes of Exeter is identified as **Exeter Slopes and Hills** which is defined as:

This is described as elevated above surrounding areas, offering views across Exeter city and the Exe Estuary... Distinctive views, strong topography, notable woodland and proximity to Exeter contribute to a strong sense of place. Despite the proximity to Exeter this landscape has a strong rural character....

Landscape Character Area: Exeter Slopes and Hills	
Key Characteristics	Representation on site and study area
Predominantly sandstone with some shales, grits and cherts, giving rise to a <u>strong varied topography of steep hills</u> and tightly enclosed, intimate small stream valleys.	The site and the surrounding landscape setting on the northern fringe of Exeter is consistent with this description. <u>The site has a general south easterly aspect falling from 122m AOD in the northern most corner to around 98m AOD in the southern most corner, creating a gradient of around 1:14 across the two fields.</u>
Steep-sided gorge where River Exe breaks through these hills.	Not within the study area but the Exe Estuary is visible in the distance from the higher, northern part of the site.
<u>Concentrations of woodland on high ground and steep slopes</u> (both plantations and ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland) e.g. fringing Haldon Ridge, Stoke Woods to the north and Whiptail, Whitestone and Newton Woods further west.	When looking north from within Exeter the higher slopes that form the landscape setting of the city do have a <u>well-wooded with residential development nestled amongst the trees on the lower-mid slopes. The existing trees on the boundaries of the site do currently contribute to this appearance.</u>
Loamy brown soils providing moderate agricultural land quality supporting mainly pasture in the west and arable in the east.	The wider setting of Exeter is agricultural fields defined by hedgerows and trees interspersed by small woodland blocks occupying the steeply undulating landscape but is experienced separately from the settlement and the site beyond the rides of the hills that define that setting.
<u>Irregular medieval field patterns, small to medium in scale and larger to the south, delineated by a mature hedgerow network with some hedgerow trees, interspersed by small woodland copses.</u>	The site is comprised of two medium scale fields that contributes to the field network occupying the higher slopes. <u>All boundaries are defined by tall, established hedges of mixed native species and trees where the predominant species are Ash,</u>
Mixed farming patterns with a higher concentration of arable in the south.	

<p>Semi natural habitats of semi-improved neutral grassland, mixed and broadleaved woodland, small streams and hedgerows.</p>	<p><u>Elm, Field Maple, Birch and some particularly fine mature Oak specimens.</u></p>
<p>Historic features including historic sites located strategically on high land above the Exe/Culm confluence and historic settlements such as Ide.</p>	<p>Heritage Assets within in the study area would not be affected by development of the site.</p>
<p>Small villages, hamlets and farmsteads with many vernacular buildings and clusters of modern residential and industrial along the A30 corridor.</p>	<p>Would be the case in the wider LCA but within the study area the <u>predominant development is the residential areas on the northern edge of Exeter.</u> This is <u>fairly typical of suburban residential development</u> arranged in estates of quite high density detached and semi-detached properties extending on to the lower-mid slopes of the hills around the edge of the city. <u>The predominant building material is red brick and clay tile roofs</u> while there is some evidence of white render and slate roofs, particularly on new builds. Red brick provides the overriding character for the study area to the south of the site. North of the site opportunities to experience Exeter are limited due to the intervening topography and vegetation. Where it is seen it tends to be experienced as a distant settlement and roofscape.</p>
<p>Settlements connected by a network of sometimes sunken, winding lanes along valleys or more open straight roads along ridges.</p>	<p>Again this is the case in the wider LCA outside of Exeter. Roads within Exeter that have the potential to offer views of the site are busy dual carriage ways or typical urban roads where views of the surrounding area are obscured by the surrounding development. The M5 also runs in a general north-south direction through the east of the study area forming the edge of the city.</p>
<p>Vernacular buildings of stone and render, slate and thatch.</p>	<p>The predominant building material <u>is red brick and clay tile roofs</u> although there is evidence of white render and slate roofs, particularly on new builds.</p>
<p><u>Open long distance views</u> in places to Haldon Ridge, <u>Exeter and the Exe estuary</u> as well as northwards across the Crediton trough and west to Dartmoor.</p>	<p>The site merges into the well-treed slopes in long distant views from within Exeter and is obscured in views from the surrounding landscape setting. <u>There are long distance views available from the higher north eastern part of the site looking south east, through to south, across Exeter to the surrounding hills and the Exe Estuary that forms its landscape setting.</u></p>

Relevant Special Qualities and Features	Representation on site and study area
Strong rural character, with woodlands, fields, hedgerows and vernacular settlements, giving rise to high scenic quality and providing an attractive setting to the city of Exeter.	As mentioned previously this describes the setting of Exeter. <u>The site currently occupies the lower edge of the undeveloped upper slopes where the landscape setting meets the residential development on the low-mid slopes. These upper slopes have a well-wooded appearance that the sites field boundaries currently contribute to.</u>
The contrast between elevated open views and inner valleys with intimate character emphasised by the presence of woodlands.	
Strong sense of tranquillity and dark night skies to the west, but reduced close to the A30 corridor and the urban edge of Exeter.	There is a certain sense of tranquillity on the site as it occupies the slopes forming the landscape setting adjacent the urban edge of Exeter but this is disturbed to some extent by the close proximity of the settlement.
High value for recreation in close proximity to the city.	There are no formal footpaths crossing through or adjacent the site but the site and the surrounding fields are currently used for informal recreation.
Relevant Forces for Change – Past and Current	Relevance to site and study area
Gradual 'gentrification' and suburban influences, eroding the historic and rural character.	Historic OS Maps for the area date back to 1889-1890. These illustrate that the expansion of Exeter started to reach the slopes surrounding the site with suburban residential development from around 1965. There appears to be little change to the site itself which has remained open during this time.
Poor hedgerow management resulting in gappy hedgerows particularly on lower-lying slopes and close to the urban edge.	<u>There are currently tall and well established hedges with trees defining all boundaries which should be protected and retained due to their positive contribution to the character of the landscape setting of Exeter.</u>
Relevant Forces for Change – Future	Relevance to site and study area
Potential new built development, including residential expansion on the edge of Exeter which could be highly visible within this elevated landscape and require further infrastructure.	The site is contained within the wider city area boundary but it is located outside of, adjacent to, the Urban Boundary identified on the Local Plan Proposals Maps. The site does occupy an elevated position on the slopes which are covered by <u>Policy Area LS1 that identifies land contributing to the Landscape Setting of Exeter.</u>
Relevant Guidelines	Relevance to site and study area
Protect important views to and from the hill tops surrounding the city of Exeter.	The site merges into the well-treed slopes in long distant views from within Exeter and is obscured in views from the surrounding landscape setting. <u>There are long distance views available from the hills that from this northern setting, including the site) looking south east, through to south, across</u>

	<p><u>Exeter to the surrounding hills and the Exe Estuary that forms its landscape setting.</u></p> <p>While the site does occupy an elevated location having the potential to be viewed from within Exeter field observations established that the ability to obtain <u>views of the site from public locations are extremely limited.</u></p>
<p>Protect the landscape’s rural character in close proximity to urban areas by resisting piecemeal urban expansion and recreational developments which undermine landscape patterns and sense of place.</p>	<p>The site is currently used as pasture, although there were no animals on site at the time of the site visit, with a certain sense of tranquillity disturbed by the nearby development. It is separated from the wider rural landscape surrounding Exeter by the intervening topography and vegetation. It does contribute to the landscape setting from within the settlement. <u>The site currently occupies the lower edge of the undeveloped upper slopes where the landscape setting meets the residential development on the low-mid slopes. These upper slopes have a well-wooded appearance that the sites field boundaries currently contribute to.</u></p>
<p>Manage existing pattern of field enclosure and enhance the network of hedgerows by encouraging traditional hedgerow management practices including the restoration of lost and gappy hedgebanks.</p>	<p><u>There are currently tall and well established hedges with trees defining all boundaries which should be protected and retained due to their positive contribution to the character of the landscape setting of Exeter.</u></p>
<p>Plan to ensure the sensitive location of new development and particularly new urban extensions of Exeter, <u>avoiding prominent open ridges and slopes.</u></p>	<p>The site occupies an elevated location towards the higher slopes on the northern edge of Exeter but does not sit on the ridgeline. While it is currently open it sits within and is obscured by the hedges and trees that define the sites boundaries and contribute to the wooded appearance of the slopes that form the setting of Exeter.</p>
<p>Plan for a network of green spaces and green infrastructure links to support the current and future population of Exeter whilst integrating new development into the landscape.</p>	<p>At this outline stage the broad principles of <u>mitigation and enhancement measures have been incorporated into the scheme</u> in order to reduce potential adverse impacts arising from the proposals and helping the development to integrate into the surrounding landscape.</p>

Immediately to the south of the site is the city of Exeter. As this is not strictly a landscape typology it is not included in the Devon Landscape Character Assessment. There is no specific character assessment for this suburban edge of Exeter. The study area also contains the Clyst Lowland Farmlands LCT and the Yeo, Culm and Exe Lowlands LCT but as these are not covered by the ZTV there would be no inter-visibility and no effects to their character so they will not be taken further into the assessment.

Local Landscape Character Types (LCT)

As part of Devon County Councils Landscape Character Assessment there is summary list of LCT's found throughout the region with their common Key Characteristics. This list has then been used to inform local Landscape Character Assessments carried out by the individual District and Borough Councils across Devon. The Landscape Character Assessment for Devon identifies the site as falling within **LCT 3A Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes**.

Landscape Character Type: 3A Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes	
Key Characteristics	Representation on site and study area
<u>Undulating or rolling upper valley slopes.</u>	The site and the surrounding landscape setting on the northern fringe of Exeter is consistent with this description. <u>The site has a general south easterly aspect falling from 122m AOD in the northern most corner to around 98m AOD in the southern most corner, creating a gradient of around 1:14 across the two fields.</u>
<u>Pastoral farmland, with a wooded appearance, and arable cultivation on lower slopes.</u>	When looking north from within Exeter the higher slopes that form the landscape setting of the city do have a <u>well-wooded appearance with residential development nestled amongst the trees on the lower-mid slopes.</u> <u>The existing trees on the boundaries of the site do currently contribute to this appearance.</u> The site is currently used as pasture, although there were no animals on site at the time of the site visit.
<u>Small to medium size fields with irregular boundaries.</u>	The site is comprised of two medium scale fields that contributes to the field network occupying the higher slopes. <u>All boundaries are defined by tall, established hedges of mixed native species and trees where the predominant species are Ash, Elm, Field Maple, Birch and some particularly fine mature Oak specimens.</u> There is a strong network of hedges with trees and woodland blocks in the wider area.
<u>Deciduous woods and copses, especially on hilltops and upper slopes.</u>	
<u>Very wide, usually low, species-rich hedges with many hedgerow trees.</u>	

Dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farms and small villages.	Would be the case in the wider LCA but within the study area the <u>predominant development is the residential areas on the northern edge of Exeter</u> . This is <u>fairly typical of suburban residential development</u> arranged in estates of quite high density detached and semi-detached properties extending on to the lower-mid slopes of the hills around the edge of the city. <u>The predominant building material is red brick and clay tile roofs</u> while there is some evidence of white render and slate roofs, particularly on new builds. Red brick provides the overriding character for the study area to the south of the site. North of the site opportunities to experience Exeter are limited due to the intervening topography and vegetation. Where it is seen it tends to be experienced as a distant settlement and roofscape.
Very winding narrow lanes.	Again this is the case in the wider LCA outside of Exeter. Roads within Exeter that have the potential to offer views of the site are busy dual carriage ways or typical urban roads where views of the surrounding area are obscured by the surrounding development. The M5 also runs in a general north-south direction through the east of the study area forming the edge of the city.
An intimate and intricate landscape with wider views often restricted by vegetation.	The site merges into the well-treed slopes in long distant views from within Exeter and is obscured in views from the surrounding landscape setting.
Frequently remote and tranquil with little modern development	There is a feeling of remoteness and tranquillity away from settlements in the wider LCT. However, there is a certain sense of tranquillity on the site as it occupies the slopes forming the landscape setting adjacent the urban edge of Exeter but this is disturbed to some extent by the close proximity of the settlement.

The suburbs of Exeter lie directly adjacent the site, which is identified as LCT 7 Main Cities and Towns. This is not generally included in Landscape Character Assessment as it is not strictly a landscape typology and where its character has been considered would be subject to a separate specific report. The Devon County Council Landscape Character Assessment does include some generic characteristics that are listed below for reference and to provide additional information and context.

- Large settlement over 200ha in area, where the landscape is dominated by built development but includes distinct areas of greenspace;
- Varied landform, often masked by development and only apparent when particularly pronounced;
- Nucleated historic cores, frequently including and surrounded by 19th century development, with more recent 20th century and later development on fringes.

There are a number of other LCT's that cover parts of the wider study area forming the wider landscape setting of Exeter. Although some parts of these LCT's are covered by the ZTV field observations established that views of the site are limited so there would be little to no effect to the character of this area arising from the proposed development, particularly as the site is viewed at a distance. Therefore these LCT's will not be taken further into the assessment but are illustrated on Figure 2 for reference.

Exeter Fringes Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2007

Zone 4 and 6

While Exeter City Council does not have a Landscape Character Assessment for the area covered in this application, the Core Strategy states that as part of the Exeter Local Plan Review several areas of open land were identified as '*Landscape Setting following landscape appraisal studies carried out in 1997 and 1999.*' The Core Strategy then goes on to explain that *this issue is thoroughly reviewed in the 2007 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, which assesses robustly the qualities of the landscape and identifies the extent to which each area has capacity to accommodate development. The study provides the detailed evidence that supports the protection of areas of landscape sensitivity including those areas that provide the strategic landscape setting for the city.*

When discussing the functions of these fringe areas the Core Strategy suggests that *the hills to the north... have a particularly important role to play in forming an attractive green setting for the city, in addition to their intrinsic landscape value.*

The site falls on the southern edge of the landscape setting area 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.

Some of the accompanying comments of particular note or relevance to the site in relation to Zone 4 (Field 2) are:

- The area has a high visual sensitivity as it lies on a ridgetop exposed to views.
- Skyline forms a strong backcloth to the city.
- *Part of the northern rural hinterland of the city poorly connected to the settlement.*
- *C20-21 housing intrudes on to the hillside although bounded by trees.*
- *No potential for improvement of settlement edge as already bounded by trees.*

Some of the accompanying comments of particular note or relevance to the site in relation to Zone 6 (Field 1) are:

- The area has a high visual sensitivity as it lies on a ridgetop exposed to views.
- Skyline forms a strong backcloth to the city.
- *Part of the rural hinterland to the city with some footpath linkage.*
- *Important setting to the city even though the area consists of valley sides.*
- *New estate housing with red brick prominent on hillside.*
- *Additional native tree planting could be desirable on existing settlement edge.*

2.2 Landscape Policies/Designations

The current planning policy documents for Exeter City are the Core Strategy DPD which was adopted in February 2012 and covers the period up to 2026 together with the Saved Policies from the Local Plan First Review 2005-2011 which was adopted in 2005 and the policies saved in 2008. Exeter City Council is currently working with the surrounding local authorities of East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge as well as Devon County Council to prepare a Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP). This will provide the overall spatial strategy and level of housing and employment land to be provided up to 2040 and deliver the best possible outcomes for the provision of new homes, jobs and infrastructure for existing and future generations, while also protecting and enhancing the environment. As part of the GESP Exeter City Council are in the process of producing a Development Delivery DPD with associated Proposals Maps that will replace the Saved Policies from Local Plan First Review and support the Core Strategy. However, at this point the GESP and the Development Delivery DPD are

in the very early stages having gone through consultation on the vision but have not yet been submitted for examination. Therefore they carry very limited weight in planning decisions but do suggest the possible future intentions for the development and management of the area.

The Proposals Map associated with the Exeter Local Plan First Review adopted in 2005 identifies the site as covered by the **LS1 Landscape Setting** policy area, abutting the current boundary of the suburban residential development on the northern edge of Exeter. The Local Plan explains that *the council carried out a landscape appraisal of all open countryside in and around the city where open land is identified which is to be protected from development because of its intrinsic merit and its contribution to the distinctive landscape setting of the City.* It goes on to describe *the continuous nature and sheer size of hills to the north are of major landscape significance, providing the largest most important part of the landscape setting and containment of the City, which is essential to its character... the hills, which are themselves intrinsically attractive, preserve the pastoral landscape of a large part of East Devon.*

Saved Policy LS1 states:

Development which would harm the landscape setting of the City will not be permitted.

Proposals should maintain local distinctiveness and character and:

a) Be reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, the rural economy, outdoor recreation or the provision of infrastructure; or

b) Be concerned with change of use, conversion or extension of existing buildings:

Any built development associated with outdoor recreation must be essential to the viability of the proposals unless the recreational activity provides sufficient benefit to outweigh any harm to the character and amenity of the area.

This is supported by the Core Strategy which suggests that *the hills to the north... have a particularly important role to play in forming an attractive green setting for the city, in addition to their intrinsic landscape value.*

Part of the Adopted Core Strategy Policy CP16 states:

The character and local distinctiveness of the areas identified below [the hills to the north and north west], will be protected and proposals for landscape, recreation, biodiversity and educational enhancement brought forward, in accordance with guidance in the Green Infrastructure Strategy, through the Development Management DPD.

The emerging Development Delivery DPD will replace the Saved Policies of the Local Plan First Review and the Proposals Maps supporting the DPD still include the site within the Landscape Setting area. The Development Delivery DPD explains that *the*

hills to then north and west of the city and the ridgelines which connect to, and from part of, the wider Devon landscape, give Exeter a distinctive character.

Emerging Policy DD29 states:

Development within the Landscape Setting Areas will only be permitted where:

- a) there is no harm to the distinctive characteristics and special qualities of the landscape setting of the City and the wider area; and*
- b) it does not contribute towards the urbanisation of these areas; and*
- c) it does not contribute towards settlement coalescence between Exeter and Topsham; and*
- d) it consists of a replacement dwelling or domestic extension or it is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, the rural economy, outdoor recreation, landscape, educational or biodiversity enhancement, or the provision of green infrastructure; or,*
- e) it delivers strategically important infrastructure identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and it can be demonstrated that there is no suitable alternative site with less harmful impacts and it minimises harm to the Landscape Setting Area.*

The emerging policy appears to be moving away from totally precluding development within the Landscape Setting other than what is *reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, the rural economy, outdoor recreation or the provision of infrastructure* so long as *there is no harm to the distinctive characteristics and special qualities of the landscape setting and it does not contribute towards the urbanisation of these areas.*

Under the heading of *Design Principles* the Local Plan First Review discusses *Landscape* in relation to design proposals. It states that *landscape design is a principal consideration of development, the starting point of which is the quality and character of the existing landforms (hills, valleys and slopes), vegetation and other natural features. Exeter's hilly terrain strongly influences its townscape with views and glimpses almost at every turn. Green spaces penetrate built up areas, green hills are clearly visible from the centre and there is significant tree cover in the older residential areas.* It goes on to explain that *development proposals should work with the existing contours rather than relying on extensive cut and fill and that landscape works should aim to enhance the setting of both the proposed development and the surrounding area... Carefully considered hard landscape works and new planting allied to the conservation of important existing natural features (examples of these would include trees, significant shrubs and hedgerows, rivers, streams and associated land) enhances the character and appearance of new development and promotes local distinctiveness.*

With regards to *Materials* the Local Plan First review states that *the use of local materials is a major factor in enhancing local distinctiveness*. It goes on to explain that *the historic core of Exeter is notable for a rich mix of stone, stucco and brick and that later 18th and early 19th century suburbs may be brick or stucco... Roofing is traditionally in slate with some... later suburbs distinct by their use of plain clay tiles. Sheet metals such as lead and copper are also commonplace. For new proposals developers should generally use this range of materials in conjunction with timber, steel and glass to create contemporary design solutions. Modern glazing is particularly useful for cladding which, when used in conjunction with traditional materials, can create contemporary solutions appropriate to an historic townscape.*

In relation to the *Objectives of Urban Design Saved Policy DG1* states:

Development should:

- a) be compatible with the urban structure of the city, connecting effectively with existing routes and spaces and putting people before traffic;*
- b) ensure that the pattern of street blocks, plots and their buildings (the grain of development) promotes the urban character of Exeter;*
- c) fully integrate landscape design into the proposal and ensure that schemes are integrated into the existing landscape of the city including its three-dimensional shape, natural features and ecology;*
- d) be at a density which promotes Exeter's urban character and which supports urban services;*
- e) contribute to the provision of compatible mix of uses which work together to create vital and viable places;*
- f) be of a height which is appropriate to the surrounding townscape and ensure that the height of constituent part of buildings relate well to adjoining buildings, spaces and to human scale;*
- g) ensure that the volume and shape (that massing) of structure relates well to the character and appearance of the adjoining buildings and the surrounding townscape;*
- h) ensure that all designs promote local distinctiveness and contribute positively to the visual richness and amenity of the townscape;*
- i) use materials which relate well to the palette of materials in the locality and which reinforce local distinctiveness.*

2.3 Settlements

The site is contained within the wider city area outside of, but adjacent to, the Urban Boundary identified on the Local Plan proposals maps. The site is experienced from and in the context of the suburban area on the northern edge of Exeter which started to extend on to the slopes adjacent the site from around 1965 and currently forms the northern extent of the city.

The overriding character of the area adjacent the site is of residential suburban development on the edge of a city that is fairly typical of this type of development constructed during these periods. The houses are a variety of detached, semi-detached and terraces arranged in quite high density estates fronting on to internal access roads that make the most out of the land parcels that were available at the time. The majority are two storey although due to the sloping nature of the topography some of the buildings have been constructed on terraces created out of the slope. The predominant building material in the context of the site is red brick and clay tile roofs. There is some evidence of white render in the surrounding settlement, particularly on new builds.

There is larger scale development such as Pinhoe Trading Estate and Sowton Industrial Estate that extends further south along the eastern edge of Exeter beyond the immediate context of the site. Both of which are industrial/commercial in nature. There are also the University of Exeter campus and individual buildings such as St Luke's College and The Met Office building which are set within large open grounds. At the time of the site visit there was evidence of recent residential development and new residential development taking place in some of the open gaps within this and the surrounding suburban area some of which is visible in VP 5 (Tithebarn Development). The majority of this follows the typical vernacular of red brick and clay tiled roofs but some are a mix that also includes white render and slate roofs.

While the prominent landscape setting presented by the hills to the north are apparent at all times from within the settlement the site itself is often obscured by the hedges and trees that define its boundaries and contribute to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes. Views from publicly accessible locations within Exeter are however limited and are often from roads passing through the area where the site is obscured by intervening buildings and vegetation. Due to the location of the site on a south facing slope looking over Exeter there is little to no opportunity to view the site in the context of the wider city from the surrounding landscape to the north.

The suburban area on the northern edge of the city of Exeter, will be considered as a landscape receptor concerning potential affects to its character arising from the proposed development. Effects to the visual amenity of publicly accessible routes/locations will be dealt with individually.

Visual Receptors

2.4 Public Rights of Way

No designated Public Rights of Way run through the site that would be directly affected by the proposals, however a number of Public Rights of Way are present within the study area. They are detailed below.

Key Routes - Main Roads

The M5 motorway runs in a general north to south direction defining the eastern edge of the wider City Area boundary. A couple of sections of the motorway, around junction 30 and just to the north of junction 29 are covered by the ZTV. However, field observations found that views of the site tend to be obscured by intervening vegetation bounding the motorway and development associated with Exeter. As users of the motorway would be travelling in vehicles at speeds of up to 70mph and, if visible, the site would be seen at a distance and would not be a prominent or prolonged feature in views. Development of the site is not likely to cause a noticeable change to the visual experience for users of the M5 so it will not be taken further into the assessment.

The A3015 and the A379 lead from the M5 into Exeter and both have long sections covered by the ZTV. Field observations established that views of the site are obscured by intervening buildings and vegetation so they will not be taken further into the assessment.

The other main route covered by the ZTV is the **B3181** that runs from the A3015 through Exeter where it either turns east out of the city or west where it merges into the **B3212** and runs into the city centre. In the main, field observations established that views of the site are often obscured by intervening buildings and vegetation although there are some opportunities for glimpses views towards the through gaps between buildings due to the sites elevated position. Therefore, users of this route will be considered as **visual receptors**.

Key Routes - Railways

The South Western Railway Line between Exeter St Davids and London Waterloo runs from west to east through the study area between the residential areas of Pinhoe and Monkerton. Although views from the train itself were not tested during the site assessment field observations considered that views of the site would not be available due to intervening vegetation and buildings, particularly the vegetation bounding the railway line itself and the woodland on the slopes surrounding the site. When this is combined with the speeds that users would be travelling on the train it is considered

that there would be little to no effect to the visual experience along this route. Therefore the railway line will not be taken further into the assessment.

The other railway lines that run through Exeter would not be affected as views of the site would not be available due to the combination of distance, speed of travel and the intervening vegetation and buildings.

Local Roads

Local roads and their associated pavements either side present the best opportunity for views of the site from Exeter, within the immediately surrounding residential areas and up to around 3km as indicated by the ZVI on Figure 5. The site can be seen occupying its elevated position on the well-wooded slopes of the hills that form the landscape setting of Exeter. While different parts of this landscape setting are nearly always apparent views of the site itself are restricted to short sections or specific locations of certain roads due to being obscured by intervening buildings and vegetation. The general nature of roads that allow for views of the site are described below.

- **Surrounding Residential Areas (publicly accessible locations)** – (VP's 1a-c): These would be local roads primarily used to access residential properties so would be used by the general public. There is pedestrian access to the site from Spruce Close, across an area of open space, and from Celia Crescent through the boundary vegetation. The ZVI on Figure 5 illustrates that views of the site from these roads are only available within a proximity of around 1km. The roads tend to have two lanes and are often bound on either side by houses so views of the surrounding landscape are restricted to glimpses through gaps between the buildings, although the wooded landscape setting is apparent above the buildings from some locations. Users of these roads would be travelling in vehicles at slow speeds or walking along the adjacent pavements but their attention is not necessarily on appreciating views of the surrounding landscape. Users of these roads will be considered as **visual receptors**. The residents of surrounding properties are not included in this report as they are not openly accessible by the general public.
- **Cheynegate Lane** – (VP 3): This is a narrow lane leading from the northern edge of Pinhoe out to the landscape setting surrounding Exeter. This is likely to be used by people travelling into and out of Exeter as well as accessing the small number of properties along the lane. It would be predominantly used by people travelling in vehicles at very slow speeds, although the ventral section is not easily accessible by car due to the uneven surface. It is also likely to be used by a small number of pedestrians. Views of the surrounding landscape are available but only from specific location through roadside gates. Users of these roads will be considered as visual receptors. The residents of surrounding properties are not included in this report as they are not openly accessible by the general public.

- **Exeter (within around 1-3km south east of the site) – (VP's 4-6):** These would be local roads within the wider city used by people passing through as well as those accessing residential properties so would be more heavily used than those mentioned above including by the general public. Cumberland Way (VP 4) for example is quite a busy route through this part of the city. The ZVI on Figure 5 illustrates that views of the site from these roads are only available from an area to the south east of the site around 1-3km away, usually from elevated locations amid the undulating landform of the city. The roads tend to have two lanes and are often bound on either side by houses or vegetation. The well-wooded slopes forming the landscape setting of the city are a constant presence in views although the site itself is only visible from certain locations due to being obscured by the intervening buildings and vegetation. Users of these roads would be travelling in vehicles at slightly quicker speeds, up to 30mph, or walking along the adjacent pavements but their attention is not necessarily on appreciating views of the surrounding landscape. Users of these roads will be considered as visual receptors. The residents of surrounding properties are not included in this report as they are not openly accessible by the general public.

Footpaths and Bridleways

Beyond the roadside pavements described above there are few dedicated footpaths within the city in the vicinity of the site and even fewer that are covered by the ZTV. Of those covered by the ZTV that were visited during the site assessment none of them allowed for views of the site due to intervening buildings or vegetation, either bounding the route, surrounding the site, or in between.

Cycle Routes

There are no national Cycle Network routes passing through the study area that provide views of the site. Both the adopted and emerging Local Plan maps indicate a cycle network within the city that in the vicinity of the site follow local roads. These would be included in the assessment of the local roads as described above.

2.5 Other Recreational Landscapes/Areas

Although not formally recognised through a designation or policy the **slopes surrounding the site** are used by the local community for informal recreation (walkers/dog-walkers). Again, there are no formal routes across these slopes but evidence such as desire lines do suggest that people tend to walk around the perimeter of fields allowing for views towards the site, often when looking back across Exeter and the distant landscape setting to the south (VP's 2a-d). Residential development does not tend to present a prominent feature in these views as it is often obscured by the surrounding vegetation and the views are looking across the

roofscape. However, due to the recreational activity of these locations and the elevated, distant nature of views users are more likely to be appreciating views of the surrounding landscape.

There are areas of Open Access Land to the north and north west of the site, however, these are not covered by the ZTV so will not be taken further into the assessment as views of the site are not available.

2.6 Visual Amenity and Views

Visual receptors are people who may experience views of the site and proposed development from public rights of way including roads and footpaths. Visual receptors can be located throughout the study area, any impacts that they experience would be considered to be direct impacts as a result of the proposals through introduction, removal, obstruction, or modification of elements within the view.

As part of the appraisal process potential viewpoint locations were visited following the site visit. These were selected to enable an understanding of the actual visibility of the site, based on review of the topographic plans, designations maps, and accompanying figures to identify likely sensitive visual receptors.

The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) suggests that potential views of the proposed development would be available from around the site and from within the city in the southern half of the study area, 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.

Views of the site can be obtained by three distinct areas. Firstly, from the immediately surrounding residential areas within 1km of the site. This would include the residential properties but they are not included in this report as the views are not available to the public. There are also some views from the slopes immediately surrounding the site that are used informally for recreation, within 500m of the site. Beyond that the third area is a band between 1-3km south east of the site within the urban area from elevated locations. 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 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 Panels A-V, summarised below:

- **1a:** View looking into the south eastern end of the site from across the open green space at Juniper Close that currently forms the edge of the residential area in this location. The gate in the centre currently allows access to the site with the mature trees/hedges either side defining its boundary. The trees in the background, through the gate, form the boundary that divides Fields 1 and 2 within the site. This view would most likely be available to the local community rather than the general public. *During the winter months there would be filtered views through the gaps between the boundary trees although the density of the trees would continue to direct views through the field gate in the centre.*
- **1b:** View looking towards the south western boundary of the site from Celia Crescent that currently forms the edge of the residential area in this location. The trees to the right define the boundary of the site which can also be seen continuing along the boundary behind and above the houses along the road to the left. This view would most likely be available to the local community rather than the general public. *During winter months the gaps between the boundary trees and therefore the visibility into the site would increase.*
- **1c:** This view is taken from the residential area at Pendragon Road which is located on the other side of a steep narrow valley to the south west of the site. The valley separates the development areas which occupy the upper slopes of the valley sides. The viewpoint location is actually near to a play area that is elevated above the road so this view is not available to the road users. The houses that can be seen on the opposite side of the valley in the background form the edge of Celia Crescent. The trees behind and above those houses forming the skyline in the view define the south western boundary of the site towards the north western end of Field 2. This view would most likely be available to the local community rather than the general public. *During winter months the trees on the skyline would present a less prominent feature due to the leaf loss.*
- **2a:** This view is taken from the open field that forms part of the landscape setting of Exeter immediately to the east of the site. It is in a slightly elevated position above the site allowing for distant views back across the city of Exeter and its setting to the south above the intervening vegetation within this field and defining nearby field boundaries. Some of these trees/hedges to the right of the view form the boundaries of the site allowing glimpsed views through gaps into Field 1 of the site itself. This field is accessed from a bridleway leading from the nearby residential area, allowing for informal recreation across these slopes. There are desire lines making routes through the field that leads through the boundary vegetation into the fields adjacent the site. This view would most likely be available to the local community, including wider Exeter rather than just the nearby

residents but not the general public beyond that. During winter months the gaps between the boundary trees and therefore the visibility into the site would increase.

- **2b:** This view is taken from the open field that forms part of the landscape setting of Exeter immediately to the north of the site. It is in a slightly elevated position above the site allowing for distant views back across the city of Exeter and its setting to the south above the intervening tree/hedges defining field boundaries in the middle ground. It is these trees/hedges that form the boundaries of the site allowing glimpsed views through gaps into Field 2 of the site itself. This field is accessed from the fields either side, but not the site itself, as part of the informal recreation taking place across these slopes. There are desire lines making routes around the perimeter of the field with a location in the northern most corner where people are likely to stop to appreciate the distant views from the highest part of this field. This view would most likely be available to the local community, including wider Exeter rather than just the nearby residents but not the general public beyond that. During winter months the gaps between the boundary trees and therefore the visibility into the site would increase.
- **2c:** This view is taken from the open field that forms part of the landscape setting of Exeter immediately to the north west of the site. It is elevated above the site allowing for distant views back across the city of Exeter and its setting to the south. This field is accessed from any one of the surrounding fields, including the site, as part of the informal recreation taking place across these slopes. There are desire lines making routes around the perimeter of the field and clearly a location in the northern most corner where people stop to appreciate the distant views from the highest part of this field. The trees/hedge defining the north western boundary of the Field 2 within the site form part of the field boundary in the centre of the view. This view would most likely be available to the local community, including wider Exeter rather than just the nearby residents but not the general public beyond that. During winter months the gaps between the boundary trees and therefore the visibility into the site would increase.
- **2d:** This view is taken from the open field that forms part of the landscape setting of Exeter on the opposite side of the valley to the south west. It is at a lower level looking back up towards the edge of the residential areas and the site. This field is accessed from Pendragon Road and is used for informal recreation with desire lines making routes around the perimeter of the field. The trees/hedge defining the boundary of the field immediately to the north west of the site form the skyline in this view with the trees on the south western boundary of Field 2 can just about

be seen to the right. This view would most likely be available to the local community, including wider Exeter rather than just the nearby residents but not the general public beyond that. During winter months the trees on the skyline would present a less prominent feature due to the leaf loss.

- **3:** These viewpoints represent the nature of views through the roadside gates when travelling along Cheynegate Lane between the nearby residential area and the landscape surrounding the city. This lane is used by people travelling in vehicles, although the central section is not easily accessible due to the uneven surface, and some pedestrians. There are some views directly into Field 1 where the intervening vegetation including that on the sites boundary allows but the majority of the site is obscured by the surrounding well-wooded appearance of the slopes. The site is seen in the context of the nearby residential development that currently forms the edge of Exeter. This view would be available to predominantly the local community but also potentially the general public. During the winter months the site would become more visible as the trees lose their leaves.
- **4:** This is the view when travelling north west along Cumberland Way which is a busy transport route towards the suburban residential area that forms the northern edge of Exeter. This route is used by people travelling in vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. The landscape setting can clearly be seen forming the background of this view. The site itself is not currently easily identifiable as the boundary trees/hedges merge into the surrounding well-wooded appearance of the slopes that go on to a wooded ridge which defines the skyline. This view would be available to residents of Exeter as well as the general public passing through. While the fields occupying the slopes become more visible during the winter as the trees lose their leaves the site is still very obscured and difficult to identify due to its position on the slopes and the amount of surrounding trees.
- **5:** This is the view when entering the eastern edge of Exeter into Monkerton just after the bridge crossing the M5. It is taken from a newly created road leading through a new residential development that is currently under construction. The view illustrates the settled nature of the lower-mid slopes that form the northern suburban edge of Exeter before it meets what is identified as the landscape setting. Again, the site itself is not currently easily identifiable as the boundary trees/hedges merge into the surrounding well-wooded appearance of the slopes that go on to a wooded ridge which defines the skyline. This view would currently be available to residents of Exeter as well as the general public passing through however, once the Tithebarn Development is complete this view would be largely

obscured by houses, much like elsewhere throughout Exeter. While the fields occupying the slopes become more visible during the winter as the trees lose their leaves the site is still very obscured and difficult to identify due to its position on the slopes and the amount of surrounding trees.

- **6:** This view is from a residential area known as Birchy Barton that occupies an elevated location within Exeter. This is a good example of the nature of views towards the site that are available from within Exeter, which tend to be from elevated locations. The site is located just below the ridgeline behind the residential development that occupies slopes. The site itself is not currently easily identifiable as the boundary trees/hedges merge into the wooded ridge behind which defines the skyline. The zoom-in image shows that the south western boundary of the site is just about perceptible immediately behind the residential development and below an open field the occupies the upper slope above the site to the north east which is separated from the site by well-established trees/hedge that can be seen in the view. These sorts of views would be available primarily to residents of Exeter but also potentially to the general public passing through from certain locations. Field 2 within the site does become more visible during winter months when the trees along its boundaries lose their leaves.

2.7 Summary of Key Receptors

Based on review of the desk study and ZTV models for the proposed development combined with fieldwork observations and professional judgement the following landscape and visual receptors are considered to be key to understanding impact arising from the proposals on the site and study area.

Landscape Receptors

- 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
- Policy Area LS1 Landscape Setting
- Suburban edge of Exeter

Visual Receptors

- Surrounding residential areas within 1km (publicly accessible locations)
- Surrounding slopes used for informal recreation
- Exeter (within around 1-3km south east of the site)

2.8 Sensitivity

Landscape Character

The site is contained within the wider city area outside of, but adjacent to, the Urban Boundary identified on the Local Plan proposals maps. It occupies an elevated position towards the higher slopes abutting the northern edge of the suburban residential area that currently forms the northern extent of the city and is covered by Policy Area LS1 that identifies land contributing to the Landscape Setting of Exeter. As a result, it does contain some characteristics described in the Landscape Character Assessments at all levels but is also influenced by its proximity to the suburban development that currently extend on to the lower-mid slopes below the wooded upper slopes in this location. While the site does occupy an elevated position up to around 122m AOD the it forms the lower edge of the landscape setting where it meets the suburban development with the land beyond continuing to rise reaching 144m AOD at the northern most point of the field immediately adjacent the site to the north west. The land then continues to rise up to around 150-160m AOD beyond that 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 appearance of the slopes that form the landscape setting of Exeter. While the vernacular building material in the surrounding landscape is described as stone and render with slate or thatched roofs the predominant building material in the context of the site is red brick with clay roofs, or similar with some evidence of white render and slate roofs.

The Exeter Fringes Study is a good starting point to understand the sensitivity of these Zones around the city and their contribution to the landscape setting. However, it does make quite broad-brush conclusions regarding the visibility and sensitivity applied over zones that cover large areas and have a range in elevation of up to 50m in some places. Field observations found that while these entire zones do in general contribute to the landscape setting of the city the land parcels contained within do 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 site actually occupies a similar elevation to the adjacent development at Celia Crescent and the land within the site is not visible due to the scale of the fields and the screening provided by boundary trees/hedges which merge into the surrounding well-wooded appearance of the slopes. 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. This is accepted to some degree by the fact that Field 1 is covered by Zone 6 which is considered to have more capacity to accommodate development than Zone 4. It could be argued that both Fields 1 and 2, that make up the site, have more capacity to accommodate

development than the Fringes Study suggests. Having said that development of the site would still need to be carefully considered and would be reliant on the boundary trees/hedges being retained in order to maintain the screening and contribution to the well-treed landscape setting of the upper slopes.

The boundary trees/hedges appear to be in good condition with some particularly fine Oak specimens, although do contain some Ash (which is susceptible to Ash dieback) and the condition of all trees should be confirmed by a tree survey. There is no inter-visibility between the site and the Conservation Areas around the centre of Exeter and there are no listed buildings within the vicinity of the site so they will not be affected. There are few footpaths leading from the suburban edge of Exeter into the surrounding landscape but none that offer views of the site although there are views from the surrounding slopes that are used for recreation. There are no other areas of landscape, ecological, cultural or historic value relevant to the site or its surrounding context.

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. With this in mind it is considered that the site and the study area is valued at a **Local** level.

Field observations made for this report 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. As a result, there is potential for development to be accommodated within the site while still maintaining the landscape setting of Exeter. However, it is still important that development proposals are well considered to ensure they respect the existing boundary vegetation and the wider landscape setting. *The site itself is more apparent from the immediately surrounding landscape during the winter months when the boundary vegetation loses its leaves.* Therefore, the landscape would have an overall **Medium** susceptibility whereby development could be accommodated on the site within the landscape setting but *undue consequences may arise.*

Therefore, an overall **Medium sensitivity** has been attached to the landscape character of the study area.

Visual Amenity

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 site itself 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 site itself are often obscured by intervening buildings and vegetation. Where opportunities do exist to obtain views towards the site it tends to be from elevated locations or transport corridors. In those views the 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 between the edge of the residential development that occupies the settled lower-mid slopes and wooded ridgeline above.

Therefore, an overall **Medium sensitivity** has been attached to the visual amenity of the study area within Exeter.

Even from within close proximity there are very few opportunities for direct views in to the site 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.

The slopes surrounding the site 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 activity of people in these locations and the nature of views available gives the visual amenity of users of these slopes a **Medium-High sensitivity**.

The judgements made during the Baseline Study are broadly consistent with the *Visual Land Parcel Evaluation for Potential Residential Sites in Exeter* that was produced by Cornwall Environmental Consultants for Exeter City Council in September 2013, which informed the *Housing Land review* document dated November 2013. This evaluation established that the two fields which now comprise the application site are less sensitive to development than the immediately surrounding fields within the applicants ownership higher up the slope, due to the reasons set out in this Baseline Study.

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The Proposals

The outline planning application seeks planning permission for residential development across the two fields that make up the site. At this stage the precise number of dwellings is not known but the proposed Block Plan produced by Place by Design indicates development areas with a suggestion of building densities within each area. The proposed Block Plan has been informed by the Key Sensitivities diagram (Figure 7) that was produced by Redbay Design following the initial site assessment, based on an Opportunities and Constraints Plan for the site and the immediately surrounding area produced by Place By Design.

As the application is for outline planning permission there is no further information provided about the detail of the proposals. Therefore, the judgements being made are based on the general mass, size, scale and height expected of the type of development being proposed. Certain assumptions have been made such as the form/architectural style of the buildings and use of appropriate materials that respect the surrounding character and context.

The proposed development will be accessed via improvement of existing access points. One from Spruce Close, across the open green space into Field 1 through the existing field gate in the south eastern boundary of the site. The second will be created into Field 2 through the south western boundary in the location of an existing pedestrian path from Celia Crescent. An internal road has been illustrated that crosses the two fields within the site with spur roads leading from it providing access to the different development areas. The Block Plan indicates 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 have also been 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 would be towards the north western end of Field 2 which is most visible. Other than what would require removal for the creation of access into and throughout the site, all other boundary vegetation is intended to be retained. Additional tree planting and landscape features would be incorporated into the development proposals at a more detailed design stage, should planning permission be granted.

3.2 Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

As the application is for outline planning permission there is limited information regarding the detail of the proposals beyond the Block Plan setting out the principles of development across the site in this location, these include:

- The proposed 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.
- The key piece of information on the Block Plan are the proposed development areas which 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 most visible. This is appropriate for the edge of settlement location where development tends to reduce in density as it meets the landscape setting.
- Development areas C2 and F have been set back from the highest, most visible part of the site at the north western end of Field 2. The Block Plan suggests that development would extend 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.
- 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 have been 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.
- 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 all existing trees if possible. If not, any trees lost should be replaced by new tree planting.
- A landscape strategy will be provided alongside detailed development proposal that will confirm the protection and retention of existing boundary vegetation with the inclusion of RPA's as well as the provision of additional tree planting, landscape features and ecological/habitat enhancement with the associated biodiversity benefits.

3.3 Potential Effects

The following will result in residual effects once construction is complete and mitigation measures have taken effect. The impacts of these then will be considered against the individual receptors identified during the Baseline:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 landscape strategy that would also help to break up the appearance of the buildings contained within the development areas illustrated on the Block Plan.

4.0 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 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*.

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 site is located within Policy Area LS1 and Zone 4 and 6 of the Fringes Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study. The Baseline Study set out that the conclusions made in the Fringes Study are quite broad-brush and the site would have more capacity to accommodate development than the more elevated slopes surrounding it.

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 dramatically extend development further up the slope. It is expected that the proposed development would make use of external materials that are consistent with and respect the local context so would not appear as new development or an obvious extension.

The development areas illustrated on the Block Plan have been informed by the visual sensitivity of the site as illustrated on the Key Sensitivities diagram (Figure 7). Therefore the density of buildings within these development areas would decrease as they ascend the site with the most elevated and visible parts of the site being free of development, therefore reducing the prominence of the potential development from the surrounding area.

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 beyond the site would remain undeveloped. The principle mitigation measure is to retain the boundary trees/hedges that will contain the development and continue to contribute to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes that form the landscape setting of Exeter. [Development of the site would be more apparent during the winter months when the boundary vegetation lose their leaves.](#) 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.

With this in mind the proposals are likely be a recognisable new feature but would be less prominent in its own right, when experienced in this context on the 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 is considered to be **Slight-Moderate Adverse**.

5.0 VISUAL EFFECTS OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

As illustrated by the ZVI on Figure 5 there would be very few direct views of the development due to the screening provided by the boundary trees/hedges, even within close proximity of the site. 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. The scale of change to views has been judged once landscape features have established and matured so will represent residual effects.

5.1 *Surrounding residential areas within 1km (VP's 1a-c)*

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 visual amenity of users of these locations are considered to have a **Medium sensitivity**.

The most obvious change will be where new entrance points are to be created. The most noticeable change will be as a result of the new access road to be created across the open space at Juniper Close, particularly if it requires the removal of existing trees (VP 1a). The development itself would cause a change but would not be particularly prominent in the view due to being obscured by the retained boundary trees/hedges and set back behind the proposed attenuation basin. *The development within the site would be more visible during the winter months when the trees lose their leaves but this would be as glimpses through the gaps between the trees and its appearance would still be softened by the presence of the trees themselves.* The appearance of buildings could be softened further by internal trees through a detailed landscape strategy. This would result in a **medium-large scale, permanent effect** to an **intermediate** area of Juniper Close where it abuts the open space, producing a **Medium-High magnitude of change**. When this is compared against the **medium sensitivity** the effects to the visual amenity of Juniper Close would be **Moderate Adverse**. Those able to experience this effect would be residents of properties in and around this location.

The creation of the access point from Celia Crescent would require the removal of some of the trees and undergrowth from the boundary of the site together with an extension of the road into the site (VP 1b). The rest of the boundary vegetation either side of the new entrance point will be retained. The block plan indicates that a village green will be created at the arrival points when entering the site which would reduce the prominence of development within the site in this view. It is possible that roofs of some of the buildings within the site would be visible above the boundary vegetation

and the existing houses along Celia Crescent. While this would be a noticeable change to the view it would not necessarily be uncharacteristic in this location where the wider landscape setting is not evident. *During the winter the development would be more visible through gaps between the trees when they lose their leaves. Views from this location are likely to be focused on the new access point rather than of the new buildings themselves which are likely to be set into the site and appear behind the existing buildings, reducing their prominence.* This would result in a **medium-large scale, permanent effect, limited** to this specific location, producing a **Medium magnitude of change**. When this is compared against the **medium sensitivity** the effects to the visual amenity of Celia Crescent as a result of the new access point would be **Moderate Adverse**. The new development would be visible through gaps between and/or above the existing houses from elsewhere along the road but the overall character of these views would not change. Those able to experience this effect would be residents of properties in and around this location.

Beyond these locations opportunities to obtain views of the development would be limited to particular locations such as at the play area at Pendragon Road (VP 1c). These views would only be affected if the new buildings become visible above the existing houses, in which case they would introduce additional roofs defining the skyline. These would be broken up by the trees that will be retained along the boundary, together with any new planting within the scheme. *They would become more visible during winter months when the trees lose their leaves but these trees would not provide a lot of screening in any case due to their sparse nature along the boundary so there would not be much of a change throughout the seasons.* Again while this change would be visible it would not necessarily be uncharacteristic in this location where the wider landscape setting is not evident. This would result in a **small-medium scale, permanent effect, limited** to specific location within 1km of the site, producing a **Low magnitude of change**. When this is compared against the **medium sensitivity** the effects to the visual amenity of the wider surrounding residential areas would be **Slight Adverse**.

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

The slopes surrounding the site have no official recognition as a recreational resource but do appear to be used informally by the local community of Exeter. They are in an elevated position allowing for distant views across the city towards the landscape setting to the south and people would have plenty of opportunity to linger and experience these views. Therefore, the visual amenity of users of these locations are considered to have a **Medium-High sensitivity**.

Field 1, within the site, is well contained by its boundary vegetation restricting views into it from the nearby slopes, *although does become more visible in the winter*

through gaps in the vegetation due to the leaf loss. In views from the east the roofs of properties at Spruce Close can be seen leading the eye into Exeter and beyond. There is opportunity to obtain views back towards Exeter when looking across the site from locations on the slopes within the fields immediately to the north and north west of the site. While much of Field 2 is also obscured by the intervening boundary vegetation, as buildings are constructed it is likely that they would become visible through gaps and protruding above the tree/hedges along the site boundaries in views from locations elevated above the site, again becoming more visible in the winter. As mentioned above much of Field 1, and indeed Field 2, is obscured from the east restricting views to glimpses through boundary vegetation (VP 2a). It is likely that once construction is complete new development within Field 1 would be seen as glimpses amongst the vegetation, in a similar way to the existing development at Spruce Close. During the winter when vegetation loses its leaves the development would of course become more visible but would still be heavily obscured and seen in the context of the existing nearby development. The proposed block plan actually shows that the most visible parts of the site, such as the eastern most corner of Field 1 and along the north eastern boundary, would remain free of development. In the field to the north of the site it is likely that the development would be visible in the south eastern part of Field 2, particularly the eastern most corner (VP 2b). The development in the upper north western end of Field 2 would be largely obscured by the mature Oak trees on the boundary but glimpses may still be visible through the vegetation, or during the winter when the trees lose their leaves. It is likely that the ridge line of the new development in Field 2 would be visible above the tree line from the field immediately to the north west, and would become more visible as glimpses through the boundary vegetation when it loses its leaves in winter (VP 2c). However, the visual prominence of the new buildings will be reduced by being set in to the site away from the boundary and leaving the highest part of Field 2 undeveloped and could be softened further with additional tree planting as part of a detailed landscape strategy for the scheme. When descending the slopes surrounding the site to the west the proposed development within Field 2 would become less visible due to screening provided by the intervening vegetation and topography combined with the perspective from these locations (VP 2d). Where the roofs/ridgeline of the new development is visible it is likely to be seen in the context of the existing nearby residential development so would not look out of place or as a prominent new feature in the view. It is considered that the development proposed would cause a noticeable change to views in these locations although users would be aware of the nearby residential development and from certain locations their roofs are already visible from these slopes. Therefore, the proposed development would result in a **medium scale** (medium-large scale from certain locations such as in views from the north particularly during winter), **permanent effect** to a **localised extent** of the fields immediately adjacent the site occupying the slopes that surround the northern edge of Exeter and form part of the landscape setting of

the city. This would produce a **Medium magnitude of change**. When compared to the **Medium-High sensitivity** the effects to the visual amenity of informal users of these slopes would be **Moderate Adverse**. These effects would only be felt to views from those slopes immediately adjacent the site, within a maximum of 300m from the site boundaries, and the development proposed would not be visible from the wider landscape setting of Exeter. *When the development would become more visible during the winter these locations are likely to be access be fewer people.*

5.3 *Cheynegate Lane (VP 3)*

Public lane leading out of the edge of Pinhoe (Exeter) to the surrounding landscape, most likely to be used by people accessing the residential properties located along the lane. Most people would be travelling in vehicles at very slow speeds although the central section is not easily accessible due to the uneven surface, as well as potentially some pedestrians. It is likely that the attention of people in this location would be on the activity of driving or on passing vehicles rather than necessarily appreciating views of the surrounding landscape, therefore, the visual amenity of users of these locations are considered to have a **Medium sensitivity**.

Views are available from the surrounding landscape looking back to where the edge of Exeter meets its setting on the slopes. The topography allows for some views into the site through intervening and boundary vegetation although much of the site is obscured by the trees surrounding the site that contribute to the well-wooded slopes forming the setting of Exeter. The visibility of the site increases during the winter as vegetation loses its leaves. Where development of the site does become visible it would be in the context of the nearby development at Spruce Close that currently forms the edge of Exeter. Development of the site would not cause dramatic change to the view or the settlements relationship with its setting. The retention of existing vegetation together with the provision of additional planting as part of the scheme would continue to contribute to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes and aid the transition of the settlement edge into its landscape setting. Therefore, the proposed development would result in a **small-medium scale, permanent effect, limited** to a very small number of specific views through field gates along the lane, producing a **Low-Negligible magnitude of change**. When this is compared to the **Medium sensitivity** the effects to the visual amenity of users of Cheynegate Lane would be **Minimal Adverse**.

5.4 *Exeter - within around 1-3km south east of the site (VP's 3-5)*

Publicly accessible locations within Exeter that allow for views towards the site tend to be transport routes such as busy roads through the city or local roads providing access to residential properties. These routes would be used by people travelling in vehicles at up to around 30mph, cyclists and pedestrians on roadside pavements. It is likely that the attention of people in these locations would be on day-to-day activities rather than necessarily appreciating views of the surrounding landscape, therefore, the visual amenity of users of these locations are considered to have a **Medium sensitivity**.

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 locations (VP's 5 & 6). Due to the distances involved the site is currently very difficult to discern in its own right at the boundary trees/hedges merge into the well-wooded appearance of the slopes. As these boundary trees/hedges are to be retained they would effectively contain and screen much of the development proposed for the site, in combination with other mitigation features such as the identification and extent of the development areas suggested. This means that the trees/hedges would continue to contribute to the well-wooded appearance of the slopes and the development is not likely to present a prominent or particularly noticeable feature in these views. Where it is visible [and during winter when intervening vegetation loses its leaves](#) it is likely to appear as an extension to the residential development that already occupies the lower-mid slopes in this location. It would also appear as residential properties amongst trees on the slopes, presenting a transition from the settlement into its setting, rather than there being a hard line between one and the other. This would result in a **small scale, permanent effect, to localised** areas within the outer edge of Exeter, or short sections of certain transport corridors (up to 3km from the site), producing a **Low –Negligible magnitude of change**. When compared to the **Medium sensitivity** the effects to the visual amenity of users in these locations would be **Minimal Adverse**.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Landscape Effects

The baseline study concluded that the landscape character of the study area has an overall **Medium sensitivity** due to being located within the landscape setting of Exeter. This involved consideration of the Exeter Fringes Sensitivity and Capacity Study together with the objectives of the LS1 Landscape Setting policy area and how this is experienced in reality during the site assessment.

The proposed development 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 dramatically extend development further 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 principle 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 the 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 on 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. Within this in mind the effects to the landscape character of the area as a result of the development proposed would be **Slight-Moderate Adverse**.

6.2 Visual Effects

The baseline study concluded that the overall visual amenity of the Exeter has a **Medium sensitivity** 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** due to users having more opportunity to experience distant views back across Exeter from an elevated location.

The ZVI on Figure 5 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.

It has been established that the impact to the visual amenity of the surrounding residential areas would be **Moderate Adverse** 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.

The proposals would introduce roofs of the proposed development into middle distance of far reaching views across Exeter from the surrounding elevated slopes, which would cause a noticeable to change and result in a **Moderate Adverse** impact to the visual amenity of these locations. These slopes are 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. *While development of the site would be visible on and forming the new settlements edge from Cheynegate Lane, the effects to its visual amenity would be **Minimal Adverse** due to the limited opportunity for views.*

Beyond that views towards the site are only available from the outer, northern edge of Exeter where the well-wooded appearance of the slopes is a constant presence in views. 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 proposals would have a **Minimal Adverse** impact to the visual amenity of the outer edge of Exeter where views towards the site would be most available to the general public.

6.3 Summary

Overall, it is considered that the site 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. Where adverse effects do arise to visual amenity they are felt within the immediate vicinity of the site and from location that are not widely available to the general public. Although outline proposals at this stage the indicative block plan has been informed by the sensitivities of the site and incorporates mitigation measures derived from field observations as part of this LVIA to lessen effects while helping to integrate the development into the surrounding character of the area and the landscape setting of Exeter. **REPORT END**

APPENDIX I - METHODOLOGY

The landscape and visual impact assessment deals with the separate but related issues of:

- **Landscape Character:** the effects of the development upon discrete character areas and/or character comprising features possessing a particular quality or merit: and
- **Visual Context:** the effects of the development on views from visual receptors, and upon the amenity value of the views.

This landscape and visual impact assessment has been carried out by the means of desktop and field studies. Initial analysis of maps studying existing landforms was undertaken to identify potential viewpoints. Panorama Digital Topographical Data was used to establish approximate heights within the application sites. Viewpoints and any other views identified during the fieldwork were then visited and assessed for their sensitivity to the proposed development.

The application site and surrounding area were visited during May 2019 where a series of photographs were taken from representative viewpoints. Their locations are shown on in Figure 5 of the Figure Document.

All viewpoints were photographed using a Nikon D90 Digital SLR camera. The nature of the views are of relatively wide panoramas and it was therefore considered beneficial to present of the photographs in this way. The panoramic views consist of a number of individual photographs that have been combined.

Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity is categorised as high, medium, or low, according to the degree to which a particular landscape receptor can accommodate change arising from a particular development without detrimental effects on its character. This is judged by combining the **susceptibility** of individual landscape receptors to the type of change or development proposed with the **value** attached to that receptor through protection by designations or contribution at a community level.

Susceptibility indicates the ability of a receptor (landscape or visual) to accommodate the proposed development '*without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies or strategies*'. The susceptibility of a receptor is influenced by key characteristics, special qualities, purpose for designation and/or activity likely to be taking place. It is judged as:

- **High** – undue consequences are likely to arise from the proposed development.
- **Medium** – undue consequences may arise from the proposed development.
- **Low** – undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the proposed development.

Landscape/Receptor Value is ‘*the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society*’. It is judged as:

- **National/International** – Designated landscapes which are nationally or internationally designated for their landscape value – including National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), World Heritage Sites, Heritage Coasts and National Scenic Areas.
- **Local** – Locally or regionally designated landscapes such as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). Also, areas which local evidence indicates as being more valued than the surrounding area.
- **Community** – ‘everyday’ landscape which is appreciated by the local community but has little or no wider recognition of its value.
- **Limited** – despoiled or degraded landscape with little or no evidence of being valued by the community.

Table A : Sensitivity Levels and Definitions.

Sensitivity Level	Landscape Resources
High	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly susceptible to change from the type of development being assessed.
Medium-High	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are susceptible to change from the type of development being assessed.
Medium	Some of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are susceptible to change from the type of development being assessed.
Low-Medium	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are susceptible to change from the type of development being assessed.
Low	Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are robust and are less likely to be adversely affected by the type of development being assessed.

Landscape Impact Assessment:

Magnitude of change

Magnitude of change to the landscape character is measured on a scale of **High, Medium or Low** by considering the **scale** of effect to the baseline situation with the **duration** it is likely to occur and the **extent** of the receptor that will experience the change.

The following degrees of **scale** have been adapted from GLVIA methodology:

- **Large:** total loss or major alteration to key elements of the pre development landscape, or the introduction of elements considered to be uncharacteristic when assessed within the attributes of the receiving landscape, or the proposal becomes a dominant feature within the scene with the surrounding elements becoming subordinate and the resultant effect is a change in the overall character.
- **Medium:** partial loss of, or alteration to one or more key elements of the landscape pre-development, or the introduction of elements that maybe prominent, or form a visibly recognisable new feature, but may not necessarily be considered substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.
- **Small:** minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the pre-development landscape, or the introduction of elements which constitute a minor component of the wider landscape, and are not uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.
- **Negligible:** where the development would cause a virtually imperceptible change in the existing use or character.

Duration is the time period over which the change to the receptor would arise as a result of the development. It is judged as:

- **Permanent:** The change is expected to be permanent with to intention for it to be reversed.
- **Long-term:** the change is expected to be in place for 10-25 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or removed so no longer occurring beyond that time frame.
- **Medium-term:** the change is expected to be in place for 2-10 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or removed so no longer occurring beyond that time frame.
- **Short-term:** the change is expected to be in place for 0-2 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or removed so no longer occurring beyond that time frame.

Extent indicates the geographic area over which the effects will be felt as a result of the proposed development. It is judged as Wide, Intermediate, Localised or Limited.

- **Wide:** beyond 4km, or more than 50% of the receptor
- **Intermediate:** up to approx. 2-4km, or around 50% of the receptor
- **Localised:** site and surroundings up to 2km, or up to approx. 25% of the receptor.
- **Limited:** site, or part of the site, or up to approx. 10% of the receptor.

Significance of Landscape Impacts

The landscape impacts of the proposed development have been assessed by considering the degree to which each landscape feature is likely to be affected, taking into account the ease with which features could be replaced, and the contribution each feature makes to local landscape character, is assessed as high, medium or low. The condition of each feature is assessed as good, moderate or poor. These aspects are difficult to quantify and their assessment depends largely on professional judgement. Measures to mitigate the landscape impacts are also considered.

The overall significance of the landscape impacts, based on the combined effect of the elements described in the paragraphs above is summarised using the criteria stated in methodology Table C below. The criteria in the table are a combination of the receptor sensitivity and magnitude of effects as defined previously.

Table B - Significance criteria of landscape impacts

SIGNIFICANCE	CRITERIA
Substantial beneficial	Landscape feature is significantly enhance and improved in a manner consistent with the local landscape character
Moderate beneficial	Landscape feature is enhanced and extended in a manner consistent with the local landscape character
Slight beneficial	Landscape feature is enhanced in a manner consistent with local landscape character
Neutral	Virtually imperceptible or no indirect change in landscape characteristics over a very localised area, or virtually imperceptible, or no, direct change to landscape components/ character
Slight adverse	Perceptible indirect change in landscape characteristics over a localised area, or direct change to landscape components/ character over a very localised area. Partial loss or deterioration of landscape component which is not mitigated
Moderate adverse	Noticeable indirect change in landscape characteristics over less extensive area, or direct change to landscape feature/ character over a localised area.
Substantial adverse	Very noticeable indirect change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area, or direct change to landscape features/ character over a less extensive area.

Visual Assessment

Views have been assessed from an average height of approximately 1.6m above ground level. The significance of a predicted impact is determined by combining the sensitivity of visual receptors with the magnitude of change, duration of the proposed development and the extent of the receptor that is likely to experience the change. The visual assessment focuses on the visual impacts upon public viewpoints so does not consider the effects upon views from private properties, which would be subject to separate Residential Amenity Assessment; this does not however affect the sensitivity of the receptors experiencing views.

The viewpoints were chosen to represent views in which the proposed development would be visible, none are included in which the proposed development would not be visible.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

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 receptor. Sensitivity is judged by combining the susceptibility of the receptor to change with the value attached to that receptor which depends on the following factors:

- Location and context of the receptor: For example, receptors/viewpoints which are closer to the site are generally more susceptible;
- Number of viewers who commonly use the receptor: Some receptors/viewpoints are commonly used by the public, such as formal viewing platforms, picnic areas or recreational rights of way. Other viewpoints may be difficult to gain access to;
- Nature of the receptor: Public footpaths, for example, can be susceptible, since the users' attention is often focused on the landscape. By contrast, views from outdoor sport facilities, transport routes or places of work are less susceptible;
- Movement of viewers at /on the receptor: More transitory views, for example from a motorway, are generally less sensitive than views experienced from footpaths;
- Value attached to views take account of the relation to heritage assets or planning designations and the cultural significance of the viewpoint, including its appearance in guidebooks and tourist maps, or cultural and historical associations.

Table C : Criteria for determining visual receptor sensitivity

Sensitivity	Landscape Resources
High	High value activity (those engaged or who's focus is on the landscape) with extended period of exposure and/or proximity to the proposal. Such as promoted viewpoints, specific/key viewpoints and panoramic viewpoint marked on maps.
High-Medium	Medium-high value activity (activities that do not specifically involve focus on the view but have plenty of opportunity to experience and appreciate the landscape) with high/medium value of the existing view, and/or proximity to the proposal. Such as along public rights of way and key views to/from local landmarks as well as visitors to attractions or heritage assets where view contribute to the experience.
Medium	Medium value activity (activities that do not involve appreciation of the landscape) and/or medium value of the existing view, and/or proximity to the proposal. Such as travellers using cycle routes or scenic roads as well as visitors staying within an area such as at caravan or camping sites.
Medium-Low	Low-Medium value activity (where engaged with another activity that does not allow opportunity to appreciate the landscape) and/or medium/low value of the existing view, and/or proximity to the proposal. Such as most road and rail users and outdoor workers.
Low	Low value activity and/or low existing value on view and/or proximity to proposal. Such as travelling at speed on motorways and trunk roads or those engaged in work or sporting activities.

Visual Impact Assessment:

Magnitude of Change

In the visual assessment the magnitude is measured on a scale of **High, Medium or Low**. It is determined by the distance from the receptor, the extent of change in the field of vision, the proportion or number of viewers affected and the duration of activity apparent from each receptor, 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.

The following degrees of **scale** have been adapted from GLVIA methodology:

- **Large:** where the development would cause a very noticeable change in the existing visual experience of the receptor.
- **Medium:** where the development would cause a noticeable change in the existing visual experience of the receptor.
- **Small:** where the development would cause a perceptible change in the existing visual experience of the receptor.
- **Negligible:** where the development would cause a largely imperceptible change in the existing visual experience of the receptor.
- **No Change:** Where the development will not be discernible in the visual experience of the receptor.

Duration is the time period over which the change to the receptor would arise as a result of the development. It is judged as:

- **Permanent:** The change is expected to be permanent with no intention for it to be reversed.
- **Long-term:** the change is expected to be in place for 10-25 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or removed so no longer occurring beyond that time frame.
- **Medium-term:** the change is expected to be in place for 2-10 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or removed so no longer occurring beyond that time frame.
- **Short-term:** the change is expected to be in place for 0-2 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or removed so no longer occurring beyond that time frame.

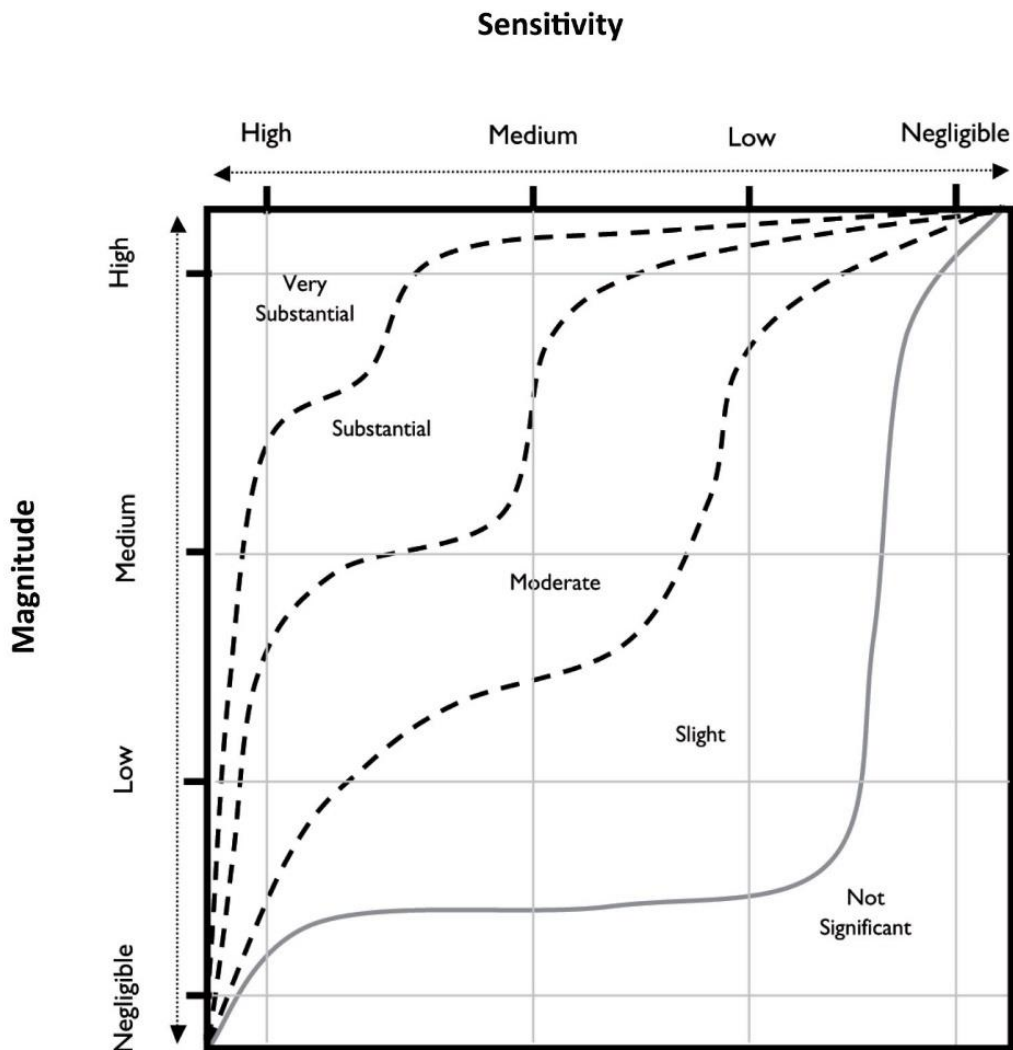
Extent indicates the geographic area over which the effects will be felt as a result of the proposed development. It is judged as Wide, Intermediate, Localised or Limited.

- **Wide:** beyond 4km, or more than 50% of the receptor
- **Intermediate:** up to approx. 2-4km, or around 50% of the receptor
- **Localised:** site and surroundings up to 2km, or up to approx. 25% of the receptor.
- **Limited:** site, or part of the site, or up to approx. 10% of the receptor.

Significance of Visual Impacts

Table D - Significance criteria of visual impacts

SIGNIFICANC	CRITERIA
Substantial Adverse	The proposals would be visually intrusive and would cause a significant deterioration in existing views, resulting in disruption to valued
Moderate Adverse	The proposals would be visually intrusive and would cause a noticeable deterioration in existing views, resulting in some disruption to valued views of the area.
Slight Adverse	Although not very visually intrusive, the proposals would cause a barely perceptible deterioration in certain views into and across the area.
Neutral effect	No discernible deterioration or improvement in existing views; the proposals would avoid being visually intrusive.
Slight Beneficial	The proposals would cause a barely perceptible improvement in existing views
Moderate Beneficial	The proposals would cause a noticeable improvement in existing views.
Substantial Beneficial	The proposals would cause a significant improvement in existing views.

Diagram 1 – Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

This diagram is based on the EIA significance matrix found in the IEMA Special Report 2011. It is used in both landscape and visual assessments to provide an initial indication of the likely significance of impact arising but may not reflect the conclusion made during the final assessment. Its application also relies on professional judgment and the knowledge of the assessor following field observations when considering the balance between sensitivity and magnitude.