

**Aldens Farm
Exeter, Devon**

Landscape and Visual Assessment
Revision A
Master Copy



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**Prepared for
Devon County Council
by**



NPS South West Ltd

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

This document supersedes the document produced in 2014. The document has been updated in line with current planning policy and current good practice as outlined in section 2.1.

The purpose of this Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) is to examine the qualities of an area of land, split into two sites, which has been allocated to residential development. As yet, no design proposal exists for this land, so this is not a conventional Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) since that process assesses the changes resulting from overlaying a project proposal onto a site. This is done by applying the tools and techniques of the established best practice against relevant assessment criteria, providing a clear rationale for the methods chosen and an objective basis to judgements made.

Local planning authorities have however produced a framework document of guidance for the future development of the study area, the *Exeter South West Masterplan*¹ (SWM); and also the *Exeter Residential Design SPD* guidance (RDG)². These documents describe enough of the features, qualities and layout of the future proposed development sought for this land to allow the likely effects of development to be quantified and indicative assessments to be made. These documents support policies adopted in the Exeter Local Plan 1st Review and the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (PDD).

The intent is that by developing the mitigation side of the LVIA process, the constraints and opportunities identified at this early stage should inform the site analysis and strategy for planning and designing this proposal in detail, at a later stage. This document aims to contribute to development planning at a site-specific level, within the framework afforded by SWM and RDG; to describe local features, spatial qualities and prominent views; to bring together the information from the reports of other specialists, identify salient inputs and key issues, and collate them to a whole; and suggest a landscape strategy for the two sites.

At the stage of a planning application, the proposal is not expected to be 'EIA development' subject to the *Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011*. These 'EIA Regulations' call for 'A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment' for certain types of development. This one will not need to be assessed in the depth of EIA development, but the transparent assessment approach used for that statutory requirement is still a valuable guideline for this purpose.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This study sets out to:

- identify landscape and visual constraints on developing the study site, and recommend layout and other strategic approaches to feed into the detailed design process;
- analyse the adjacent built form existing in Exeter (how it is organised and used); and that planned in Teignbridge (how it might link into the proposed development);
- assess the value of natural assets already onsite which might with advantage be conserved and given functions within the new development;
- study environmental factors linking the site with its geographical context;
- apply constraints arising from the strategic masterplanning process outlined above to a site-specific level.

¹ *Exeter South West Masterplan* (Teignbridge District Council supported by Exeter City Council, Devon County Council and East Devon Growth Point, 2012)

² *Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document* (Exeter City Council, 2010)

1.3 Study Area Boundaries

The extents of the geographical area to be studied are shown on the **Location Plan** (Figure 1). This locates the study site in its two constituent parts either side of the Chudleigh Road. While reference will be made to each in turn, for the purpose of this study they will be treated as one site.

The site lies at the western end of the study area covered by the SWM and much information is taken directly from this work.

Both the geographical area and the time period to be studied (scoping) and the subject matter to be covered (screening) in this report, along with the viewpoints to be assessed, were discussed with Planning Officers of Exeter City Council (ECC). This assessment includes a study of the surrounding landscape within which the site is set. All off-site work was conducted from public highways and public rights of way.

2 Assessment Methodology

2.1 Guidance and Terminology

This study has been compiled and is presented according to two recommendations, which, between them, currently define best practice in the field:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Analysis: Second Edition* (Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment [LI/IEMA], 2002)
- *Landscape Character Assessment - Guidance for England and Scotland* (Countryside Agency [now Natural England] and Scottish National Heritage, 2002)

The generic title of the process followed here is Landscape and Visual Impact Analysis. While both guidelines given above use the term 'impact', the EIA Regulations refer to the '*likely significant effects*' of a development, so it is the term 'effect' which is used in this document. Other aspects of these guidelines remain unaffected by this choice.

2.2 Nature and Definition of Effects

The **landscape impacts** of development are defined in the LI/IEMA Guidelines (known as GLVIA) as '*changes in the fabric, character and quality of the landscape as a result of development*'. These include local, physical impacts from building operations as well as wider effects on character and statutory designations. It is important to understand that these impact on the landscape as a resource for all time.

Visual impacts, on the other hand, are described in GLVIA as relating '*solely to changes in available views of the landscape, and the effects of those changes on people*'. They apply to those people inhabiting the landscape today or who might reasonably be expected to do so in the foreseeable future. **Effects** result from a combination of these impacts judged alone, with the category of landscape or visual receptor being affected; they can be direct or indirect, adverse or beneficial, or even cumulative with those of other developments.

Direct effects result from physical disturbance to elements of the landscape; indirect effects are consequential changes separated in time or space from their cause (for instance, vegetation changes downstream of a drainage scheme). Both can be adverse or beneficial, since this development is part of a continuing story; it may detract from the integrity of a landscape of an established character, or equally provide opportunities to remedy historical degradation (maybe in replanting previously cleared hedgerows).

2.3 Assessing Landscape Effects

Landscape is defined as an holistically viewed resource for society as a whole, framing all issues of land use, development and environment. **Landscape receptors** are elements of the existing situation, which are affected by the proposals, and their intrinsic value is assessed before these effects are quantified. In this case, it is appropriate to examine **topography and drainage, vegetation, land use and public access**. The **character of the landscape** (see key concepts below) is treated as a topic in itself.

Some of the **key concepts involved with landscape** have been defined for Natural England (*Landscape Character Assessment Guidance*, see above). In brief these are:

Landscape character

'a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. Particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement create character. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct, and gives each its particular sense of place.'

Capacity

'the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate

change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character.'

Sensitivity

'Landscape sensitivity is the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on character. Sensitivity is not absolute but is likely to vary according to the type of change being considered.'

Scale	Landscape Sensitivity Criteria Description
Very High	Landscape which, taking into account its character, general visibility, and potential for mitigation, is highly vulnerable to very small changes likely through development
High	Landscape which is vulnerable to relatively small changes likely through development
Medium	Landscape which can reasonably accommodate some relatively small changes likely to be incurred through development
Low	Landscape which can accommodate moderate to substantial likely changes
Very Low	Landscape which, taking into account its character, general visibility, and potential for mitigation, can accommodate substantial changes likely through development

Table 3: Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

These factors contribute to judging the views assessed in this report using a verbal weighting scale of very high, high, medium, low and very low. The resultant rating assigns the existing landscape a degree of sensitivity, which can then be related to the nature, scale and duration of the change it would undergo were the proposed development realised.

The magnitude of this change is assessed against the following criteria:

Scale	Magnitude of Change criteria description
Very High	The proposed development redefines the characteristics of the existing landscape over an extensive area
High	Notable changes in landscape characteristics over a wide area, or alternatively, very intensive change over a more limited area
Medium	Moderate changes in landscape characteristics in a localised area
Low	Minor change in landscape characteristics
Very low	Very minor change in landscape characteristics

Table 4: Magnitude of Change criteria

By relating the Sensitivity of each landscape receptor to the Magnitude of Change, each on a 5-point scale of very low to very high, a scale of potential impact significance results. This ranges from negligible through slight and moderate to substantial, with overlaps between these categories. The following table outlines the effects of combining these factors:

Magnitude of Change					
Very High	Moderate	Moderate to Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
High	Slight to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Medium	Slight	Slight to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to Substantial	Substantial
Low	Slight	Slight	Slight to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate To Substantial
Very Low	Negligible	Slight	Slight	Slight to Moderate	Moderate

Table 5: Significance of Effect

2.4 Assessing Visual Effects

Visual receptors are treated in the same way as the landscape receptors considered above. Both the aim - a transparent, objective assessment - and the principles of methodology are the same, but with these human receptors more highly differentiated. GLVIA recommends assessing the significance of visual effects by relating the **sensitivity and importance of the receptors with the nature, scale and duration of the changes predicted.**

The measure of **visual sensitivity** reflects the nature and number of people within the landscape likely to perceive the changes; their relationship with the landscape; and their reason for being there. Those present for recreation are more sensitive to disruption in a landscape where they seek peace and relaxation than those there to work; residents who identify with the area will implicitly be more sensitive than those passing through it simply to reach a destination elsewhere. Walkers on Public Rights of Way (ProW) and visitors to designated landscapes, parks or gardens set within a particular landscape are among the most sensitive categories; people using sports grounds in open country, or otherwise occupied in a separate activity, are accepted to be less sensitive.

Some of the tools and methods used to present findings in sections 6 and 7 below include:

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

The **ZTV Plan** (Figure 4) shows areas of potential visibility based on landform alone. It disregards built structures, trees, hedgerows and other physical elements which could screen or filter the view and presents a theoretical 'worst-case scenario'. Actual visibility can be confirmed only through site visits, since this results from the combination of landform with vegetation and structures present in the field but not shown on the ZTV Plan.

Viewpoints

Viewpoint locations within the study area (ref Figure 5) are chosen to represent the main landscape character areas and visual receptors, and are spread over varying distances and directions from the site. Specific viewpoint analysis is made to highlight and confirm the findings of the landscape and visual assessment. For this scheme, the locations of the 8 viewpoints chosen were agreed in discussion with Exeter City Planning at the time of scoping.

Photographs

The photographs for this report were taken in February and show deciduous vegetation bare of leaf; the landscape is therefore at its most visually transparent. During 8 months of each year, the screening effect of foreground vegetation is dramatically increased, leaving the landscape more enclosed and reducing the visual impact of the proposals. Photographs therefore illustrate the 'worst-case scenario' of maximum visibility of the development proposals in their landscape context.

3 The Planning Context

3.1 Spatial Planning Policy

Current spatial planning legislation covering the area is examined for relevant policies in order to establish criteria for this judgement. Some of this is national planning policy, but this report focuses on the County and District Council stipulations, designations and recommendations, which apply this national policy to the regional and local contexts.

National Planning

Since March 2012 the **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF)³ sets out planning policies for England and how the government expects them to be applied. It states of its own role that it *'constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers both in drawing up plans and as a material consideration in determining applications.'*

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and core planning principles, before detailing policies which, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice. Some of the **core planning principles** cited at NPPF paragraph 17 relevant to these emerging proposals and their landscape context are that planning should (among others):

- *always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;*
- *promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);*
- *actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.'*

Under the title *'Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes'* at paragraph 50, local authorities should (among other aims):

'plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community'.

Finally, paragraph 54 states:

'The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities. Working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development. In doing so, they should consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining any such new development.'

Under the title *'Requiring good design'* the NPPF sets out at paragraph 58:

'Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*

³ *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012)

- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- *create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
and
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.'*

Local Planning

Since the study area straddles the administrative boundary between two adjacent planning authorities, the planning status of both will be outlined.

The Core Strategy⁴ **Exeter City Council** (ECC) adopted in February 2012 sets out planning policies for Exeter for the period up to 2026 and is the main strategy document in the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy not only quantifies planned levels of residential development envisaged within this planning horizon but also sets out its vision for growth of the city with its 10 objectives to provide for growth within a spatial strategy. .

Policy CP1 states that the urban extensions of Monkerton and Hill Barton, Newcourt and Alphington are central to the delivery of the spatial strategy by identifying, to the south west of the city 15 hectares of employment land at Matford, and around 500 dwellings south of Alphington as part of a larger urban extension that extends south of the city boundary into Teignbridge.

In section 6.10 of the Core Strategy Alphington has been identified as part of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Section 6.11 propose that the area south of Alphington is brought forward for development as a sustainable community that recognises the various landscape, biodiversity, noise and flood risk constraints; that incorporate open space, green infrastructure and community facilities as an integral part of the scheme; and that provide for the significant infrastructure requirements, in particular highways infrastructure, necessary to accommodate this scale of development together with the proposals to the east of the city in East Devon. **CP19** includes the requirement for a *green infrastructure network, low and zero carbon infrastructure, enhancements to transport infrastructure in particular the strategic road network, contributions towards other educational, social and community facilities.*

Teignbridge local Plan 2033⁵ includes policies for sustainable development, Green Infrastructure and Environment and a policy for development of South West Exeter as a sustainable urban extension.

3.2 Design Guidance

This section describes the relevant documents that would influence the design and development of the site. These include The Exeter City Council *Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document*; and the *South West Exeter Masterplan*, which links in with plans for future development within the Teignbridge District Council administrative area and the Exeter City Council Core Strategy Document.

⁴ Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Exeter City Council, 2012)

⁵ Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Teignbridge District Council, 2033)

Exeter City Council Residential Design SPD is designed to provide guidance to those involved in the development process about the standard required for new development proposals. The document sets out design guidance on;

- Design objectives including high quality townscape, landscape and amenity, high architectural quality, places which have their own distinct identity, permeable layouts, pedestrian and cycle friendly places and routes, energy and water efficient design, well managed and maintained public Realm, inclusive places, safe places, green infrastructure and integration of wildlife habitats.
- Design process including site analysis, layout design, integrated and biodiverse landscape design.
- Building design and materials.
- Public realm design including parking, residential amenity, bin storage and lighting.

The Exeter South West Masterplan (SWM)

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework to guide the future of a sustainable urban extension to the south west of the city. It supplements policies in the core strategy DPD and will be important for guiding future planning applications.

SWM sets out 9 objectives for development:

1. Movement: sustainable transport encouraging walking, cycling and use of well integrated and connected public transport.
2. Landscape setting and environment: create *"a place that responds sensitively to its landscape setting in terms of topography and visual prominence"*. It refers to respecting upper slopes and ridgelines.
3. Low carbon sustainable development: to include energy efficiency through design, choice of materials and construction methods and recommends the use of SUDS.
4. Community: to create a *"distinct sense of community and character"* and *"diversity and sense of place"*.
5. Green spaces: *"provide a network of multifunctional 'green' corridors"* that connect between town and countryside.
6. Urban environment: *"a high net density of mixed use development"* within easy access of facilities, open space and countryside.
7. Biodiversity and ecology: refers to network of wildlife corridors via strategic Green Infrastructure. It aims to *"retain and incorporate existing hedgerows and woodland"* and link them with wider wildlife corridors.
8. Employment: the opportunity to live close to work.
9. Deliverability.

It speaks of a new *"high density suburb centred on the enhanced public transport route"* and sets out its vision to *"reinforce the importance of the southern approach to the city"* and *"establish a new city district within the natural setting of Exeter, sitting below the ridgeline and benefitting from the backcloth of the hills that enclose the city"*.

SWM includes a Landscape Character Appraisal of the Exeter South West study area in which the study site makes up a large part of the character area 'South Alphington'. A vision is proposed for this neighbourhood as predominantly residential, with limited local facilities. Densities are proposed at an average of 35-45 dwellings per hectare, with low density (25-35 dph) adjacent to the existing housing of Alphington and a higher density block (55-65) at the core of the development, allowing a mix of dwelling types. Building heights are generally 2-3 storeys and detail design is to conform to RDG principles.

SWM also includes elements of GI such as green lanes and open spaces. Structural and productive landscape and wildlife habit and corridors are mapped out and a SuDS strategy proposed.

Development Brief for South West Alphington

This document is a Supplementary Planning Document. It sets out a detailed set of guidelines for the development of South West Alphington for developers and others with an interest in the project. The document supplements CP19 and CP17 of the Exeter Core Strategy.

The key requirements are as follows;

(Ref. 3.1) The site must be developed as a place which:

- Provides homes including homes that are affordable to local people, that are of a high standard of design.
- Makes the best possible use of land and an excellent contribution to the character and the appearance of Alphington.
- Includes high quality community facilities for the new residents, comprising a site for new health centre/doctors surgery, recycling facilities, allotments and public open space
- Provides for a net gain in biodiversity and avoids damage to existing trees, hedgerows and associated species, incorporating these within a landscape and green infrastructure.

(Ref. 3.2) The site must be developed as a place which;

- Encourages Residents to walk, cycle, or use public transport or a car club as an alternative use to the private car.

(Ref. 3.3) The site must be developed as a place which;

- Uses low and zero carbon energy and makes efficient use of natural and local resources.

The ECC Core Strategy Document

Policy CP15 sets out the expected standards that are required in terms of sustainable design and construction methods. It also states that, 'Due to their scale the Monkerton/Hill Barton, Newcourt and Alphington urban extensions should achieve levels of sustainability in advance of those set out nationally'.

The section under Strategic Allocations sets out certain aims for the urban extension south of Alphington:

"12.20 The area consists of a number of fields with mature boundary hedges that rise gently to the south to a ridge. This prominent ridge forms the city's administrative boundary and proposals should respond sensitively to this feature.

12.21 The development form would be expected to relate well to adjoining housing. Densities should be appropriate to the location and it will be important to ensure that the amenity of existing residents is protected. The development should follow the principles of good urban design to ensure that the resulting development is both attractive and locally distinctive.

12.22 The development must have good permeability for pedestrians and cyclists throughout, with links to surrounding areas. The development would also be expected to contribute to enhanced transport infrastructure within the area. Improvements to the Alphington Road Corridor will be required, a proposed enhanced public transport service could link this development to the City Centre, and a new rail halt at Matford on the Exeter to Plymouth line is proposed."

Under Design and Local Distinctiveness, section 10.54/10.55 set out design guidance on the following;

- i) High quality townscape, landscape and amenity*
- ii) High architectural quality*
- iii) Places have their own distinct identity*
- iv) Permeable layouts*

- v) *Pedestrian and cycle friendly places and routes*
- vi) *Sustainable design and resilience to climate change*
- vii) *Attractive well managed and maintained public realm*
- viii) *Inclusive places*
- xi) *Safe places reducing the fear of, and opportunities for, crime*
- x) *High quality integrated Green infrastructure*

CP17 also includes requirements on sustainable design.

Green Infrastructure

The ECC Core Strategy Document sets out in **CP16** that the Exeter GI network has been *"identified to protect and enhance current environmental assets and local identity and to provide a framework for sustainable new development."*

GI will be an *"integral part of planning for the urban extensions"* including Alphington. It mentions that new *"multifunctional areas of green space and green corridors"* are to be created to meet the needs of new communities and that character and local distinctiveness *"should 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"*.

It refers specifically to Knowle Hill and the Valley Parks including Alphington. **CP18** states that *"Developer contributions will be sought to ensure that the necessary physical, social, economic and green infrastructure is in place to deliver development"*.

The Green Infrastructure Study (Phase 1) and the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Phase 2) were commissioned by East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Natural England. Their aim together is seen as providing *"a framework for green infrastructure to be taken into account in planning for the significant amount of new growth in the area"*. Phase 2 objectives include (among others):

- GI 1: increase biodiversity;
- GI 5: Increase habitat reservoir capacity & quality;
- GI 6: Increase habitat network connectivity & quality;
- GI 8: Enhance landscape character at urban-rural gateways;
- GI 12: Improve open spaces & access routes linking city to countryside.

In light of the proposed expansion in the SW, the Strategy concludes: *"This requirement for growth will see parts of the area change significantly. Green Infrastructure will be critical to ensuring that a well-connected urban extension is created that promotes a sustainable and healthy lifestyle."*

3.3 Landscape

This section describes both statutory and non-statutory landscape, heritage and ecological protection measures; and landscape characterisation at national, regional and local levels.

The closest national landscape designation is the Dartmoor National Park whose closest point lies some 10km south-west of the study site. The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site lies 12km to the east and the East Devon AONB 11km in the same direction. None of these is within the visual envelope of the study area, as is shown on **Figure 4**.

The Exeter Local Plan First Review identifies several areas of open land, designated as 'Landscape Setting', to be protected from development because of their intrinsic merit and their contribution to the distinctive landscape quality of the city. These were identified following landscape appraisal studies carried out in 1997 and 1999.

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 Spatial Strategy provides for growth to the east and southwest of the city in those areas that the Landscape Study concludes are of medium to low landscape sensitivity and have medium to high capacity for development. The 'Landscape Setting' designation in these areas is, accordingly, deleted.

At a local level the Teignbridge District Council Landscape Character Assessment (2009, updated 2014) identifies Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) within the Councils administrative area. The Site falls immediately north of the Area of Great Landscape Value, Exe estuary and Farmlands LCA and relevant Landscape Character Types 3B Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled slopes and 4B Unsettled marine levels.

However, as the site is undeveloped land immediately adjacent to the LCA/AGLV its constituent characteristics of the LCA are somewhat relevant as follows (N.B the LCA and relevant LCT'S are described full in the Teignbridge Landscape District Councils Landscape Character Assessment);

- *Patchwork of medium to large-scale fields delineated by hedgerows (often gappy).*
- *Settlement pattern of nucleated villages, hamlets, farms and houses with cob, thatch, stone, render and slate and some brick; settlement denser on the eastern than the western bank.*
- *Network of sunken, winding lanes with often dense, high hedgebanks connecting historic settlements and contrasting with modern infrastructure of M5 and railway.*
- *Views to major urban areas including Exeter and Exmouth, which lie adjacent.*
- *Recreational influences seen in small boats, boatyards, moorings, quays and slipways and the Exeter Canal along the estuary shore as well as in nature reserves and walking routes and notable tourism development at Dawlish Warren.*
- *Variable sense of tranquillity: tranquil in inland valleys and parts of the estuary where there is a serene quality, but disturbed close to settlements, railway and main roads.*

The nearby Exe Estuary below the Exe Valley Country Park is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area and a Ramsar Convention 'wetland of international importance', which includes various Local Nature Reserves within its compass. There is another Local Nature Reserve at Redhills, some 1.5km north of the site.

The Character Map for England⁶ describes areas of distinct landscape character across the country. Titled National Character Areas (NCA), these are defined by a combination of natural and cultural features, and their extents follow natural lines rather than administrative boundaries. NCA form the basis for a local Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) carried out for the SWM, which refines the national characterisation for guidance specific to its study area.

The study site lies in NCA 148: Devon Redlands, which extends for several km around it and to the south. Its key characteristics are:

- *A hilly landscape with steep valleys, opening out to floodplains and saltmarshes at the coast;*
- *Small, irregular broadleaved woodlands and copses give sense of enclosure, particularly in upper valleys;*
- *An irregular pattern of fields with varied hedge banks inland;*
- *Mainly mixed farming;*

- *Extensive urban development and transport links on lower valleys and coasts.*

The detailed LCA for SWM allocates the site to the Matford Brook Valley Farmland. Its key characteristics are:

- *A shallow, gently sloping landscape on either side of the Matford Brook;*
- *Large open arable fields bounded by trimmed hedgerows;*
- *Distinct features include the prominent, tree-covered Knowle Hill;*
- *Strong lines of mature trees along roads and field boundaries;*
- *Land to the north is visually separated from the main valley landscape and influenced by the proximity to the built edge of Alphington.*

3.4 Biodiversity

The site as whole at present has no ecological designations on it. Whilst there are a number of significant hedgerow trees and established hedgerows as identified in the Arboricultural and Ecology Reports, there are no Tree Preservation orders in place and no statutory designations for nature conservation operating within the boundaries of the site.

3.5 Cultural Heritage

There are three areas of archaeological interest in the immediate vicinity of the site, one within its perimeter: an area of possible prehistoric ditches and a field system on the eastern site half. A Scheduled Monument lies just south of the eastern site, a Barrow Cemetery which extends to within a few metres of the southern perimeter. These signs of prehistoric features 'will require further investigation' (SWM) but are provisionally being integrated into planning processes.

4 Site Appraisal

4.1 Description and Context

The location of the study site in relation to Exeter, Alphington and Teignbridge is shown on **Figure 1**. It lies on the present townscape/landscape boundary, within the line of the A30 but on the lower slopes of the undulating hillsides rising towards Shillingford and further south, the Haldon Ridge. This is therefore the point of transition from a built up area of townscape to the north to an agricultural one to the south and east.

The site itself comprises a belt of agricultural land sloping up to the Markam Lane ridgeline and bounded by hedges and trees. To the north are residential neighbourhoods of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses, set out in meandering estates with cul-de-sacs. These are characteristics typical of the LCA Matford Brook Valley Farmland in the LCA for SWM (ref section 3.3).

The roads forming the site boundary to the north east and west are lined by houses looking on to the site. To the west, along Shillingford Road, houses are set back behind a strip of roadside land. To the east, where the site is bounded by agricultural land, several residences overlook the site. To the south is Markham Lane, with its mature hedgerow, beyond which is further agricultural land and a belt of tree planting along the A30.

4.2 Topography and Drainage

Alphington extends to the south of the River Exe with the larger part of Exeter around its historic centre on the opposite riverbank. Knowle Hill stands between the study site and the eastern neighbourhoods of Exeter; the intent is to designate this distinctive feature as a Country Park in a later phase of development.

The study site occupies lightly sloping land draining to the north-east. A ridge to the south and west of the site shields the land from views from the few settlements in this direction; also the bulk of Exeter is too flat for the site to be intervisible to any depth. Only the massif of Pearce's Hill to the southeast offers the elevation, the accessibility and proximity to allow good views into the site. Although land south of Markham Lane falls steeply to the Matford Brook, the site itself falls only moderately, but adequately to allow good drainage. At low points across the site, there is evidence of boggy ground.

4.3 Land Use

Historically this area of Alphington has long been used for agriculture with older maps showing orchards and a good degree of enclosure as illustrated by the 1888 Ordnance Survey map. In recent decades the settlement edge has crept closer and adjacent plots are now occupied with suburban housing in a loose pattern, with older buildings sparsely represented south of the village centre.

The site is well-managed agricultural land, mostly under arable production at present together with some unimproved pastureland and paddocks. Several historic hedgerows remain, in varying condition with the majority along the site boundaries. In general, the fields are a good size and largely unaffected by typical issues of an urban fringe location.

4.4 Vegetation

The site is bordered and traversed by a series of mature hedgerows, interspersed with significant hedgerow trees along their lengths. This pattern of existing vegetation is consistent throughout the extent of the site. Species present are largely native and include hazel, ash, hawthorn and elm. Hedgerow tree species include oak and ash. There are no areas of woodland contained within the site, and no significant specimen trees separate to those in the hedgerows. The remaining vegetation on site consists of either rough pasture or farmed arable land to the field areas.

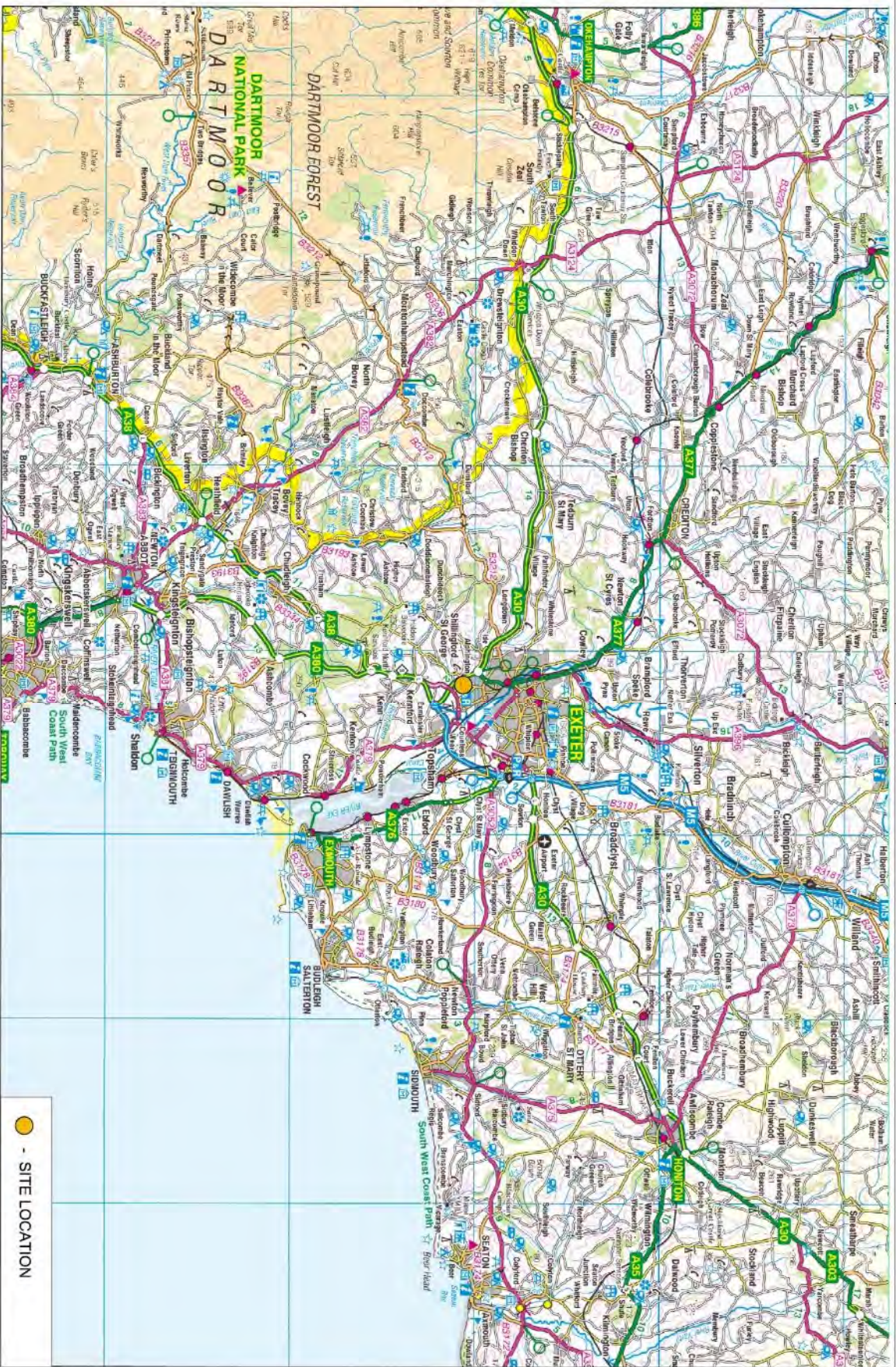
4.5 Public Access

The site is bounded by three roads, all secondary routes, leading into Alphington from the south-east, the south and the south-west. Chudleigh Road bisects the site and is flanked to the west by Shillingford Road and to the north east by Dawlish Road. To the south, Markham Lane gives landowners access to their fields and is a public right of way.

There is currently no public access to the sites although a public footpath runs from Chudleigh Road immediately to the south of the Eastern section of the application sites. Development of the sites will provide an opportunity to provide new public open space, potentially linked to the existing area at Veitch Gardens, together with new pedestrian/cycleway links to the wider South West Exeter area.

SWM Part 4 identifies the area south of the site as divided by both the A30 (running north-south) and the A379 (east-west). SWM refers to local secondary and tertiary routes as "green lanes" and recommends retention with their role reinforced or "*changed to sustainable movement corridors for pedestrians and cyclists only*". The three secondary roads around the site were observed to carry a significant volume of traffic, particularly during rush hours.

SWM notes that existing green infrastructure does not currently feature strongly around Alphington with a limited existence of Public Open Space, located to the north of the village, and play areas only located to the north and east. Knowle Hill, which forms a potential vantage point, is not currently open for public access.



● - SITE LOCATION

Project:
ALPHINGTON - EXETER
FORMER ALDENS FARM

Title:
LOCATION PLAN

Date: July 2013

Figure: 1
Drawn: MB
Checked: PRM

Scale: 1: 200 000 at A3



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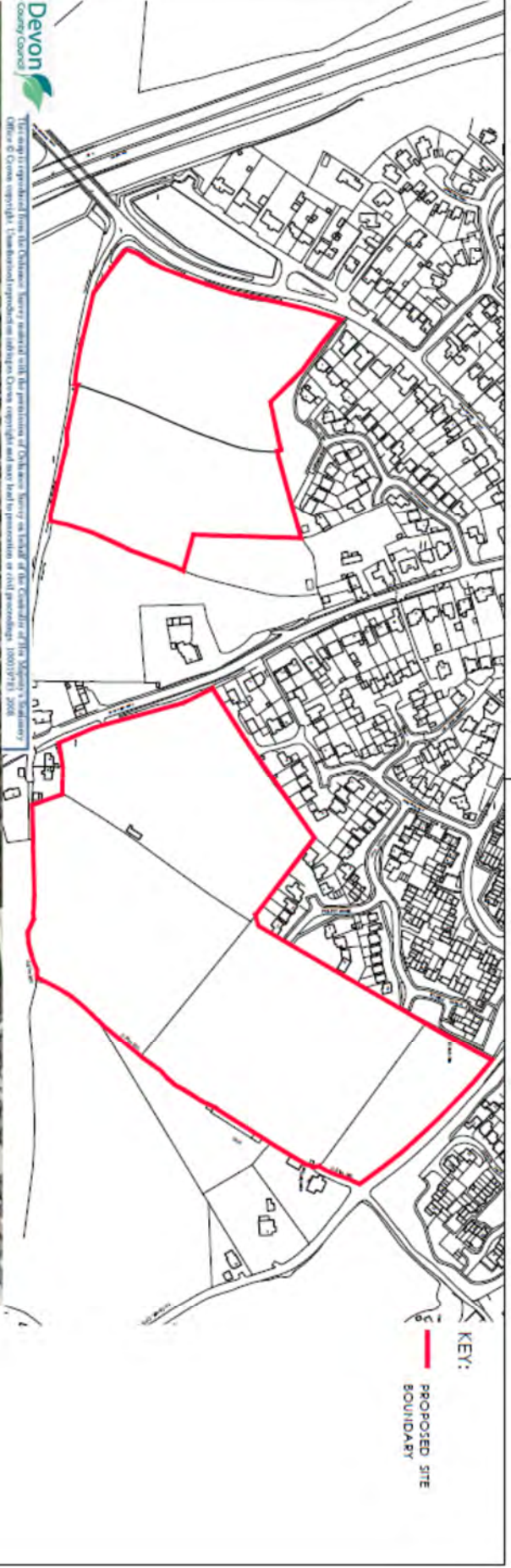
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Project: ALPHINGTON - EXETER FORMER ALDENS FARM	Title: LOCATION PLAN	Date: March 2018	Figure 2 rev A
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Project:
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Title:
 SITE PLAN & AERIAL VIEW

Date: March 2018

Scale: N.T.S.

Figure 3
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5 Proposals

5.1 Design Principles

In the absence of design proposals for the development of the study site, those principles are taken from the planning and guidance documents expounded in section 3 above which, when applied on a site-specific level, are likely to characterize the proposed development.

The mix of housing from high to low density will reflect existing village character with dialogue regarding design principles having been developed and discussed with the Alphington Forum. A design brief for the site will be issued by Exeter City Council later this year.

5.2 Built Form

The proposals in the SWM are based on a premise of mixed density (30-40dph) with building heights proposed at generally 2-3 storeys. It is anticipated that low buildings will be sited at the north end to minimise impact on the neighbouring housing, with greater heights proposed anticipated at the central area.

Design guidance suggests materials choice should suit the region, so a mix of brick, stone and roofing materials local to the area would be appropriate. Alphington village centre would suggest red brick and slate roofs but pastel rendered facades, also with dark gabled roofing, characterise the country houses and farm buildings around the study area itself. Timber detailing as promoted by Exeter's Residential Design SPD would be a more contemporary, sustainable alternative underlining the identity of this rural location.

5.3 Access and Movement

Permeability onto Markham Lane will be created.

The main axis will encourage foot traffic, particularly to the central area, and may be used for bus routes. The orientation of footpaths and the separation of pedestrians and cyclists from vehicular traffic is a question to consider. Future provision of links towards Teignbridge and its emerging development will be necessary.

5.4 Green Infrastructure

In line with the GI Strategy "*that a well-connected urban extension is created that promotes a sustainable and healthy lifestyle*", there is an opportunity to link into circulation routes planned as green corridors; in particular, to link Alphington and the South West Exeter Country Park planned in the GI Strategy. In the future, this could also allow access to the Country Park planned at Knowle Hill. While the GI Strategy shows diagrammatic routes based on the local road network, this site offers potential for footpaths and cycleways to separate walkers and cyclists from motorised traffic.

The Strategy suggests a series of tools that could be applied for landscape objectives, such as to ensure that the ridgelines are protected and strengthened, key footpaths and cycleways are provided and key habitat and hedgerow links are preserved and developed.

5.5 Project Phasing

Detailed proposals are in the process of being prepared for this site and it is possible that the two halves of the site, one to each side of Chudleigh Road, would be developed independently. For the purposes of this assessment, they are regarded as one scheme whose construction begins at Year 1.

This development is one of a number planned in the SWM. Following the construction of the housing foreseen on this Exeter site, around 2,000 further houses and their associated infrastructure including schools, employment areas and local centres are planned on land in

Teignbridge in years to come; an exact timescale is yet to be confirmed.

For the purposes of this study, the magnitude of development is assessed in three phases. The first is its own **construction phase**, which is taken as starting in Year 1. Its **short-term assessment** covers the first four years of its operational life, that is, once residents have moved in but before the mitigation, planting planned has reached its full height and before the Teignbridge developments (Phase 2 of the SWM) have been begun. Their construction and operation are anticipated to run in stages from Year 5 onwards, so they contribute cumulative effects to the **long-term assessment** of the magnitude of change this project is predicted to have on its setting in both landscape and visual terms.

6 Landscape Effects

6.1 Natural Resources

The **topography** of the study site would change only to accommodate drainage features and the foundations of the planned building works. The surface would however be sealed, which is in practical terms not a reversible effect, and the drainage would change markedly with the need for extensive runoff control. There is however no existing surface watercourse on the site itself that would be affected. Detailed study of the drainage capacity of the site has been carried out as a separate report. Its initial findings have identified areas capable of accommodating soakaway features as well as areas where this is unfeasible. Areas for surface water alleviation have also been identified.

The existing **vegetation** must be divided into agricultural crops and landscape framework. While the agricultural use would be curtailed, the retention of as much of the historical framework as possible (hedges, trees and their associated ground layers) is a stated aim of these proposals. In principle the permeating use of green infrastructure throughout, based on the existing pattern of field enclosures, would maintain a high proportion of the current framework; the fields replaced by housing, commercial and general industrial uses, but still structured by lines of currently existing and newly planned vegetation.

6.2 Land Use

Land use and **public access** change fundamentally, since the current private land use would be exchanged for a large number of new users and a high degree of access for themselves and others. The public service functions of farming would continue with maintenance of the trees and hedges and provision of associated habitats within the green infrastructure, but the nature of the land use would undergo a total change. Potential public access could be opened up as well as retention of the existing Public Right of Way along Markham Lane.

6.3 Policy and Character

As noted at 3.1 above, the Local Development Framework documents of both Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council set out planning policies for residential development on this site. The detailed LCA for SWM characterises the location as *'visually separated from the main valley landscape and influenced by the proximity to the built edge of Alphington.'*

A new residential neighbourhood here is in line with current planning intentions, conditional on the restrictions of the 'Landscape Setting of Exeter', which prescribes the continuation of local character and distinctiveness.

6.4 Landscape Receptors (Refer to Fig 3)

Landscape Receptors

The following landscape receptors are key physical characteristics or features within or in the contextual setting of the proposed study area that maybe affected by the development and are used to form the basis of this assessment of landscape impacts;

- Native hedgerows
- Native Trees
- Agricultural/Rural Setting
- Markham Ridgeline

6.5 Impact Assessment: Table of the Significance of Effects (Landscape) - Refer to 8.1 and 8.5.1 for further explanation

Landscape Receptor : Native Hedgerows and Trees

sensitivity	Medium	construction phase (Magnitude)	High
short-term effects (Magnitude)	High	long-term effects (Magnitude)	Medium
overall significance	Moderate Substantial	-	

Landscape Receptor : Agricultural/Rural Setting

sensitivity	Low-medium	construction phase (Magnitude)	High
short-term effects (Magnitude)	High	long-term effects (Magnitude)	Medium
overall significance	Moderate		

Landscape Receptor : Markham Ridgeline

sensitivity	High	construction phase (Magnitude)	high
short-term effects (Magnitude)	high	long-term effects (Magnitude)	medium
overall significance	Moderate-substantial		

7 Visual Effects

7.1 Assessment Phases

Following the construction phase assessment of each viewpoint, the operational phase is divided into two parts. The short-term assessment covers Years 1-4 after construction; this phase is expected to see the proposal standing in an unchanged visual context. The long-term assessment however takes place in an entirely different context, namely that of the SWM 'Phase 2' development in the District of Teignbridge.

The 'Phase 2' development described above is currently anticipated from Year 5 onwards; at the time of writing no detail is yet known. Assumptions are therefore even less concrete than for the 'Phase 1' development of the proposals but once more, based on information contained in the SWM. This is outlined and illustrated at section 5.5 above.

7.2 Visual Receptors

Through the baseline significant viewpoints in which the proposed development area may be visible have been recorded (Figure 5). The visual receptors assessed are discussed in 7.3.

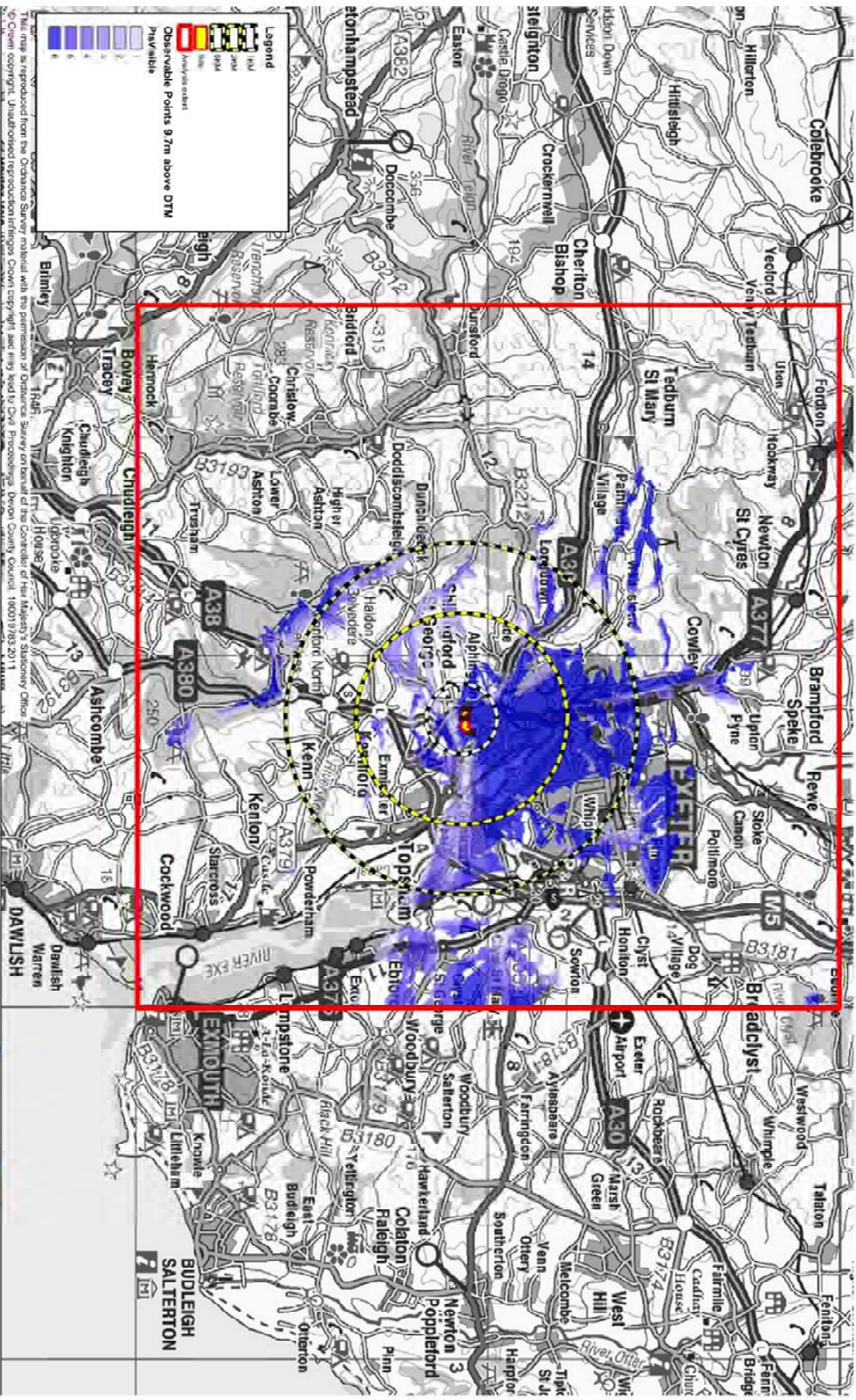
7.3 Viewpoint Analysis

Without a tangible proposal for the development, it was felt that a broad range of views from each point of the compass with a focus on views from adjacent residential areas would sufficiently cover the emerging development.

The viewpoints assessed cover the tourist destinations Haldon Belvedere and Colleton Crescent, the Ludwell Valley Country Park, Exeter Green Circle from Redhills, Public Rights of Way on Pearces Hill and near Chudleigh Road, and two representing the views of local residents. These are all photographed according to the Landscape Institute guidelines at 1.5m from ground level; at this stage it was not wished to include first-floor views from private property around the site boundaries. Views from other locations shown here were all screened by landform or vegetation; at application stage these may be shown to demonstrate their lack of intervisibility. Also considered was one from the University of Exeter or Stoke Hill; these options were felt to be represented by the selected viewpoints 1-3.

The **viewpoint details** are shown in the first table: elevation above AOD and distance from the centre of the site; their direction to the centre of the site and the time the photos were taken. The extent of the site visible is summarised and the visual receptors involved are categorised. The text which follows the first table in the sequence describes the view from the perspective of the receptor groups listed.

In the second table, **assessments** are made of the *sensitivity*, both of the landscape viewed and that of the receptor group(s); the *magnitude of predicted effects* for each project phase; and the overall *visual significance* of the development. Factors considered in reaching this assessment are given in the final text.



Project:
ALPHINGTON - EXETER
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Title:
Visibility of Points 9.7m above Ground

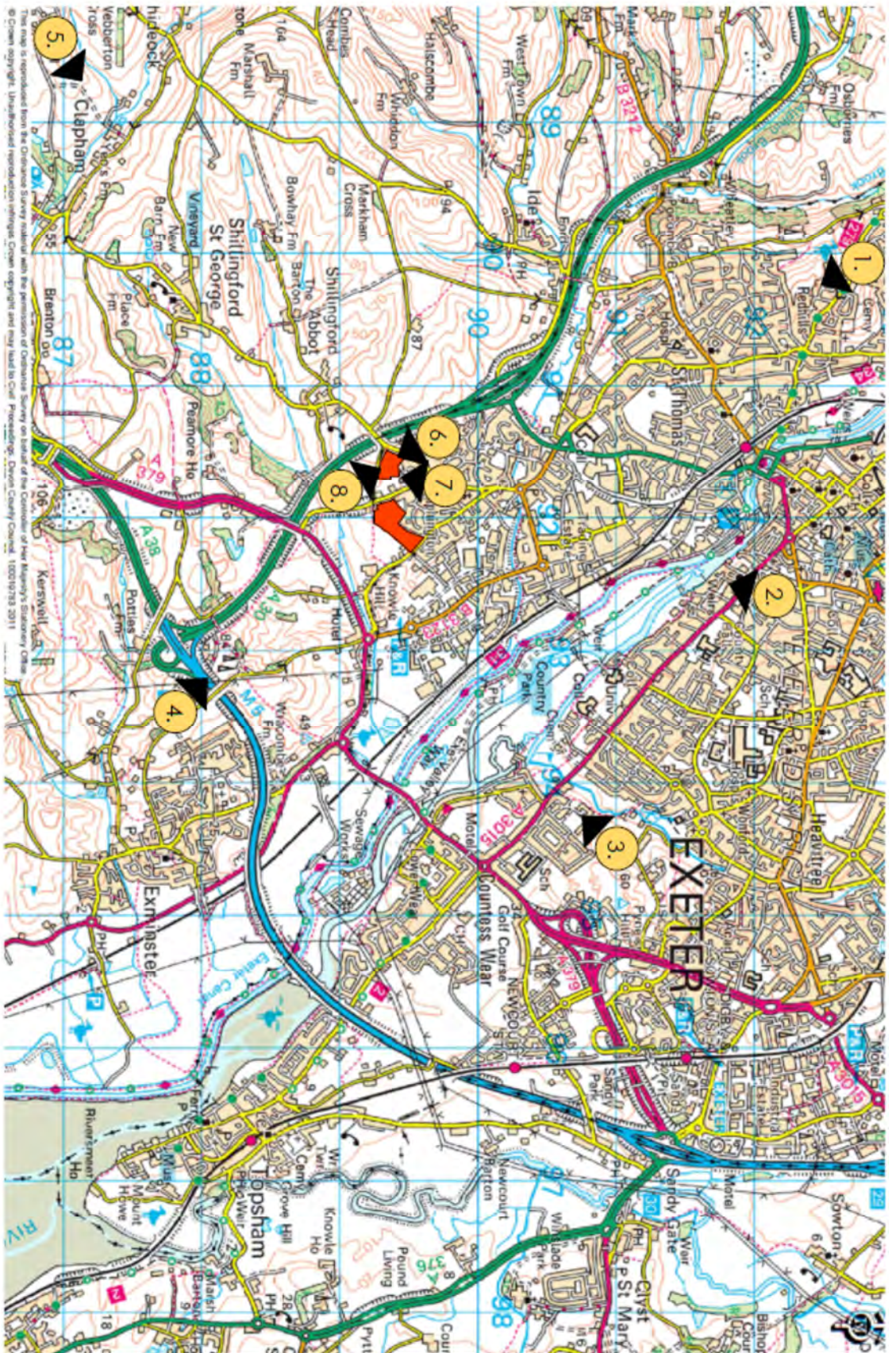
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Project:
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Title:
VIEWPOINTS LOCATION

Date: March 2018
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Impact Assessment: Table of the Significance of Effects (Visual)

Viewpoint 1: Redhills (Exeter Green Circle)

viewpoint elevation	150m AOD	distance from site	3.4km
direction to site	south-east	time of photos	11.15
extent of site visible	eastern half	visual receptors	recreational users

Wide-ranging view from the Exeter Green Circle walk, looking over western parts of the city towards Pearce's Hill behind the site. Suburban housing in the foreground gives way to industrial areas and terraced rows of houses, all framed by the distant hills either side of the Exe estuary. The light and shade of low sun when looking southwards obscures many details on a fine day and the city appears as a patchwork of built and green elements; its country setting also mixes open land with blocks of forestry and individual buildings.

The site lies at the junction of city and country, a long flat strip of land to the right of Knowle Hill which rises only slightly out of the jumbled picture in the middle distance.

sensitivity	very low	construction phase (Magnitude)	very low
short-term effects (Magnitude)	very low	long-term effects (Magnitude)	very low
overall significance	Negligible		

Given appropriate building materials and layout, the development would harden the edge of Exeter but cause only an incremental change to the existing patchwork picture. With the Teignbridge development possibly rising up the lower slopes of Pearce's Hill in the long-term assessment (Year 5 onwards), the city-country distinction may again be blurred in the future, but the large part of Phase 2 would be screened from here. The scale of new development on the study site is so small that, even before mitigation planting matures, it represents a minor and distant change entirely in character with its surroundings.

Viewpoint 2: Colleton Crescent

viewpoint elevation	40m AOD	distance from site	2.7km
direction to site	south	time of photos	15.45
extent of site visible	limited	visual receptors	Exeter visitors

View out of the city centre extending to the Haldon Ridge and framed by mature trees nearby, in which the town housing of the foreground, the industry of Marsh Barton and the residential suburbs leading to Alphington quickly give way to open countryside. Receptors at this viewpoint are often those who choose it for its views, so are of high sensitivity.

The site occupies one of two intermediate horizons formed by the low hills in the middle distance, and presents itself as a slim transverse ribbon. The near and middle distance is made up of a significantly urban and suburban townscape framed by a wider landscape setting, and the site appears at the junction of these two character areas.

sensitivity	medium	construction phase (Magnitude)	low
short-term effects (Magnitude)	low	long-term effects (Magnitude)	very low
overall significance	Slight-Moderate		

A small proportion of the total view would be affected from this distance and proposals are an extension similar in kind to existing contiguous inner townscape. While receptors here would be more sensitive than most, the effect would be hard to appreciate and incremental in kind.



VIEWPOINT NO. 1, REDHILLS



VIEWPOINT NO. 2, COLLETON CRESCENT

Project:
ALPHINGTON - EXETER
FORMER ALDENS FARM

Title:
VIEWPOINT 1 and 2

Date: July 2013

Figure:
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Viewpoint 3: Ludwell Valley Country Park

viewpoint elevation	45m AOD	distance from site	3.2km
direction to site	south-west	time of photos	15.30
extent of site visible	limited	visual receptors	recreational users

Expansive view from open ground in Exeter over disparate built areas of the city, taking in the radio mast at Redhills and the fringes of Dartmoor. From this viewpoint the city appears as green as much as it is urban, rapidly giving way to the surrounding countryside; since this is largely due to broadleaf trees, this effect could be even more pronounced in summer.

The site appears on an intermediate horizon formed by Markham Lane, below that of the Haldon Belvedere which marks the extent of Exeter. Its significance is heightened by the light and shade which differentiates it from the distant ridgeline beyond. At present, this horizon frames the city below with a line of countryside linking to the rural scene further south.

sensitivity	medium	construction phase (Magnitude)	very low
short-term effects (Magnitude)	low	long-term effects (Magnitude)	very low
overall significance	Slight - Moderate		

Given a house and block structure of moderate massing, the domestic scale of the new development would fit well with that of this area of the city and intrude far less than the commercial warehouse roofs of Marsh Barton below it. Its location makes it appear that it clearly belongs to the city, and building here would sharpen the divide between Exeter and the distant hills. This would lessen to some extent once mitigation planting matures.

Viewpoint 4: Pearces Hill

viewpoint elevation	60m AOD	distance from site	1.7km
direction to site	north-west	time of photos	12.15
extent of site visible	eastern half	visual receptors	recreational users

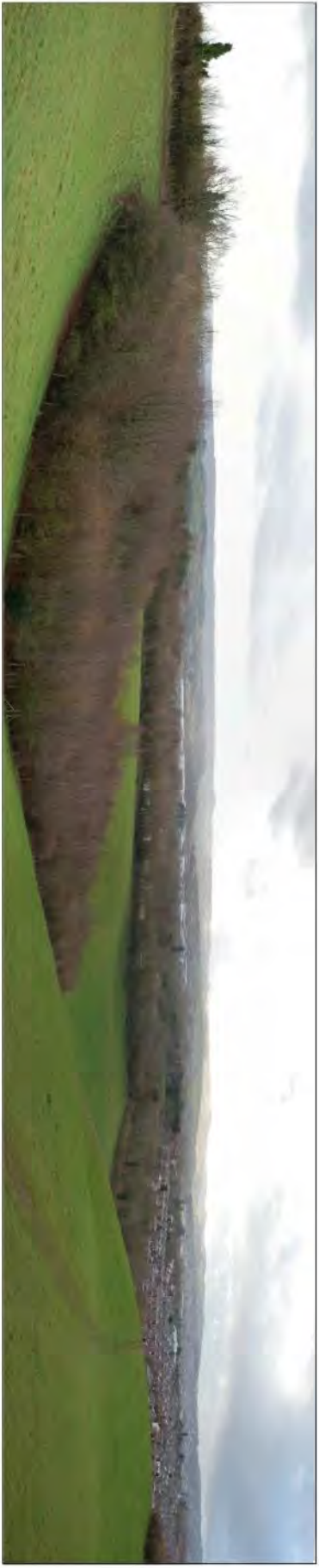
Sweeping vista of a predominantly rural landscape; only a small part of the city impinges on the edge of what is proposed to be the view from a planned Country Park. Old Matford Lane rises to join a Public right of Way leading over the hill, which links the Exe estuary with the South Devon hills, but neither is heavily used. This viewpoint lies within the TDC Area of Great Landscape Value (the site itself does not).

The site slopes away to the north and its western half is entirely screened by the line of trees along Markham Lane. The eastern half is however visible on the edge of Alphington.

sensitivity	medium	construction phase (Magnitude)	low
short-term effects (Magnitude)	low	long-term effects (Magnitude)	low
overall significance	Slight to Moderate		

The potential intrusion of building on the western half of the site would depend on the location and height of the highest houses on the ridge, but at this distance, even a worst-case scenario would represent minimal change. A large area of POS if centrally placed or along the southern border would break up the mass of buildings visible on the eastern site but until planting here

grew, this half of the development would initially be open to view. It is however contiguous with its suburban context and no major extension to this.



VIEWPOINT NO 3. LUDWELL VALLEY COUNTRY PARK



VIEWPOINT NO 4. PEARCES HILL

Project:
ALPHINGTON - EXETER
FORMER ALDENS FARM

Title:
VIEWPOINT 3 and 4

Date: July 2013

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Viewpoint 5: Haldon Belvedere

viewpoint elevation	250m AOD	distance from site	5.3km
direction to site	north-east	time of photos	10.05
extent of site visible	eastern part only	visual receptors	recreational users

Extensive views over Exeter and its hinterland to the Blackdown Hills in the distance. The city reveals itself as both compact in extent and permeable to the countryside, with green spaces penetrating its fabric; despite its proximity to the viewpoint, Exeter occupies only a small part of the scene. Knowle Hill is visible but not prominent; from this elevation other undulations in the landscape are not marked. Rural settlements, buildings, roads and masts feature occasionally and the spread of industrial-scale rooftops at Matford stands out.

The western part of the site is screened by rising ground west of Shillingford and A30 traffic forms a foredrop in continuous motion. Most of the eastern end is in view, the central part of site screened by the same crest as the western part.

sensitivity	high	construction phase (Magnitude)	very low
short-term effects (Magnitude)	low	long-term effects (Magnitude)	very low
overall significance	Slight to Moderate		

This landscape is largely unspoiled in its integrity and is valued for recreational purposes. The Teignbridge developments (SWM Phase 2 onwards) would impact once they are begun, but since the study site slopes away from this viewpoint, its effect would be limited. The western site would be screened in summer; the eastern site would appear as a cluster of buildings in keeping with those around it. Conditional on the height and proximity of the nearest houses, planting along the southern edge would suffice largely to screen it from view.

Viewpoint 6: Shillingford Road

viewpoint elevation	45m AOD	distance from site	200m
direction to site	south-east	time of photos	13.05
extent of site visible	western half only	visual receptors	road users, residents

Urban fringe scene at the point where Shillingford Road leaves the suburbs for the first fields of adjacent countryside to the south. They form the site and offer agricultural land. Alphington centre is marked by mature trees and its church in the opposite direction but visually, the city centre is some distance away.

sensitivity	medium	construction phase (Magnitude)	very high
short-term effects (Magnitude)	high	long-term effects (Magnitude)	high
overall significance	Substantial		

For residents, the view of open countryside on their doorstep would disappear; but for road users, whose sensitivity is intrinsically lower, the edge of Exeter would simply retreat uphill to the A30 crossing. Unless construction access could be made directly from the A30, the impact

of site traffic will need to be addressed as a site management issue. The last open field at this point would be replaced by housing but the mature trees of the landscape framework around it could, if carefully planned, remain. Public access to open ground could also be planned for. Nonetheless this is a fundamental change in character from open rural landscape to enclosed, designed townscape.



VIEWPOINT NO. 5. HALDON BELVEDERE



VIEWPOINT NO. 6. SHILLINGFORD ROAD

Project:
ALPHINGTON - EXETER
FORMER ALDENS FARM

Title:
VIEWPOINT 5 and 6

Date: July 2013

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Viewpoint 7: Royal Close

viewpoint elevation	30m AOD	distance from site	100m
direction to site	south	time of photos	12.50
extent of site visible	western half only	visual receptors	residents

Looking from the housing estate over the site, the first of the adjacent country fields, this is a quiet and traditional picture of well-managed farmland (possibly extending to more distant horizons from private upper storey viewpoints). As it is the view out from publicly accessible areas at ground level is bounded by the row of trees along Markham Lane; traffic on the A30 is occasionally audible, and one line of low pylons crosses the field, but this is otherwise free from infrastructure. The boundary hedge would reduce effects markedly in summer.

sensitivity	high	construction phase	very high
short-term effects	very high	long-term effects	very high
overall significance	Substantial		

Development of the western half of the site would change this view entirely. Building height would be critical for the existing houses since new build would lie both upslope and to their south, so they could quite literally be overshadowed in winter. Although mitigated to some extent by mature planting in the long-term assessment, this viewpoint would experience the highest category of change: 'the proposed development redefines the characteristics of the existing landscape over an extensive area.'

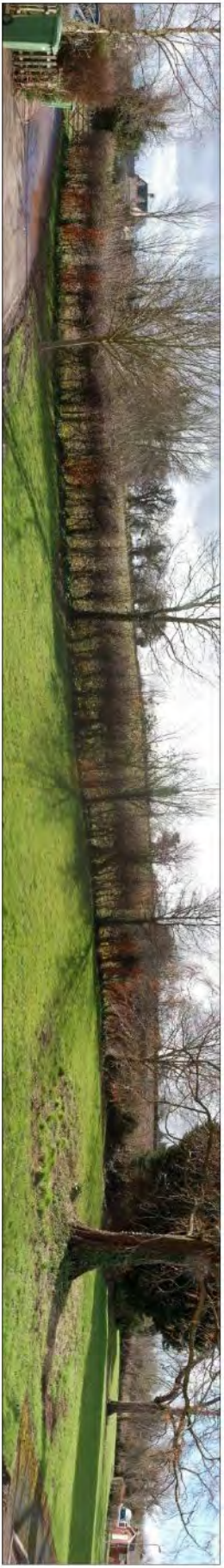
Viewpoint 8: Chudleigh Road Public Right of Way

viewpoint elevation	35m AOD	distance from site	100m
direction to site	north	time of photos	13.30
extent of site visible	eastern half only	visual receptors	walkers, residents

View back from the southern edge of the site taking in its eastern half, nearby areas of Exeter and the northern suburbs of Stoke Hill and Pennsylvania. The city is however distant and the overriding impression is rural; the hedge screens most of the view from ground level, although residents' upper-storey views would of course include more.

sensitivity	high	construction phase	high
short-term effects	very high	long-term effects	very high
overall significance	Substantial		

Any building on the eastern half of the site would block this view. Tree and hedgerow planting with possible open space at the edge of the development might mitigate its impact, but the rural nature and character of the scene would still be fundamentally altered.



VIEWPOINT NO 7. ROYAL CLOSE



VIEWPOINT NO 8. CHUDLEIGH ROAD

Project: ALPHINGTON - EXETER FORMER ALDENS FARM	Title: VIEWPOINT 7 and 8	Date: July 2013	Drawn: AK Checked: PRM
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8. Summary

8.1 Landscape

- The current land use of the site is largely agricultural providing for rough pasture, grazing and arable.
- The landscape character is rural edge, forming the natural boundary to the village of Alphington.
- The proposed site has distinctive field patterns and boundaries with the quality of these identified in the accompanying arboricultural and ecological reports prepared on the site.
- The site and its surrounding area possess clear local character and distinctiveness.

8.2 Visual

- The site is visually distinctive from the adjacent village settlement of Alphington as it forms the boundary to the main valley landscape lying to the south of the site.
- The existing rural, edge of town landscape quality is enjoyed by the existing residential properties adjacent to the site.
- The site visually forms the edge of the built up settlement area of Exeter when viewed from the longer distance as illustrated by the viewpoint photographs.

8.3 Night Time Impacts

Chudleigh Road and the residential area of Alphington are well lit. As the detailed design of the site has not been undertaken yet it is not possible to determine the night-time impact. However, lighting proposals should be similar to that of the residential area of Alphington, i.e. widely spread and designed to avoid upward glow and long distance countryside impact.

8.4 Cumulative Impacts

The close proximity of the residential development of Alphington to the site has triggered progressive change in the landscape setting from a fundamentally 'rural' area to that of 'urban fringe' brought about by the expansion of the south west of the city. The proposed development site has been identified in planning policy as integral to the expansion of the development of southwest Exeter. The Southwest Masterplan/Spatial Strategy recognises the area south of Alphington as important in contributing to a wider framework of growth for the urban extension to the south of the city.(ref section 3.1 Spatial Planning Policy/Local Planning)

8.5 Conclusions

8.5.1 Assessment of Landscape Impacts

The assessment finds that there will be **Moderate to Substantial Impacts on Hedgerows and trees**. However, if sensitive mitigation proposals are implemented, that allow for the retention of as many existing trees as possible and designing within the hedgerow field pattern then the impact can be minimized. The long-term impact will be less significant as the mitigation planting establishes.

The arboricultural and ecological report suggest that most of the hedges internally are of poor quality whilst the higher quality hedgerows are on the boundaries and could be retained. Whilst there will potentially be a significant loss of internal trees/hedgerows/agricultural land, good mitigation can compensate for these losses and over time even add ecological and amenity

value to the site and environs.

The assessment finds that there will be **moderate impact on the agricultural/rural setting** as a result of the conversion of the land from rural to urban land-use. However, given that the land on the 'urban fringe' its sensitivity to development is somewhat reduced. The impact can be further reduced by the implementation of an effective mitigation strategy and sensitive design.

The assessment finds that there will be a **moderate-substantial impact on the Markham Ridgeline**, the degree of impact will depend on site design and the height of the highest houses close to the ridgeline and the mitigation strategy, which will ensure that the significance of the belt of trees along the ridgeline and its immediate surroundings are protected.

8.5.2 Assessment of Visual Impacts

The assessment finds that there will be a **negligible impact from View Point 1** Redhills (Exeter Green Circle). The scale of the site at this distance from a northern aspect is so small that the change of the site from rural to urban would have a negligible visual impact particularly as the site lie on the edge of the urban patchwork and mitigation planting matures.

The assessment finds that there will be a **slight-moderate impact on viewpoints 2-5** (Colleton Cres., Ludwell Valley and Pearces Hill, Haldon Belvedere) largely due to the distance from the site, surrounding topography and vegetation as explained in more detail within the visual assessment section.

The assessment finds that there will be a **substantial impact on views 6 to 8** (Shillingford Rd, Royal Close and Chudleigh Road) due to the close proximity to the site of these views and the current perception of the site as countryside fundamentally changing to urban townscape. Again the sensitivity of site design and quality of mitigation will be key in ensuring that the new development integrates well into the surrounding urban/rural area.

8.5.3 Key Issues Arising from the Impact Assessment

- The proposed development of this site for residential development would fundamentally alter the land use of the area from agricultural to mixed residential.
- The site and its adjacent setting possess clear local character and distinctiveness that should be recognised and valued in any proposed development.
- The site contains landscape elements of significant arboricultural and ecological interest. Retention and protection of these elements should be allowed for in any development plan. This would include retention of historic land boundaries and the linking of new boundaries to link to this.
- The proposed development of this site would extend the built up edge of the city of Exeter. Design proposals should be appropriate to maintain this edge within the wider context of the landscape setting of Exeter.
- The extension of the built up edge of the city environs would alter the rural character of the site for the existing surrounding residences, although the visual effect of this extension would be of little visual impact from the wider landscape of the city.

8.6 Constraints Arising (refer to following Constraints Plan)

- The site is contained by the existing road network.
- The site needs to provide for onsite surface water drainage. Ground conditions will determine where attenuation and storage of storm water can be accommodated.
- The topography of the site will determine the siting of built forms to minimize the visual impact of the development on the wider and longer ranging views into the site from the surrounding city vantage points.
- The proposed development of the site will need to seek to protect existing mature trees on the site.



KEY:

	SITE BOUNDARY		EXISTING TREE		AREAS OF FLOODING - ATTENUATION		LINE OF MAXIMUM VISIBILITY
	EXISTING HEDGE		EXISTING ROADS		PUBLIC OPEN SPACE - LINK WITH EXISTING		POTENTIAL CYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN LINKS



Project:	ALPHINGTON - EXETER FORMER ALDENS FARM	Title:	SITE CONSTRAINTS	Date:	March 2018	Rev A
Scale:	N.T.S. at A3	Drawn:	AN	Checked:	JS	

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9 Recommendations

9.1 Mitigation and Enhancement

The landscape mitigation strategy for the site should provide the following;

Provide a 'Green Infrastructure' Network by seeking to retain the existing established landscape framework, formed of historic hedgerow boundaries and distinctive field patterns, and to use this to help guide design layouts and protecting, enhancing and creating a variety of habitats linking to the wider countryside.

Seek to protect and enhance important landscape elements including species rich hedgerows and mature specimen trees within the site layout.

Seek to identify the local character and distinctiveness of Alphington village, and to provide proposals that respect and reinforce this sense of place.

Increase the amenity value of the site through enhancement of the proposed development through the provision of landscape planting around buildings and along internal corridors

Improve Ecological connectivity to enhance the species diversity of the site, and provide habitats for birds, bats and other small mammals to create links from the site into the wider surrounding landscape.

Compensate for the loss of any trees/hedgerows through additional tree and shrub planting.

Provide a lighting scheme which avoids light spill on the landscape.

9.2 Component Design

Design components for the site include: structural landscaped framework; retention and protection of existing mature vegetation; green infrastructure links to/ from the site; on site water attenuation facilities; site massing and layout planning to achieve a built form consistent in height with the adjacent existing settlements.

9.3 Layout Strategy

The proposals for the development of this site are to provide a robust site layout that enables the provision of residential units within a landscaped framework, linked to the surrounding wider landscape and settlements by road, cycle and pedestrian access routes.