

Landscape, Townscape and Visual Issues Study

**LAND AT SANDY**

Pigeon

August 2017



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1.1 Liz Lake Associates has been appointed by Pigeon Land Ltd. to assist with the assessment of landscape and visual issues relating to land at Sandy, Central Bedfordshire (the Site) and its potential for mixed use including residential and other uses.
- 1.1.2 The report considers the existing baseline conditions and seeks to identify the relevant landscape and visual issues applicable to the Site. It also considers the urban morphology of Sandy throughout history, in order to ascertain the established pattern of expanding settlement pattern and to help identify the most logical option for future extension of the town. It has also reviewed Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBCs) Draft Site Assessments issued in response to the Council's 'call for sites' in 2014 and 2016.
- 1.1.3 An initial Site visit was undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect in August 2017. The weather was bright and sunny, visibility was good. This report was prepared following this site visit.
- 1.1.4 All photographs were taken with a digital camera, a Canon EOS 1100D with a 30mm fixed lens. The 30mm lens is the digital equivalent to a standard 50mm focal length lens with a single lens reflex camera.
- 1.1.5 Liz Lake Associates is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy with over 30 years' experience of master planning, landscape, ecology, urban design, heritage and environmental impact assessment. The company is a registered practice of the Landscape Institute.
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## 2 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ISSUES

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### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This report has been prepared, encompassing the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) 3rd edition (published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013), and 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland' (published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage 2002). In summary, the approach combines information and desktop reviews with on-site surveys and appraisal.

2.1.2 The Site based assessment involves the recording of both objective description and subjective impressions of the landscape, as well as details of the existing landscape condition. It includes an assessment of the extent and nature of views to and from the Site and the type of receptors that experience these views.

2.1.3 The following relevant studies and documents have been considered as part of the desk based review and subsequent assessment:

- Natural England – National Character Areas
- Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2015)
- Central Bedfordshire Council's Draft Site Assessments (as available for consultation in August 2017)
- Central Bedfordshire District Council Sandy Green Wheel Masterplan 2014
- Central Bedfordshire District Council's Nature Conservation Strategy 2015
- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan (Prepared for Mid Bedfordshire District Council by the Greensand Trust, September 2008)
- Sandy Conservation Area Appraisal (2003)

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### 2.2 Site Area and Context

2.2.1 The Site abuts the northern edge of Sandy with Sunderland Road running along the southern boundary.

- 2.2.2 The Site itself is currently in agricultural use separated by some hedgerow field boundaries and others separated by rough grass farm tracks and ditches, extending north on the shallow valley slopes towards Highfields Farm.
- 2.2.3 Sandy is a town in the Central Bedfordshire District in Bedfordshire, England, which has formed along the shallow valley slopes of the River Ivel. The town is largely contained by and lies adjacent to key infrastructure, arterial north south routes, including the A1 to the west and the East Coast Main Line railway to the eastern side of the settlement. Bedford is approximately 12km to the west, St. Neots 10km to the north and Biggleswade 4km to the south. The River Ivel and its valley floor lie to the west of the Site beyond the A1.
- 2.2.4 Historically, there is evidence of Mesolithic and Roman settlement around the area centred around the River Ivel. The modern town developed from where it meets the River Ivel in the south and extended west towards Girtford and north with the C18th and C19th development of the road, river and rail transport that coincided with the market garden industry that developed in the area at that time. There was a significant amount of extensions made to the town in the post-war period and late in the C20th.
- 2.2.5 Land use around the Site varies but is largely made up of modern residential development (existing settlement edge) to the south, the A1 to the west and agricultural fields lie to the north and east, although the large-scale industrial structures associated with the Sandy Business Park form a prominent feature to the south east. A number of businesses are strung along the edge of the A1, including Dane Hill Farm, which lies adjacent to the south west corner of the Site. The Bedfordshire Car & Caravan Centre lies to the west of the Site adjacent to and with access directly from the A1 southbound carriageway, as well as a petrol filling station (Esso). The northern boundary of the Site is aligned with a farm track that leads to Highfield Farm, around the curtilage of Highfield Farm and also continues east along the field boundary before continuing south along the eastern boundary.
- 2.2.6 The Site is largely flat at 20mAOD with a small dome profile, meaning that the land slope gently eastwards down towards another small tributary valley in the east at approximately 15mAOD. The land in the north edge of the Site at Highfield Farm

reaches approximately 35mAOD. Accordingly, the land associated with the Site rises no higher than the existing settlement of Sandy, for example the area near to the railway station and, as a result the majority of the Site levels are consistent with those running through the existing settlement following the shallow slopes of the Ivel Valley.

2.2.7 Public bridleway 21 lies just within the Site's south eastern boundary and public footpath 24 runs along the southern site boundary adjacent to Sunderland Road. Otherwise there is not currently any public access onto the Site. There are several other PROW that are in the vicinity of the Site offering opportunity for connectivity with the wider area and with Sandy.

2.2.8 A selection of photographs from the Site and the surrounding area are provided in Figures 7 and 8 of this report.

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## 2.3 Published Landscape Character Assessments

2.3.1 A brief summary of the published landscape character assessments in the context of the Site is detailed below.

### **National Character Area:**

2.3.2 The Site lies in National Character Area (NCA) profile 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands as defined by Natural England. The NCA is a broad, gently undulating, lowland plateau dissected by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens in the east. It includes numerous large towns, Milton Keynes, Bedford, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough, and major transport routes, including the M1, A1 and A14 and the Midlands and East Coast mainline railways.

2.3.3 Key characteristics of the area relevant to this Site include:

- *"Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.*
- *The River Great Ouse and its tributaries meander slowly across the landscape, and the River Nene and the Grand Union Canal are also features. Three aquifers underlie the NCA and a large manmade reservoir, Grafham Water, supplies water within and outside the NCA.*

- *Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the north west representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.*
- *Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.*
- *Rich geological and archaeological history evident in fossils, medieval earthworks, deserted villages and Roman roads. A number of historic parklands, designed landscapes and country houses – including Stowe House and Park, Kimbolton Park, Croxton Park, Wimpole Hall and Wrest Park – combine with Bletchley Park, Second World War airfields, the Cardington Airship Hangers and brickfields to provide a strong sense of history and place.*
- *Diversity of building materials including brick, render, thatch and stone. Locally quarried limestone features in villages such as Lavendon, Harrold and Turvey on the upper stretches of the River Great Ouse.*
- *Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads.*
- *Major transport routes cross the areas, including the M1, M11, A1, A6, A5 and A14 roads, the East Coast and Midlands mainline railways, and the Grand Union Canal. ”<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> National Character Area profile 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands.

### **District Character Assessment:**

- 2.3.4 The Site is split broadly on a west east axis between two Landscape Character Areas (LCA). The western area of the Site lies within 4A : Great Ouse Clay Valley and the eastern part lies within 5F: Biggin Wood Clay Vale as defined by LUC in the Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2015).
- 2.3.5 The key characteristics of LCA 4A : Great Ouse Clay Valley relevant to the Site include:
- *“A shallow fairly wide valley of the Rivers Great Ouse and Ivel founded on Oxford Clay and Alluvium with deposits of Valley Gravel and small sections of Glacial Gravel.*
  - *Large scale open water bodies, multiple channels and tributary streams are scattered across the floodplain. The course of the river is marked by riverside vegetation including mature willows. Shelterbelts and distinctive clusters of woodland create a semi-enclosed landscape.*
  - *Mixed land use of arable of the shallow slopes of the valley with pasture, quarrying and recreational uses along the valley floor.*
  - *Large and medium scale geometric fields are bounded by hedgerows in mixed condition with some hedgerow trees.*
  - *The importance of the area in prehistoric times as a focus for ritual sites and funerary monuments is reflected in a number of ancient monuments.*
  - *Historic parks at Tempsford (and Roxton and Little Barford in Bedford Borough) contain parkland trees as well as medieval earthworks and ridge and furrow. Moated sites and remains of castles are present particularly at strategic points commanding the rivers.*
  - *Settlement consists of medium size villages, the market town of Sandy and large industrial complexes including the generating station at Little Barford and the Priory Business Park (both within Bedford Borough).*
  - *Building materials are varied with local stone churches and bridge at Great Barford, red brick dwellings, black painted clapboard barns, clay tile and*

*thatch roofs along with more recent industrial buildings of brick, metal and glass.*

- *An urban fringe character results from the audible and visual presence of major road corridor of the A1, large scale industrial development and the mix of land uses giving an urban fringe character particularly close to Bedford.*
- *The Bedford to Sandy Country Way crosses through the landscape along a disused railway line west of Sandy.”<sup>2</sup>*

2.3.6 The visual and perceptual character of 4A is outlined as,

*“The open, gently rising slopes of the Great Ouse Clay Valley have strong visual links with the surrounding higher ground of Clay Farmland to the north and within Bedford Borough, and Clay Vales character areas particularly the large scale arable fields. Some sections along the rivers are highly rural in character but other areas are more highly managed such as the historic parkland at Tempsford. Urban influences include the A1 which has a visual impact locally, and the exposed northern urban edge of Sandy.”<sup>3</sup>*

2.3.7 Within the section on settlement pattern and built character of LCA 4A it comments that, *“The large scale buildings at the western edge of Sandy are generally well-screened although the northern urban edge is exposed and brings an urban fringe influence to the landscape locally.”<sup>4</sup>*

2.3.8 The LCA notes that past changes within the landscape have included the rise and decline of market gardening, loss of water meadows along the Rivers Great Ouse and Great Ivel, loss of hedgerows and large-scale housing at Fallowfield as northern edge of Sandy.

2.3.9 The LCA notes potential future changes could include further large-scale development at the northern and western edge of Sandy, flooding of the River Ivel

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<sup>2</sup> P.54 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

<sup>3</sup> P.56 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

<sup>4</sup> P.56 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

and its adjacent floodplain, green infrastructure improvements as part of the Sandy Green Wheel, and potential route of East-West rail, via Sandy (acknowledged to be a corridor somewhere north of Highfields, although details are unknown at the time of writing).

- 2.3.10 Strategic sensitivities of the landscape of LCA 4A include the minor roads and bridges over the Great Ouse and Ivel which reinforce the rural character of the area, distinctive features such as hedgerows, hedgerow trees and water meadows, pockets of parkland and surviving areas of meadow, individual villages with historic cores and strong links to the rivers.
- 2.3.11 Visual Sensitivities of LCA 4A include openness and long views across the gently rising slopes linking with the adjacent Clay Farmland and Clay Vales landscape types. The LCA notes, *“the level topography means that tall structures and large scale buildings are highly visible – avoid adverse impacts on the character of the river corridor”*.
- 2.3.12 The landscape strategy for LCA 4A is to enhance the landscape, *“through restoring elements that have become degraded or been lost such as the hedgerows, pollarded willows, pastures and water meadows and conserving features such as the historic villages with their strong links to the river landscape character and the tranquil, rural sections of riverside and open water bodies fringed by woodland.”*<sup>5</sup>
- 2.3.13 The LCA provides several guidelines for new development which include:
- *Strengthen the connection of the town of Sandy with the river Ivel and its floodplain through the instance tree planting or wetland habitat creation that would enhance access links.*
  - *Enhance and restore the hedgerows by replanting and resist development that will result in further loss/fragmentation of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.*

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<sup>5</sup> P.58 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

- *Safeguard the rural character of the river corridor.*
- *Conserve the rural settings of the towns and villages and enhance the settlement edge for instance by woodland planting to screen large scale development.*
- *Conserve the character of secondary roads, limiting urbanising influences e.g. kerbing and widening and ensure that traffic management measures are sympathetic to those sections of the area with a rural character.*
- *Enhance recreational links to the river.*<sup>6</sup>

#### 2.3.14

The Landscape Management Guidelines for LCA 4A include:

- *Consistent hedgerow management and active management of pollarded willows. Encourage management of arable field margins for biodiversity interest.*
- *Take opportunities to plant new woodlands (in particular wet woodlands) that will screen new and existing development.*<sup>7</sup>

#### 2.3.15

The key characteristics of LCA 5F: Biggin Wood Clay Vale relevant to the Site include:

- *“A medium scale, open vale landscape underlain by Oxford Clay. A predominantly flat landscape with dominant open skies.*
- *Clear views across the vale terminated by the backdrop of the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge (6c) provide a sense of containment. To the west the more wooded landscape of the river valley is defined by willows and poplars.*
- *Lane use is predominantly defined by arable cropping contained within medium to large arable fields, with hedgerow boundaries in variable condition.*

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<sup>6</sup> P.58 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

<sup>7</sup> P.59 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

- *Roadside hedgerows are an important feature and include tall overgrown mixed hedgerows creating a shaded wooded context as well as wide grass verges and mature hedgerow and roadside trees (ash, field maple and oaks).*
- *Small woodland blocks, hedgerow trees and copses provide texture, variety and enclosure in close range views, as well as forming a valuable biodiversity resource.*
- *Occasional small scale industrial units with associated industrial boundary (chain-link fencing / access splays and gates) interrupt the rural agricultural character.*
- *The area is severed by the main LNER rail line which runs north south across the vale. It is crossed by two roads (bridge and level crossing) – although much of the area to the east of the railway line is isolated and ‘remote’ with access limited to unmarked tracks.*
- *Locally, the overhead electric lines associated with the railway and line of pylons which cross the area form visually dominant built elements. The transitory noise from the railway also impinges on the quiet rural character.*
- *Settlement is limited to occasional solitary farms and buildings – often isolated at the end of unmarked lanes. The village of Tempsford on the boundary is associated with the valley of the Great Ouse. The interface with the market town of Sandy to the south is contained by the railway line.”<sup>8</sup>*

### 2.3.16

The visual and perceptual character of LCA 5F is described as, *“The character area has a strong sense of isolation as a result of a relatively unsettled landscape and few access paths. There are distant views to the contrasting elevated landscape of the Wooded Greensand Ridge, trees and hedgerows punctuate the landscape, providing texture, height and enclosure. More industrial elements dominate locally, including*

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<sup>8</sup> P.112 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

*lines of pylons and the railway line. A localised enclosed character is created by woodlands of the Woodburry estate.”<sup>9</sup>*

- 2.3.17 Within the section on Cultural pattern and historic character the LCA 5F notes that the *“the line of the Sandy-Godmanchester Roman Road is a rare survival of a visible pre-medieval landscape feature.”*
- 2.3.18 The settlement pattern and built character of the LCA 5F notes that, *“Today, the area is distinctive for its general absence of settlement limited to occasional solitary farms and farm buildings often isolated at the end of unmade lanes. The main built feature is the rail line with its associated overhead electric lines and a main pylon line which are locally dominant. The transition with the town of Sandy to the south is largely contained by the railway line and there are limited views into the settlement.”<sup>10</sup>*
- 2.3.19 The key positive landscape features of the LCA 5F include,
- *The quiet, peaceful, isolated rural character which persists within areas of this vale.*
  - *Hedgerow boundaries and the patchwork pattern that they create in views from the adjacent elevated ridge.*
  - *Small farm woodlands and copses which create texture, variety and enclosure in local views and contribute to the biodiversity resource.*
  - *The regular pattern of hedgerow and roadside standard trees (oaks).*
  - *Low density dispersed isolated settlement pattern with scattered farm houses at the end of narrow unmarked tracks.*
  - *The route of the old Roman Road.*

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<sup>9</sup> P.113 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

<sup>10</sup> P.114 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

2.3.20 Visual sensitivities of LCA 5F are outlined as:

- *The flat, open landscape with the potential for any large scale change to be highly visible.*
- *Clear views across the landscape to the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge (6c) and panoramic views from the ridge back over the Vale.*
- *Views are filtered by small blocks of woodland and high hedgerows.<sup>11</sup>*

2.3.21 The landscape strategy for LCA 5F is for landscape enhancement. *“The aim should be to enhance and reinforce the patchwork pattern of the landscape created by the integrated field boundary network. There are also opportunities to manage and enhance the woodland cover within the landscape and restore elements of the floodplain character.”<sup>12</sup>*

2.3.22 The guidelines for new development within LCA 5F include:

- *Consider opportunities for further small scale woodland creation within the vale – particularly where there is an opportunity to provide links between existing woodland blocks or join access routes such as the Old Roman Road bridleway.*
- *Conserve the rural character of the roads and lanes.*
- *Consider opportunities for landscape enhancement (woodland creation and hedgerow restoration) to provide a well-integrated edge to Sandy.*
- *Conserve the clear views and visual relationship with the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge (6c). Retain the dramatic visual contrast between the flat vale and steep slopes.*

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<sup>11</sup> P.115-116 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

<sup>12</sup> P.116 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

- *Conserve the recreational links through and across the landscape and safeguard the line of the Roman Road.*<sup>13</sup>

### 2.3.23

The landscape management guidelines for LCA 5F include:

- *Renew field boundaries where these are gappy and apply a consistent management strategy to conserve the structure and pattern of boundaries and reflect the historic enclosure patterns. Conserve and enhance historic boundaries particularly those at the base of the Greensand escarpment and around Langford End.*
- *Conserve hedgerow trees (field maples, ash and oaks) and promote growth of a new generation of hedgerow and verge trees.*
- *Apply appropriate management of the small farm woodlands and copses in order to conserve them as landscape features and enhance biodiversity value. Hedgerows linking woodland blocks should be a target for restoration and management.*
- *Conserve the characteristic drainage channels associated with the Great Ouse corridor.*
- *Encourage the appropriate management of ditches in the area.*<sup>14</sup>

### 2.3.24

The Site contains some of the characteristics of these two LCAs in that it comprises largely flat agricultural fields with some hedgerow boundaries and ditches but the visual and audible presence of the A1 and the existing built edge of Sandy adjacent to the Site contribute to the urban fringe character of the Site.

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<sup>13</sup> P.116 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

<sup>14</sup> P.116-117 Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015

## 2.4 Urban Morphology and Historical Development of Sandy

- 2.4.1 The settlement pattern of Bedfordshire is a mixture of nucleation and dispersal and are generally located along the river valleys and more recently along road and rail corridors.<sup>15</sup>
- 2.4.2 The area where the modern town of Sandy is now located has been settled since prehistoric times with archaeological findings been found in various places within and near to the town.<sup>16</sup>
- 2.4.3 The Roman era was particularly important for the area. There was a hillfort, known as Caesar's Camp, which was built on an outcrop overlooking the River Ivel<sup>17</sup>. The Historic Environment Record has an entry on Roman Sandy (HER 1897) which reads as, *"The Roman settlement at Sandy was based around a major road intersection... but seems to have been relatively small and diffuse settlement, but apparently of distinct local importance. The main focus of the settlement seems to have been on the site of the modern cemetery, the adjoining area known as the Chesterfield and the railway station and marshalling yard..."*<sup>18</sup>
- 2.4.4 The Domesday Book holds records on Sandy and outlines that it was a large manor with 24 villagers, six smallholders and 2 slaves.<sup>19</sup> Two mills were also listed at this time.<sup>20</sup>
- 2.4.5 The west tower and south aisle arcades at The Church of St. Swithun (Grade II\* Listed Building) are mediaeval but the majority of the Church dates back to 1860 by architect W G Habershon (Historic England List Entry 1137790). It is believed that there was a church on the same site from before the Norman Conquest of 1066.

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<sup>15</sup> Central Bedfordshire LCA, LUC 2015. National Character Area profile 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands.

<sup>16</sup> Sandy Conservation Area Appraisal 2003

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy\\_-\\_early\\_times.html](http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy_-_early_times.html)

<sup>18</sup> <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/Sandy/RomanSandy.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> <http://opendomesday.org/place/TL1749/sandy/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/Sandy/SandyIn1086.aspx>

- 2.4.6 The growth of Sandy into a small town began as early as the 1700s. It appears on Jeffery's map of Bedfordshire in 1760 (Refer Figure 9 Historic Mapping of Sandy in Appendix C of this report). Market gardening was a large contributor to the growth of Sandy with 'gardener' mentioned as an occupation on the parish registers as early as 1682<sup>21</sup>.
- 2.4.7 Sandye Place (Grade II Listed Building) which is now occupied by a school dates back to the Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Historic England List Entry 1137822). The Historic Environment Record for Bedfordshire for and earthwork to the south of Sandye Place (HER3033) notes that, "*The 1901 Ordnance Survey marks Sandye Place "on site of Danish camp", and the 1926 edition suggests that it is the site of a manor house. There is no evidence for either interpretation.*"<sup>22</sup>
- 2.4.8 As the maps in Figure 9 indicate, the historic core of the modern settlement has focussed around the River Ivel where the Church of St. Swithun and Sandye Place are located.
- 2.4.9 The growth of market gardening as an industry in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries as well as infrastructural improvements during the industrial revolution, resulted in the town spreading along the road to the north and west. The railway arrived in Sandy in 1850 with the Great Northern Railway line heading north out of the town and the Cambridge and Bletchley Branch heading west in an arc.
- 2.4.10 Most of the open fields around the historic centre of the town disappeared after the Enclosure Act of 1804 and commercial amount of produce began to be transported to markets further afield in London and the midlands.<sup>23</sup>
- 2.4.11 As the population boomed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, development of the town began to extend along St Neots Road, Cambridge Road and the High Street which can be seen on the Ordnance Survey 1901 edition (Figure 9). It was around this time that the

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<sup>21</sup> [http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy\\_-\\_the\\_middle\\_ages\\_2.html](http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy_-_the_middle_ages_2.html)

<sup>22</sup> <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/Sandy/SandyePlaceMiddleSchool.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy\\_18th\\_19th\\_c.html](http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy_18th_19th_c.html)

town can be seen extending closer towards the adjacent village of Girtford in a north-west direction.

2.4.12 Post-war development extended into the triangular area between Sandy and Girtford causing the settlements to coalesce in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Figure 9).

2.4.13 Much of the expansion of Sandy as it is known in the modern day began in the 1950s. It was at this time that the Great North Road (now the A1) became a dual carriageway. In 1973, Sandy Urban District Council (as it was then known), entered an agreement with the Greater London Council to build 700 dwellings on the area of land between Sunderland Road, and St Neots Road with new schools as part of the London 'overspill' scheme.<sup>24</sup>

2.4.14 In the 1980s and 1990s smaller parcels of land which were once worked as market gardens were converted into modern estates.<sup>25</sup> This development can be seen in the progressive historic mapping provided in Figure 9.

2.4.15 The development at Fallowfield in the late 1990s extended the settlement further to the north of the town to create settlement of Sandy as it is known today. Between the 1980's and the present day, the industrial estates that occupy the triangular parcel of land between Sunderland Road and the rail line to the east have gradually extended northwards, even protruding north beyond Beamish Close with industrial units.

2.4.16 Sandy in the present day is characterised by a mix of housing stock, local industrial estates, and commuter housing estates that sit in a still largely rural setting. However, the audible and visual presence of the A1, the railway and large scale industrial development, as well as pylons and overhead wires criss-crossing the area has resulted in an urban fringe character to the setting of Sandy to the north and west.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy\\_-\\_modern\\_times\\_-\\_1.html](http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy_-_modern_times_-_1.html)

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy\\_-\\_modern\\_times\\_-\\_1.html](http://www.sandy-bedfordshire.co.uk/sandy_-_modern_times_-_1.html)

<sup>26</sup> LCA 4A, Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, LUC 2015.

- 2.4.17 In summary, the town of Sandy has a long history with the origins of the town dating back to prehistoric period. The majority of Sandy as it is known today has developed since the 1950s with significant post-war development and continued extensions to the north in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 2.4.18 There are constraints provided by the lower lying land and floodplains of the River Ivel to the south and west of Sandy. To the south east is the more sensitive landscape associated with the elevated slopes of the Greensand Ridge and the registered park and garden at Hatells Hall. The area of land to the east of Sandy is somewhat divorced from the settlement by the railway and the industrial estates located in between it and Sunderland Road. Therefore, the town has developed largely along the shallow slopes of the River Ivel Valley following the shallow valley side and has been guided north by the presence of key infrastructure including the A1 and the railway line.
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- 2.5 **Central Bedfordshire Sandy Green Wheel Masterplan 2014**
- 2.5.1 The Sandy Green Wheel Masterplan (published by Central Beds Council in 2014) is a long term plan for the linking of public green spaces and routes around the town to create a 'rim' which is supported by 'spokes' of paths and corridors leading from the settlement out to the 'rim' and the wider surrounding countryside.
- 2.5.2 There has been further support for the Sandy Green Wheel within the Sandy GI Plan (2010) and the Ivel Valley Framework Vision (2011).
- 2.5.3 One of the main rim routes of the Sandy Green Wheel Routes runs along the southern boundary of the Site along Sunderland Road.
- 2.5.4 An area within the Site is identified as a potential new green space within the Green Wheel Masterplan (see Appendix D of this report for extracts from the masterplan document).
- 2.5.5 The masterplan identifies several existing PROW in close proximity to the Site for proposed improvements and enhancements. Footpath 24 (running along Sunderland Road) is proposed for one of the outer rim routes. It is also proposed that landscape enhancements could aid the urban : countryside interface at this point. Public Bridleway 25 which extends further east from the southern Site boundary is identified

as an alternative route for the rim routes around the Green Wheel. The Green Wheel Masterplan also identifies the opportunities for extending the currently 'dead-end' bridleway 21 to the north to create links with Tempsford.

- 2.5.6 These proposals for PROW improvements and connectivity as outlined within this masterplan could be enabled through the development of the Site for residential or mixed use development. It presents an opportunity to improve the accessibility around the edge of Sandy as well as improving the access to adjoining settlements and the countryside by incorporating these new connections within landscaping and new public open space as part of a potential development.

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## 2.6 **Liz Lake Associates Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

- 2.6.1 The Site is currently in agricultural use separated by some hedgerow field boundaries and others separated by rough grass farm tracks and ditches. It lies adjacent to the A1 which can be heard across the Site and is within view from most areas within the Site.
- 2.6.2 The Site lies abreast of two different landscape character areas (LCA) as identified in the Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2015, see Figure 5 Landscape Character Assessment). It contains some of the characteristics of these two LCAs but the visual and audible presence of the A1 and the railway line as well as the proximity to the industrial estate and the existing built edge of Sandy adjacent to the Site contribute to the urban fringe character of the Site. Refer to Figures 7 and 8 of this report for a selection of photographs of the Site and the surrounding area.
- 2.6.3 The Site is largely flat at 20mAOD with a small dome profile, meaning that the land slope gently eastwards down towards another small tributary valley in the east at approximately 15mAOD. The land in the north edge of the Site at Highfield Farm reaches approximately 35mAOD. Accordingly, the land associated with the Site rises no higher than the existing settlement of Sandy, for example the area near to the railway station and, as a result the majority of the Site levels are consistent with those running through the existing settlement following the shallow slopes of the Ivel Valley.

- 2.6.4 Views to the west from within the Site are largely contained because of the extensive vegetation within the Ivel River valley and the landscape features beyond. There are views towards the Greensand Ridge in the east where the small hilltop settlement of Everton is located. Whilst there are likely to be some views back towards the Site, these are much wider panoramic views over the whole of Sandy and the River Ivel valley and the Site itself is not a prominent feature within these views (see example photo location 18 in Figure 7 and 8).
- 2.6.5 There will be a change in the land use of the Site from agricultural field to residential led mixed use development. However, this land use would not be incongruous with the adjacent land uses of residential area, industrial uses, and large infrastructural elements and the development of the Site would provide significant opportunities to improve the relationship of the built edge with the surrounding landscape providing better integration of the settlement form into the wider landscape.
- 2.6.6 Development that was designed to be in keeping with the existing northern built edge of Sandy would likely be perceived as an extension of the existing edge further north and would appear very similar to the existing character and appearance of the built edge.
- 2.6.7 Sandy has historically developed from its core near the church and Sandye Place near to where they meet the River Ivel and has since extended north in between the Great North Road (A1) and the railway lines. There are constraints provided by the floodplains of the River Ivel to the south and west of Sandy. To the south east is the more sensitive landscape associated with the Greensand Ridge and the registered park and garden at Hatells Hall. The area of the land to the east of Sandy is somewhat divorced from the settlement by the railway and the industrial estates located in between it and Sunderland Road.
- 2.6.8 In landscape terms, the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the

existing settlement. For these reason, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.

- 2.6.9 Public bridleway 21 lies just within the Site's south-eastern boundary and public footpath 24 runs along the southern site boundary adjacent to Sunderland Road. Otherwise there is not currently any public vehicular access onto the Site. There are several other PROW that are in the vicinity of the Site offering opportunity for connectivity with the wider area and with Sandy.
- 2.6.10 New development could also incorporate the outlined objectives of the Sandy Green Wheel masterplan which would provide significant benefits to the residents of Sandy both existing and new.
- 2.6.11 Landscape mitigation that is in keeping with the guidelines outlined in the LCAs such as the creation of more woodland areas and the reinstatement of some historic hedgerows and drains, as well as incorporating new areas of public open space and landscaping to enhance the Green Instructure Network of the area (as identified in the CBC Nature Conservation Strategy, the Sandy Green Wheel Masterplan and the draft Community Plan for Blunham, Moggerhanger, Sandy, Tempsford) would provide an opportunity to enhance the urban : countryside interface at the north of Sandy and may help in reducing its exposure within views from within the surrounding landscape.
- 2.6.12 The existing settlement edge of Sandy along the A1 is generally not particularly exposed to views save for the northern edge of the modern development. Development of this promotion site could help to reduce the exposure of this edge within views from the surrounding landscape (refer example photo locations 12, 13 and 14 in Figures 7 and 8) by incorporating new planting and screening along the A1 to mask the existing exposed edge.
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### 3 REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S SITE ASSESSMENTS

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#### 3.1 Central Bedfordshire Council's Site Assessments

3.1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council is currently in the process of adopting their draft local plan for the period 2015 to 2035.

3.1.2 The document that has been released for consultation in July 2017, was the Site Assessment Technical Document and the Site Assessment Results for sites proposed for residential and employment development through the Council's Calls for Sites. Following further work the Council will then undertake a full Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which is expected in 2018.

3.1.3 There are several sites within this document that cover the area of the Site currently being promoted by Pigeon Land Ltd.

3.1.4 The sites in the Council's 2017 document that most closely relate to the Site currently being promoted by Pigeon Land Ltd. The largest of these sites is NLP414. Within this site are other areas relevant to the promotion site, which are ALP319 ALP320 and NLP084.

3.1.5 Stage 1 of the Council's assessment ruled out sites that were: too small or conflict with national policy designations, sites that were not well related to existing settlement, of insufficient size to be self contained, sites that would cause coalescence of existing towns or villages. A self-contained site was defined as a site that will provide 1,500 homes or more.

3.1.6 Stage 2 of the Council's assessment reviewed the suitability of each site using detailed desktop assessment. This was then followed by further assessment of suitability using comments from technical specialists.

3.1.7 Stage 3 of the Council's assessment reviewed whether sites were achievable in line with NPPG guidance.

- 3.1.8 All of these sites passed through all three stages of the Council's assessment. It was generally concluded that each site will be considered further as part of the local plan.
- 3.1.9 The overall outcome of the assessment of these sites was that each of them will be considered further as part of the local plan.
- 3.1.10 Other sites on the west, south and east Sandy identified within the Council's 2017 assessment all concluded that they were to be 'excluded from the Local Plan process' due to various constraints associated with them.
- 3.1.11 Within the Council's Stage 2 assessment the sustainability of the settlement was assessed in relation to each site. For all the sites identified in relation to the promotion site (NLP414, NLP084, ALP319 and ALP320) it was noted that development of each of the Site's "*would not result in the loss of services*". It should be noted that the development of these sites has the potential to provide benefits for the town with the opportunity to incorporate new services, employment and facilities for new and existing residents as well as the potential to fulfil the expressed objective of providing new public open spaces and enhancements to the Green Infrastructure Network within the area.
- 3.1.12 The tables below contain extracts of the Council's assessment that are relevant to landscape and visual issues for each Site located directly to the north of Sandy. LLA have provided comments on the Council's initial assessments for these sites.

Central Bedfordshire Site Assessment : NLP 414 Land north of Sunderland Road and east of A1, Sandy.		
Stage 1		LLA response
Relationship to Settlement	<p><i>The site lies to the north of Sandy within a number of other submissions. The site does not extend too far from the north of sandy and could be considered as a logical extension.</i></p> <p><i>The site does not cause coalescence.</i></p>	<p>LUC 2015 Landscape Character Assessment of LCA 4A, noted the potential for further large scale development at the northern and western edge of Sandy. The Site also extends the historical trend of Sandy's development along the shallow slopes of the River Ivel and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway line. Therefore, we concur with the Council's statement that the Site can be considered a logical extension to the town.</p>
Stage 2		LLA response
Physical Constraints	<p><i>There are no physical constraints or permanent features that affect the site's developability.</i></p>	<p>Given our topographical analysis (see Figure 6 Topography), development on this Site would not result in development on higher land than that of the existing built area of Sandy. We therefore concur with the Council's statement.</p>
Relationship to Settlement	<p><i>Due to the size of the site it would complement the settlement pattern on its own without the need of other submissions however it would extend the settlement further away from the main infrastructure areas of Sandy.</i></p>	<p>As demonstrated by the study of Sandy's urban morphology in this report, the extension is complimentary to the settlement pattern and its future extension northwards. The town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography) and is contained between the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. The land is significantly less</p>

		<p>elevated or prominent within the landscape compared to the Greensand Ridge.</p> <p>Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reason, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.</p>
<p>Landscape Character</p>	<p><i>Open vale landscape leading to higher ground of Biggin Wood Clay Vale.</i></p>	<p>The Site lies abreast two different character areas, one of which is the Biggin Wood Clay Vale landscape and the other the Great Ouse Clay Valley. Though the topography of the Site and the area to the north of Highfields Farm does rise up gently in a northerly direction this feature is significantly less elevated and prominent with the local landscape than the Greensand Ridge. Therefore, with careful design decisions regarding the placement of built form this site could be developed with minimal effects on the surrounding landscape and visual receptors.</p> <p>The Site does not lie within the Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area as identified in the CBC Nature Conservation Strategy (2015, see Appendix E). Also identified within this Strategy are is a branch of the Green Infrastructure network that curves along the northern boundary of the site. This could be enhanced by the development of this site through landscape mitigation proposals and new public open space.</p>

Ecological Assets	<i>Just outside NIA, buffer wildlife corridors, some value for farmland species. Opportunities for habitat creation.</i>	We concur with this statement. Wildlife corridors and buffers can be created as part of a potential layout and enhancement to habitats can be accommodated.
Open space/leisure and GI assets	<i>Open Space: No. of dwgs 250. No loss of LS open space. Leisure and GI: Part of site covered by Parish GI plan priority aspiration to create landscaped community GI across proposed development site to include informal recreation, habitat creation, allotments and possibly a new cemetery. Not identified as part of GI network at Mid Beds plan level.</i>	The aspiration to create landscaped community GI (such as those listed) across the proposed development site could be incorporated into an emerging layout and successfully contribute to the landscape characteristics of the site and the surrounding landscape and provide benefits for the residents of Sandy.
Stage 2 Conclusion: Is the site suitable for the proposed development?	<i>Development of the entire site would be considered an illogical extension to the settlement of Sandy that would cause harm to the character of that settlement which includes the pattern of development. Furthermore, it is considered that such an illogical development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area including intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is not considered that the benefit of development would outweigh such harm. Not withstanding the above, it is considered that a portion of the site to the south would not result in significant harm and there are no constraints that would prevent the development of this portion of the site, subject to acceptable details that</i>	There appears to be an anomaly within the Council's assessment. In Stage 1 of their own assessment they stated that the site would be a 'logical' extension to the town but in the conclusion here, suggests otherwise.  We are of the opinion that it is a logical extension given that the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher

	<p>would mitigate noise impacts from neighbouring commercial uses as well as the A1, provision for the net gain for biodiversity and would mitigate impacts upon non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interests...</p>	<p>than the existing settlement. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.</p> <p>Landscape mitigation proposals including the reinstatement of historic hedgerows and drains, structural screening vegetation to the west and east, and the enhancement of the Green Infrastructure network as identified in the CBC Nature Conservation Strategy (2015, extracts in Appendix E), would provide sufficient mitigation for any effects on the landscape as a result of the proposed development as well as significant benefits to the area.</p>
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<p><b>Central Bedfordshire Site Assessment : NLP 084 Land north of Sunderland Road, Sandy.</b></p>		
<p><b>Stage 1</b></p>		<p><b>LLA response</b></p>
<p><b>Relationship to Settlement</b></p>	<p><i>The proposed development is separated from the main settlement by Sunderland Road along the southern boundary of the site. This is a minor road and does not represent a major physical barrier to pedestrians. The site is centralised and submissions that exist to the west of the site would also have to be passed as their situation is similar. The site can be seen as extending to far to the north. A portion may be more acceptable or another submission that exists within the site area.</i></p>	<p>We are of the opinion that it is a logical extension given that the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these</p>

		<p>reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.</p> <p>It should also be noted that within the assessment for NLP414 the Council noted that, <i>“The site does not extend too far from the north of sandy and could be considered as a logical extension.”</i></p> <p>NLP414 covers a much larger area and extends further north than NLP084. It is therefore surprising that they came to the conclusion that NLP084 extends too far north.</p>
<p>Stage 2</p>		<p><b>LLA response</b></p>
<p>Physical Constraints</p>	<p><i>There are no physical constraints or permanent features that affect the site’s developability.</i></p>	<p>Given our topographical analysis (see Figure 6 Topography), development on this Site would not result in development on higher land than that of the existing built area of Sandy. We therefore concur with the Council’s statement.</p>
<p>Relationship to Settlement</p>	<p><i>The site can be seen as complementary to the settlement if other submissions adjacent to it are put forward also. The site is unlikely to have a negative impact on the form of the area and the area of land is constrained by the railway and A1.</i></p>	<p>As demonstrated by the urban morphology study in this report the extension is complimentary to the settlement pattern and its future extension northwards. The town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the</p>

		<p>landscape as the Greensand Ridge.</p> <p>Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reason, extending the town to the north is the most logical option. Therefore we concur with this statement.</p>
Landscape Character	<p><i>Some limited scope if development secures stronger mitigation for rural edge.</i></p>	<p>Mitigation could be achieved within plans for future development at the rural edge. The Site's proximity to the A1 and railway contributes to its urban fringe character. Landscape mitigation would be achievable within a new development layout to help enhance the urban : countryside interface at this location.</p>
Ecological Assets	<p><i>Same as ALP319 Potential reptile/invertebrate habitat, wildlife corridors; ditches &amp; hedges, to be buffered and enhanced.</i></p>	<p>This could be accommodated within a potential development layout.</p>
Open space/leisure and GI assets	<p><i>Open space: No. of dwgs 540. No loss of LS open space. Leisure and GI: Parish GI plan priority aspiration to create landscaped community GI across proposed development site to include informal recreation, habitat creation, allotments and possibly a new cemetery. Not identified as part of GI network at Mid Beds plan level.</i></p>	<p>The area to the north of the Site along the lane of Highfield Farm and beyond has been identified as being part of the GI network in the area (see Appendix E CBC Nature Conservation Strategy, 2015). The aspiration to create landscaped community GI across the proposed development site could be incorporated into any layout or plan and successfully mitigate any effect on the landscape of the site and the surrounding landscape</p>

		<p>character and provide benefits to the town.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Conclusion: Is the site suitable for the proposed development?</p>	<p><i>Development of the entire site would be considered an illogical extension to the settlement of Sandy that would cause harm to the character of that settlement which includes the pattern of development. Furthermore, it is considered that such an illogical development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area including intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is not considered that the benefit of development would outweigh such harm. Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that a portion of the site to the south would not result in significant harm and there are no constraints that would prevent the development of this portion of the site, subject to acceptable details that would mitigate noise impacts from neighbouring commercial uses as well as the A1, provision for the net gain for biodiversity and would mitigate impacts upon non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interests....</i></p>	<p>There appears to be an anomaly within the Council's assessment. In Stage 1 of their own assessment they stated that the site would be a 'logical' extension to the town but in the conclusion here, suggests otherwise.</p> <p>We are of the opinion that it is a logical extension given that the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway line. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.</p>

Central Bedfordshire Site Assessment : ALP 319 Land north of Sunderland Road and east of A1, Sandy.		
Stage 1		LLA response
Relationship to Settlement	<i>The proposed development is separated from the main settlement by Sunderland Road along the southern boundary of the site. This is a minor road and does not represent a major physical barrier to pedestrians. The site can be seen as a logical extension and does not extend too far northwards away from Sandy and provides a more reasonable extension across the width of the northern boundary of Sandy in comparison to other submissions.</i>	We are of the opinion that it is a logical extension given that the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.
Stage 2		LLA response
Physical Constraints	<i>There are no physical constraints or permanent features that affect the site's developability.</i>	Given our topographical analysis (see Figure 6 Topography), development on this Site would not result in development on higher land than that of the existing built area of Sandy. We therefore concur with the Council's statement.
Relationship to Settlement	<i>The site can be seen as complimentary to the settlement pattern, given the positioning of the A1 and railway it is unlikely to have a very negative impact on the natural form of the</i>	As demonstrated by the urban morphology study in this report the extension is complimentary to the settlement pattern and its future

	<p><i>area and adversely affect the character of the area.</i></p>	<p>extension northwards. The town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reason, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.</p>
<p>Landscape Character</p>	<p><i>Some limited scope if development secures stronger mitigation for rural edge. Development would need comprehensive screen mitigation as very open setting in view form Greensand Ridge and A1 corridor.</i></p>	<p>Mitigation could be achieved within plans for future development at the rural edge. The Site's proximity to the A1 contributes to its urban fringe character. Landscape mitigation would be achievable within a new development layout to help enhance the urban : countryside interface at this location.</p> <p>The Site lies outside of the Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area but a proposed development layout would have the opportunity to link in with the Green Infrastructure Network of the wider area as identified in the CBC Nature Conservation Strategy (2015, see extracts in Appendix E).</p>

Ecological Assets	<i>Potential reptile/invertebrate habitat, wildlife corridors; ditches &amp; hedges, to be buffered and enhanced.</i>	This could be accommodated within a potential development layout.
Open space/leisure and GI assets	<i>Parish GI plan priority aspiration to create landscaped community GI across proposed development site to include informal recreation, habitat creation, allotments and possibly a new cemetery. Not identified as part of GI network at Mid Beds plan level.</i>	The Council marked this element as 'R', meaning 'red' 'cannot be mitigated'. LLA are of the opinion that this can be mitigated. The area to the north of the Site along the lane of Highfield Farm and beyond has been identified as being part of the GI network in the area (see Appendix E CBC Nature Conservation Strategy, 2015). The aspiration to create landscaped community GI across the proposed development site could be incorporated into any layout or plan and successfully mitigate any effect on the landscape of the site and the surrounding landscape character and provide benefits to the town.
Stage 2 Conclusion: Is the site suitable for the proposed development?	<i>Development of the entire site would be considered an illogical extension to the settlement of Sandy that would cause harm to the character of that settlement which includes the pattern of development. Furthermore, it is considered that such an illogical development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area including intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is not considered that the benefit of development would outweigh such harm. Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that a portion of the site to the</i>	There appears to be an anomaly within the Council's assessment. In Stage 1 of their own assessment they stated that the site would be a 'logical' extension to the town but in the conclusion here, suggests otherwise. Stage 2 also outlined that if development secured proper mitigation that development would be possible.  We are of the opinion that it is a logical extension given that the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology

	<p><i>south would not result in significant harm and there are no constraints that would prevent the development of this portion of the site, subject to acceptable details that would mitigate noise impacts from neighbouring commercial uses as well as the A1, provision for the net gain for biodiversity and would mitigate impacts upon non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interests....</i></p>	<p>section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway line. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.</p>
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**Central Bedfordshire Site Assessment : ALP 320 Land north of Sunderland Road and east of A1, Sandy.**

<b>Stage 1</b>		<b>LLA response</b>
<p><b>Relationship to Settlement</b></p>	<p><i>The proposed development is adjacent to the settlement envelope. Sunderland Road runs along the southern boundary of the site. This is a minor road and does not represent a major physical barrier to pedestrians. It is unclear whether there are any safe crossing points. To the east the A1 which is a major barrier is located. However this does not separate the development from the main settlement of Sandy. For the site to be considered a logical extension, other submissions to the east of the site would need to be approved.</i></p>	<p>Site ALP 320's proximity to the A1 and built edge of Sandy contributes to its settlement edge character and it therefore presents a logical extension to the settlement. We are of the opinion that the development of both ALP 320 and ALP 319 (to the east) as part of the larger parcel NLP414 would make a logical extension to the settlement as they are located in the least constrained area of the settlement edge of Sandy. The town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is</p>

		significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.
Stage 2		<b>LLA response</b>
Physical Constraints	<i>There are no physical constraints or permanent features that affect the site's developability.</i>	Given our topographical analysis (see Figure 6 Topography), development on this Site would not result in development on higher land than that of the existing built area of Sandy. We therefore concur with the Council's statement.
Relationship to Settlement	<i>Due to the size and shape of the site, it would only be considered complimentary to the settlement if other submissions were put forward also. However due to the A1 it is unlikely to have a negative impact on any key characteristics of the area.</i>	We are of the opinion that the development of both ALP 320 and ALP 319 (to the east) as part of the larger parcel NLP414, would make a logical extension to the settlement as they are located in the least constrained area of the settlement edge of Sandy.
Landscape Character	<i>Some limited scope for development if this secures stronger mitigation for rural edge and enhanced A1 corridor.</i>	Mitigation could be achieved within plans for future development at the rural edge. The Site's proximity to the A1 contributes to its urban fringe character. Landscape mitigation would be achievable within a new development layout to help enhance the urban : countryside interface at this location.

Ecological Assets	<i>Just outside NIA, buffer wildlife corridors, some value for farmland species. Opportunities for habitat creation.</i>	This could be accommodated within a potential development layout.
Open Space/leisure and GI assets	<i>Open space: No. of dwgs 250. No loss of LS open space. Leisure and GI: Part of site covered by Parish GI plan priority aspiration to create landscaped community GI across proposed development site to include informal recreation, habitat creation, allotments and possibly a new cemetery. Not identified as part of GI network at Mid Beds plan level.</i>	The area to the north of the Site along the lane of Highfield Farm and beyond has been identified as being part of the GI network in the area (see Appendix E CBC Nature Conservation Strategy, 2015). The aspiration to create landscaped community GI across the proposed development site could be incorporated into any layout or plan and successfully mitigate any effect on the landscape of the site and the surrounding landscape character and provide benefits to the town.
Stage 2 Conclusion: Is the site suitable for the proposed development?	<i>Development would be considered an illogical extension to the settlement of Sandy that would cause harm to the character of that settlement which includes the pattern of development. Furthermore, it is considered that such an illogical development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area including intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is not considered that the benefit of development would outweigh such harm. Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that a portion of the site to the south would not result in significant harm and there are no constraints that would prevent the development of this portion of the site, subject to acceptable details that</i>	There appears to be an anomaly within the Council's assessment. In Stage 1 of their own assessment they stated that the site would be a 'logical' extension to the town but in the conclusion here, suggests otherwise.  We are of the opinion that it is a logical extension given that the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site

	<p><i>would mitigate noise impacts from neighbouring commercial uses as well as the A1, provision for the net gain for biodiversity and would mitigate impacts upon non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interests...</i></p>	<p>would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.</p>
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- 3.1.13 In summary, LLA are of the opinion that well considered development of the land NLP414 (which includes ALP319, ALP320 and NLP084) can be accommodated without significant adverse harm arising.
- 3.1.14 We are of the opinion that development north of the existing settlement is a logical extension, given that the town has historically developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.
- 3.1.15 Landscape proposals including the reinstatement of historic hedgerows and drains, structural screening vegetation to the west and east, and the enhancement of the Green Infrastructure network as identified in the CBC Nature Conservation Strategy (2015, extracts in Appendix E), would provide sufficient mitigation of the proposed development as well as bringing significant benefits to the area.
- 3.1.16 Due to the larger size and shape of NLP414 in comparison to the smaller parcels ALP319, ALP320 and NLP084 when considered individually, the development of NLP414 as part of a coordinated masterplan would ensure that there is an overall vision for the northern area of Sandy and the larger parcel would allow a more complete masterplan to be created. Development of the larger parcel would allow for ample space for a new, softer settlement edge and to provide planting to protect the

most elevated part of the land north of Highfield Farm, as well as housing and employment for the area in a form that complements the settlement character and pattern of Sandy and has Green Infrastructure benefits.

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## 4 CONCLUSION

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- 4.1.1 Liz Lake Associates has been appointed by Pigeon Land Ltd. to assist with the assessment of landscape and visual issues relating to land at Sandy, Central Bedfordshire (the Site) and its potential for residential use.
- 4.1.2 This report has considered the existing baseline conditions and seeks to identify the relevant landscape and visual issues applicable to the Site. It considers the urban morphology of Sandy throughout history in order to ascertain the most logical option for future extension of the town. It has also reviewed Central Bedfordshire Council's Draft Site Assessments as submitted in response to the Council's 'call for sites' in 2014 and 2016.
- 4.1.3 The Site has been identified as lying abreast of two LCAs: 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley and 5F Biggin Wood Clay Vale. The Site contains some of the characteristics of these two LCAs in that it comprises largely flat agricultural fields with some hedgerow boundaries and ditches but the visual and audible presence of the A1 and the existing built edge of Sandy adjacent to the Site contribute to the urban fringe character of the Site.
- 4.1.4 This report has undertaken a study of Sandy's urban morphology. In summary, the town of Sandy has a long history with the origins of the town dating back to prehistoric period. The majority of Sandy as it is known today has developed since the 1950s with significant post-war development and continued extensions to the north in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The general trend of the growth of Sandy to the north is logical considering the constraints of the River Ivel valley floodplains to the west and south, and the historical estates and more sensitive, sparsely populated landscape to the south east on the opposite side of the railway.
- 4.1.5 Upon the review of the Council's Site Assessments (2017) LLA are of the opinion that development of the entirety of the larger site NLP414 (which includes ALP319, ALP320 and NLP084) will have a limited effect on the landscape character of the area.

- 4.1.6 We are of the opinion that it is a logical extension given that the town has developed along the shallow edges of the River Ivel valley (refer Figure 6 Topography and the Urban Morphology section of this report) and the infrastructure of the A1 and railway lines. Though the land rises north of the Site beyond Highfields Farm, this land is significantly less elevated or prominent within the landscape as the Greensand Ridge. Proposed development on the Site would not be built on land that is higher than the existing settlement, as shown in analysis of topography mapping. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.
- 4.1.7 Landscape proposals including the reinstatement of historic hedgerows and drains, structural screening vegetation to the west and east, and the enhancement of the Green Infrastructure network as identified in the CBC Nature Conservation Strategy (2015, extracts in Appendix E), would provide sufficient mitigation for any effects on the landscape as a result of the proposed development as well as significant benefits to the area.
- 4.1.8 Due to the large size and shape of NLP414 in comparison to the smaller parcels ALP319, ALP320 and NLP084 when considered individually, the development of NLP414 as part of a coordinated masterplan would ensure that there is an overall vision for the northern area of Sandy. Development of the larger parcel would allow for ample space for new, softer settlement edge and to protect the most elevated part of the land north of Highfield Farm as well as housing and employment for the area in a form that complements the settlement character and pattern of Sandy.
- 4.1.9 There will be a change in the land use of the Site from agricultural field to mixed use with residential. However, this land use would not be incongruous with the adjacent land uses of residential area, industrial estates, and large infrastructural elements and the development of the Site would provide significant opportunities to improve the relationship of the built edge with the surrounding landscape.
- 4.1.10 There are constraints provided by the floodplains of the River Ivel to the south and west of Sandy. To the south east is the more sensitive landscape associated with the Greensand Ridge and the registered park and garden at Hatells Hall. The area of the land to the east of Sandy is somewhat divorced from the settlement by the railway

and the industrial estates located in between it and Sunderland Road. For these reasons, extending the town to the north is the most logical option.

4.1.11 In landscape terms, development on the Site would have a minimal effect on the landscape of the Site and the local landscape character. It is considered that these effects could be successfully mitigated by careful siting of buildings and the integration of the development within a robust landscape mitigation strategy.

4.1.12 In visual terms, development of the Site would have a minimal effect on views from the surrounding landscape given that the Site is not located in a prominent position within the landscape and would be seen within the context of existing built form that would be of similar character to the proposed type of development.

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