PARCEL NLP397, AMPTHILL ROAD, FLITWICK

Landscape & Visual Appraisal
CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 1
3 BASELINE ASSESSMENT 2
3 POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS 12
4 CONCLUSIONS 19

PLANS

ASPECT PLAN ASP1 LOCATION PLAN
ASPECT PLAN ASP2 SITE SETTING

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 VISUAL ASSESSMENT
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed by Denison Investments Ltd to undertake a Landscape Visual Appraisal relating to the potential exclusion of Parcel NLP397, Ampthill Road, Flitwick from the Green Belt for residential development. The location and context of the site is illustrated on Plan ASP1 Site Location and Plan ASP2 Site and Setting.

1.2. This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) is not a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) but seeks to introduce the principle of development into the context of the existing landscape character, visual environment and landscape related policy to assess the ability of the site to integrate future development. Within their publication ‘Site Assessment Technical Document – Appendix D: Preliminary Site Assessment Results’ (July 2017), Central Bedfordshire identifies the site as parcel NLP397. In this document the site is reported to have failed at Stage 1B of the assessment due to the potential coalescence it would cause.

1.3. The assessment of potential effects has been derived from guidance provided within GLVIA3 (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in April 2013. The methodology is contained within Appendix 1 of this document.

1.4. This assessment should be read alongside the other supporting material which accompanies this report.
2. **BASELINE ASSESSMENT**

2.1. The site is located on the northern edge of Flitwick built-up area. It consists of an overgrown and unmanaged agricultural land of approximately 3.3 hectares located west of Ampthill Road. The site is directly connected to edge of built-up areas associated with Flitwick to the south and north while its western and eastern are respectively bordered by a railway and the Ampthill Road corridor.

2.2. The site is located outside of Flitwick built-up core and is situated at approximately 2.2km from the closest Conservation Area. There are no listed buildings related to the site, the closest being Froghall Farmhouse located approximately 500 metres to the south-west of the site.

2.3. The site is located within the Green Belt and adjacent to the settlement edge of Flitwick. It is acknowledged that built form is present within the Green Belt to the north of the site, as it comprises a variety of building such as business units, school buildings or a petrol station. The location and setting of the site regarding these designations is illustrated on ASP2 Site and Setting.

2.4. The site is gently sloping, from 71m AOD in western part of the site down to 67m AOD in the eastern part of the site. At a larger landscape scale, the site is located within a small-medium scale valley and is surrounded to the north-west, south-west and south by gentle slopes on which the built-up areas of Flitwick and Ampthill are located.

2.5. The site is an overgrown and unmanaged agricultural land comprising patches of overgrown rough grassland and bounded by established mixed native hedgerows and trees along most of its boundaries. The southern boundary is made up of a combination of wire mesh, timber fencing and some vegetation structure forming the boundary between the curtilages of a number of residential properties associated with Flitwick. The site’s northern boundary is bounded by a native hedgerow, which forms a physical limit between the site and Froghall Road. Along the site’s eastern boundary, a large hedgerow and a number of hedgerow trees separate the site from Ampthill Road and affords it a
strong degree of visual and physical containment. To the west, a significant vegetation structure is located in parallel to the railway corridor and separates it from the site. The location and setting of the site is illustrated on ASP1 Site Location Plan and ASP2 Site and Setting.

2.6. The immediate context to the site is made up of residential developments to the south and east, two business parks and a petrol station to the north and a housing estate is located beyond the railway line, to the west the site.

2.7. Other than the patches of overgrown rough grassland, the internal components of the site offer little in the way of landscape value. However, the more established vegetation structure and mature hedgerow and trees along the eastern boundary provides a strong degree of containment and visual separation from Ampthill Road and associated residential properties.

2.8. There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) located within the site or its immediate setting. However, it is acknowledged that several public footpaths are located within its wider setting, such as the PRoW FP15 located beyond the railway. Other PRoW located within the setting of the site are shown on plans ASP1 and ASP2.

2.9. A network of footpaths and bridleways also run through the wider landscape to the north of Flitwick. There is also a long distance recreational route known as ‘John Bunyan (JB) Trail’ that bisects the built-up area of Flitwick to the south of the site. Refer to Plan ASP1 Site Location Plan and ASP2 Site and Setting Plan.

**Landscape Policy**

2.11. The Council is in the process of preparing a New Local Plan. A Draft Local Plan was published on July 2017 for public consultation. It sets out a proposed set of policies regarding the future for the district, identifying where new homes, jobs and infrastructure will be created and how the countryside will be protected.

2.12. As it is subject to new development, the site is covered by a number of landscape related policies in the Adopted Core Strategy and Development Management Document:

**Core Strategy Policies**

- Policy CS14: High Quality Development
- Policy CS16: Landscape and Woodland
- Policy CS17: Green Infrastructure
- Policy CS18: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

**Development Management Policies**

- Policy DM4: Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes
- Policy DM6: Development Within Green Belt Infill Boundaries
- Policy DM14: Landscape and Woodland
- Policy DM15: Biodiversity
- Policy DM16: Green Infrastructure
- Policy DM17: Accessible Greenspaces

2.13. Although not formally adopted yet, the Draft Local Plan sets out several policies that are considered to be relevant in terms of landscape character and setting. These policies are the following:

- Policy EE1: Green Infrastructure
- Policy EE2: Enhancing Biodiversity
- Policy EE3: Nature Conservation
- Policy EE4: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- Policy EE5: Landscape Character and Value
Policy EE6: Tranquillity
Policy EE11: Public Rights of Way
Policy EE12: Outdoor sport, leisure and open space

2.14. The site is situated outside the defined Settlement Envelope for Flitwick and within the Green Belt. This designation is covered by several saved policies in the adopted Core Strategy (July 2008) and Draft New Local Plan (June 2017).

2.15. Policy DM4 – Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes:
“(…) Where no land is available within the settlement, a site adjacent to the settlement may be granted planning permission. Such development should make the best use of available land and lead to more sustainable communities”.

2.16. Policy DM6 – Development Within Green Belt Infill Boundaries:
“The Council will consider infill development acceptable in principle within the defined Green Belt Infill Boundaries. Particular attention will be paid to assessing the quality of development proposed and the likely impact on the character of the settlement and its surroundings”.

Landscape Character

2.17. At national level, the site is located in the centre of the Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge (NCA90). This assessment provides a useful introduction to the landscape of the region but is too broad to apply at a more site-specific level.

2.18. Central Bedfordshire Council Landscape Character Assessment identifies the site as being located within the Greensand Valley Character Area, which has the following key characteristics:

“The small-medium scale valleys of the River Flit and River Ouzel.”
• Surrounded largely by the enclosing landform of the Wooded Greensand Ridge.
• Underlying solid geology of Lower Greensand with alluvium and drift deposits of valley gravels associated with the Rivers.
• Rivers and associated wetland sites are important for biodiversity.
• Mixed woodland blocks and shelterbelts increase the sense of enclosure.
• Field and roadside boundaries are variable ranging from mature shelterbelts to scrubby degraded margins”.

2.19. The Greensand Valley Character Area is subdivided into two landscape character types, which are the Flit Greensand Valley (7A) and the Ouzel Greensand Valley (7B). The landscape character assessment identified the site within the Flit Greensand Valley (7A) Landscape Character Type, which has the following key characteristics:

• “A medium scale valley cutting through, the diagonal band of Greensand with small areas of Oxford Clay and Gault Clay. Much of the valley is overlain by alluvium/peat with narrow terraces of river gravel. A mostly open landscape.
• Elevation ranges from 40m AOD - 85m AOD - becoming more elevated in the west where the valley abuts Mid Greensand Ridge (6b) and Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills (8a). The ridge provides a prominent backdrop and strong wooded context to the valley.
• Flitwick Moor SSSI valley mire system – alkaline fen and acid springs. The areas of peat are an archaeological resource.
• The valley was formerly the location for a number of traditional industries with a series of water mills (only one at Flitwick remains).
• Historic interest includes significant late prehistoric and Roman sites in upper reaches, plus medieval castles at Flitwick and Cainhoe.
• Flitwick Manor and Chicksands Priory are listed as Grade II parklands on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.
• Low lying areas of riverside farmland, including areas of improved pasture (with sheep, cattle and horses grazing), wet meadow and arable fields.
• Variable field and roadside boundaries - ranging from mature shelterbelts to scrubby degraded margins, sometimes also marked by drainage channels.
• Bordered by the urban areas of Flitwick and Ampthill as well as the smaller settlements of Shefford and Clophill. The presence of housing on the edge of the valley gives the impression that it is more settled than it is.
• At Chicksands Priory Estate - the British Intelligence and Security Centre is located on a former American military base (largely inaccessible and hidden from view).
• The A507 runs parallel to and crosses the River Flit - and dominates the valley both visually and audibly. Pedestrian steps and bridges crossing over the road are conspicuous. A busy roundabout connects the A507 to the A6 close to the settlement of Clophill.
• The small hamlet of Water End (characterised by red brick, thatch, weatherboarding and clay tiles) and the southern edge of Clophill.
• Two areas of ancient woodland: Upper Alders and Campton Plantation. A mostly open landscape but small areas of wet woodland are present; willows/ alders often line ditches.
• Past and present mineral extraction operations (fullers earth) - a restored quarry site, southeast of Clophill, forms a small complex of ponds and fringing vegetation.
• Scattered farmsteads occur in the west - where the valley widens and an arable land use dominates. Locally distinctive farm buildings occur in the area between Maulden and the Flit - many farms traditionally having onion lofts and sheds - although few now remain."
2.20. At a more site-specific level, Aspect has undertaken an assessment of the landscape character of the site and its immediate setting. This assessment identifies that the site is located within a settlement fringe landscape, being adjacent to existing built-up areas. The established vegetation structure lining almost entirely the site boundaries, including the dense vegetation belt along Ampthill Road, creates a robust edge to the site and creates a strong degree of separation between the site and its setting. The proximity of existing residential development to the south, east and the housing estate located to the west of the railway gives an urban edge character to the site. The extent of vegetation within the context of the site, including the large native hedgerow in parallel to Ampthill Road affords a strong degree of physical and visual containment to the site, restricting views of the site to framed views of boundary vegetation.

2.21. In terms of landscape quality, it is considered that the site is influenced by its proximity to the existing urban edge. The established vegetation associated with the site and its immediate context, coupled with the sites topography ensures that the site is contained the wider setting and as such does not contribute to the scenic quality of the area. There are no features associated with the site that are considered rare or representative in landscape terms. In terms of recreation value, it is acknowledged that the site is not publicly accessible and as such it is considered that the recreational value is low. There are no known historic associations with the site or its immediate setting. The site is covered by a Green Belt designation, however, this is a planning designation which has no weight in terms of landscape value. To that end, it is considered that the value of the site is low.

2.22. The site is distinctly separate from the Green Belt area that extends to the west and east and which has limited intervisibility with the site. The site’s localised setting is already largely developed and urbanised to the north, west, south, south-west and south-east. It is also acknowledged that the land adjacent to the northern site boundary will soon be redeveloped to provide a residential care home of 75 bedrooms (CB/15/3693/FULL). It is considered that the value of the site is low, based on the above analysis. In terms of susceptibility to change as a
result of residential development, it is considered that the settlement edge landscape, with the existing built edge, together with the established vegetation structure and the presence of urbanising features, means that the site has some capacity to accommodate change. It is considered that the site has a medium susceptibility to change as result of sensitively designed residential development. To that end, it is considered that the localised landscape character, in which the site is set, is of low sensitivity.

Visual Environment

2.23. A visual assessment of the site and its setting has been undertaken and a viewpoint local plan and a series of photographs are included within Appendix 1 that illustrate the site within its setting. The photographs have been taken in accordance with published guidance from the Landscape Institute, from publicly accessible locations.

2.24. Viewpoint 1 is taken looking south-east from Froghall Road, approximately 10 metres to the north of the site. This views illustrates the relationship between the site and the built-up area of Flitwick, which forms a backdrop to the site. In the foreground, a low native hedgerow and mature trees are visible, while the existing built form associated with the Chinook curtilage can be identified in the middle ground. This built form, together with the properties associated with the built-up area of Flitwick, have an urbanising influence on the site. As a consequence, the site can be described as having a settlement fringe character.

2.25. Viewpoint 2 is also taken from Froghall Road, in front of the properties associated with Doolittle Yard Business Park. This viewpoint illustrates the existing open character between the settlement of Flitwick and Ampthill, while the north-western part of the site contributes to the sense of openness. The extent of the vegetation structure present along Froghall Road on the approach to the site. The vegetation present along the road is made of dense shrubs and tall trees that restrict the views onto the site’s southern part and affords therefore a strong degree of separation and visual containment. It is acknowledged that the northern-western part of the site is visible from this viewpoint due to the limited extent of the vegetation structure lining Froghall Road.
2.26. Viewpoint 3 is taken from The Meadows housing estate and looks north-west towards the site, which is visible through the wire mesh and timber fencing lining its southern boundary. In the background, the presence of a mature tree belt provides a strong degree of separation between the site and the built form associated with Chinook and Doolittle Yard, while the Froghall Road corridor can be identified.

2.27. Viewpoint 4 is taken looking north-west from Ampthill Road and shows that a significant vegetation structure is present along the site’s eastern boundary and provides a strong degree of visual containment to the site’s north-eastern part. However, the site’s south-eastern corner is visible beyond the wired mesh and timber fencing lining it due to the limited extent of the vegetation in that location.

2.28. Viewpoint 5 is also taken from Ampthill Road, approximately 15 metres to the east of the site and is looking south-east. Along the site’s eastern boundary, the existing vegetation structure made of mature trees forms a robust green edge and affords a strong degree of visual and physical containment to the site. In the background, the road corridor extends towards the built-up core of Flitwick, while the chimneys of some properties associated with Ampthill Road are visible. Assuming that the existing vegetation structure would be retained as part of a proposed residential development, it is considered that the residential proposals would not be visible if carefully designed.

2.29. Viewpoint 6 is taken approximately 2 metres to the south-east of the site’s south-eastern corner. From this location, the site is visible through the wired mesh and timber fencing. In the background, the railway line can be identified, as well as the Froghall Road corridor. To the north, the tree belt lining the site boundary afford a strong degree of separation between the site and the properties associated with Chinook and Doolittle Yard, as none of them is visible through the dense vegetation structure.
3. Potential Landscape and Visual Effects

3.1. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition (GLVIA3) prescribes the need for a site assessment to determine whether there are physical qualities or components of the site of value.

3.2. In terms of landscape quality, it is considered that the site is influenced by its proximity to the existing settlement edge, detracting from the remoteness and tranquillity of the site. The established vegetation associated with the site and its immediate context, coupled with the site's topography ensures that the site is not apparent within the wider setting and as such does not contribute to the scenic quality of the area. There are no features associated with the site that are considered rare or representative in landscape terms. The site is not publicly accessible and as such it is considered that its recreational value is low. There are no known historic associations with the site or its immediate setting. It is acknowledged that the site is located within the Green Belt, however, as the Green Belt is a planning designation this has no weight in terms of landscape value. Therefore, it is considered that the value of the site is low.

3.3. It is acknowledged that the development of this site for residential use would extend built form into previously undeveloped field forming part of a gap between the existing built-up areas of Flitwick and Ampthill. The site is however well related to the existing settlement edge of Flitwick and is surrounded by a railway and three road corridors which have an urbanising influence on it. Besides, the settlement of Doolittle Yard, the curtilage of Chinook and a land adjacent that will soon be redeveloped to provide a residential care home (CB/15/3693/FULL) are adjacent to the site northern boundary and give an example of existing developments within this part of the Green Belt.

Landscape Related Policy

3.4. The context of the immediate site setting is already characterised by the neighbouring built form associated with Flitwick, Chinook, Doolittle Mill and Doolittle Yard Business Parks. The retention and reinforcement of
the existing boundary vegetation with additional planting and the implementation of internal planting where appropriate will ensure that a robust green edge to the site is maintained. The introduction of a sensitively designed scheme could be integrated without significant harm to the existing key characteristics of the sites setting. The development of the site would be perceived within the context of existing residential properties, road corridors and other urbanising features ensuring that it is not introducing new or alien components into the fabric of the landscape. The use of a considered and appropriate palette of materials, which have been informed by the local vernacular will ensure that the proposed residential development can be integrated into its setting. The incorporation of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping will also assist the integration of the proposals creating a high-quality environment in which to live.

3.5. It is therefore considered that the proposed development of the site for residential use can be integrated without significant harm to the existing landscape character of the site and its localised and wider setting.

Visual Environment

3.6. Within the context of the existing visual environment, it is considered that the site can integrate appropriately designed residential development without compromising the amenities or qualities of the localised setting. As shown within the visual assessment, views of the site are localised, with the primary receptors being nearby residential dwellings and road users. Within these views, the site is not readily apparent, with the boundary vegetation affording a degree of visual and physical containment to the site. It is considered that there are no long-distance views of the site, due to the strong degree of containment afforded to the site by the built-up area of Flitwick and low-lying nature of the site. The presence of the established vegetation cover within the localised site context and the retention of boundary trees and hedgerows where appropriate will ensure that carefully designed built form will not appear prominent or overbearing. The retention and enhancement of the landscaped boundaries will soften the proposed residential development and assist in the integration of the built form. The retention of these features will also ensure that any built form is
afforded an appropriate set back from the corridors of Ampthill Road and Froghall Road.

3.7. Dedicating the north-eastern part of the site to a permanent public open space with a strong green strategy will allow preserving an appropriate buffer and maintaining a sense of openness between the settlements of Flitwick and Ampthill and preventing their coalescence.

3.8. Therefore, it is considered that sensitively designed proposals can be integrated without significant harm to the visual environment and related receptors. Any views of the proposed residential development would be highly localised and seen within the context of existing built form.

Review of Site Allocation within Emerging Local Plan Process

3.9. The site is assessed in the Central Bedfordshire ‘Site Assessment Technical Document – Appendix D: Preliminary Site Assessment Results’ (July 2017). The above-mentioned document reports that the site has failed at the Stage 1B of their assessment due to the potential coalescence it would cause between the settlements of Flitwick and Ampthill.

3.10. The site is located within a small portion of the Green Belt. Following the appraisal undertaken by Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd, it is considered that the scale of the site would be sufficient to provide appropriate green buffers. In that regard, the north-western part of the site is identified as an area where a robust landscape strategy should be implemented (refer to Viewpoint 2). Assuming that this area would be dedicated to a permanent public open space (Refer to Plan ASP2) incorporating a strong green strategy, the site would preserve an appropriate buffer. Furthermore, the landscape proposals associated with this area would allow the site self-containment and mitigate the views towards the proposals as perceived from Froghall Road.

3.11. It is therefore considered that, if designed appropriately, the development of the site would constitute a logical urban extension to the settlement and would not contribute to the coalescence of Flitwick and Ampthill. The site presents opportunities to accommodate a carefully
designed residential development within the localised context of the northern part of Flitwick that can be integrated without harm to the wider landscape setting. Therefore, from a landscape perspective, it is considered that the site could accommodate a sensitively designed development.

Green Belt Review

3.12. As identified within section 2 of this report, the site is located within the Green Belt. Within the NPPF, Paragraph 80 identifies that the Green Belt serves five purposes. These are outlined as being:

- “to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land”.

3.13. In addition, Paragraph 85 states that “When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:

- “ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- where necessary, identify in their plans areas of ‘safeguarded land’ between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;
- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development;
• satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
• define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.”

3.14. It is considered that the proposed development of the site would form a logical extension to Flitwick, with existing development located to the north, west, south, south-west and south-east of the site. Existing residential development to the south and south-east of the site already forms a notable urbanising feature within the site’s localised and wider setting to the west, and any proposed development would be seen within this context. The proposed development would not breach the current limits to Ampthill formed by the A507 and Froghall Road corridors within the site’s localised context. These act as suitable defensible Green Belt boundaries.

3.15. Alongside any proposed development, it is considered that substantial offsets will be provided to existing field boundaries and tree belts which already afford a strong degree of containment to the site from the wider setting to the west. Inclusion of robust landscape buffers, woodland blocks and open space will be provided where breaks in boundary vegetation occur. Opportunities exist to create a permanent public open space with treebelts in the site’s north-western corner along Froghall Road, which would create an enduring Green Belt boundary. The proposals would accord with the NPPF paragraphs 85 and 80, ensuring boundaries are redefined utilising physical and permanent features such as the treebelts and roads with landscape buffers to define the new Green Belt edge. A suitable undeveloped ‘gap’ would be maintained between the redefined Green Belt edge and existing settlements of Flitwick and Ampthill, as illustrated by Viewpoint 2 within Appendix 1. Proposals would ensure that the separate settlements within the site’s localised and wider context will not merge through the use of the physical and permanent features as well as maintaining a substantial undeveloped ‘gap’, and development of the site would therefore not result in coalescence. This also ensures that the setting and separate characters of the settlements are preserved.
3.16. The third purpose of the Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. New development proposals will inevitably require some green field land, however the site is not of particularly high landscape value, is influenced by its urban fringe setting and is well contained by adjoining residential development. It is considered that the extent of mature vegetation within the site’s localised and wider setting would ensure that any impact upon the wider countryside as a result of development would be localised. It is considered that whilst proposed development of the site would develop some green field agricultural land on the edge of Flitwick, it would not represent a significant encroachment into the countryside, being contained by the existing urbanising features that are already characterised by the urban edge, and the opportunities that are provided to form a new logical Green Belt boundary along the north-western boundary of the site through reinforced and new planting.

3.17. In terms of the fourth purpose, this is not considered relevant for this particular site. In terms of the fifth purpose of Green Belts to assist in urban regeneration, at a prima facie level it seems that the use of a Green Belt site is likely to discourage rather than encourage the use of derelict and other urban land. However, Councils are struggling to meet development targets on previously developed land alone and as such some green field sites of lower landscape value need to be considered particularly in terms of the opportunity to meet housing needs and provide a comprehensive scheme with wider social and economic benefits. Consequently, it is considered that the fifth purpose of Green Belts is not being materially compromised by any proposed development within the site.

3.18. It is therefore considered that the exclusion of the site from Green Belt will not significantly affect the characteristics of the surrounding Green Belt designation.

3.19. While it is acknowledged that the development of this site would extend built form into greenfield land, the site is well related to the existing urban edge, with development to the north, west, south, south-west and south-east with a number of urbanising influences extending to the
south. The site presents opportunities to provide sustainable land for residential use within the localised context of the northern settlement edge of Flitwick that can be integrated without harm to the wider landscape setting or Green Belt purposes. Opportunities exist for a redefined Green Belt boundary that could create a more robust and enduring Green Belt edge through the use of treebelt planting along the north-western site boundary. It is considered that development of the site for residential uses comply with the aims and objectives of the NPPF, and would not significantly affect the characteristics of the surrounding Green Belt designation. It is therefore considered that the site could be developed in accordance with landscape policies and it is a suitable site in landscape and visual terms for residential development.
4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd have received instruction on behalf of Denison Investments Ltd to undertake an initial Landscape and Visual Appraisal relating to the potential for residential development and Green Belt release on land off Ampthill Road, Flitwick. The site is located directly adjacent to the northern built up edge of Flitwick, with existing development to the north, west, south, south-west and south-east.

4.2. It is acknowledged that the development of this site would extend built form into greenfield land, however the site is well related to the existing urban edge, with development to the north, west, south, south-west and south-east with a number of urbanising influences extending to the south. The site presents opportunities to provide sustainable land for residential use within the localised context of the northern settlement edge of Flitwick that can be integrated without harm to the wider landscape setting or Green Belt purposes. Opportunities exist for a redefined Green Belt boundary that could create a more robust and enduring Green Belt edge through the use of treebelt planting along the north-western site boundary. It is considered that development of the site for residential uses comply with the aims and objectives of the NPPF, and would not significantly affect the characteristics of the surrounding Green Belt designation. It is therefore considered that the site could be developed in accordance with the adopted and emerging policies of the Local Plan.

4.3. In terms of landscape quality, it is considered that the site is influenced by its proximity to the settlement edge of Flitwick. The established vegetation associated with the site and its immediate context, coupled with the site’s topography ensures that views of the site from the wider setting will be limited and as such the site does not contribute to the scenic quality of the area. There are no features associated with the site that are considered rare or representative in landscape terms. The site is not publicly accessible and as such it is considered that the recreational value is low. There are no known historic or literary associations with the site or its immediate setting. It is acknowledged that the site is located within an area designated as Green Belt,
however, this designation is planning related and has no weight in terms of landscape value. To that end, it is considered that the value of the site is low.

4.4. The context of the immediate site setting is already characterised by the neighbouring built form associated with Flitwick, Doolittle Yard and Mill Business Parks and the Chinook curtilage. It is also acknowledged that the land adjacent to the northern site boundary will soon be redeveloped to provide a residential care home (CB/15/3693/FULL) which will introduce new urbanising components into the site's immediate setting. The retention and reinforcement of the existing boundary planting and internal planting where appropriate will ensure that a robust green edge to the site is maintained or implemented where necessary and will effectively screen the views from its immediate setting.

4.5. Within their publication ‘Site Assessment Technical Document – Appendix D: Preliminary Site Assessment Results’ (July 2017), Central Bedfordshire identifies the site as parcel NLP397. In this document the site is reported to have failed at the Stage 1B of the assessment due to the potential coalescence it would cause. Following this appraisal, Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd disagree with the findings of this assessment and consider that the site is capable of accommodating residential development and would not cause coalescence between the settlements of Flitwick and Ampthill by dedicating the north-eastern part of the site to a permanent public open space with a strong green strategy will allow preserving an appropriate buffer and maintaining a sense of openness between the settlements of Flitwick and Ampthill and preventing their coalescence.

4.6. The use of an appropriate palette of materials and a carefully considered layout will ensure that the proposed development can be integrated in this location and appear as a natural addition to the existing urban grain. Views of the proposed development will also be localised and will not give rise to significant adverse effects. Currently views towards the site are characterised by a degree of built form associated with its immediate setting. The proposed development will not introduce new components that would appear alien or out of
character within the context of these views and will not appear dominant or overbearing within the context of the adjoining street scenery.

4.7. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development of the site for residential development can be supported from a landscape and visual context and the site would be appropriate to accommodate development of this nature.
APPENDIX 1

VISUAL ASSESSMENT
N.B. IMAGES TO ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera with 50mm lens in line with best practice and current guidance. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and when printed at A2, should be viewed at a distance of 330mm curved through the same radius in order to correctly illustrate the existing landscape context. To ensure considered judgements are accurately assessed, images should not be substituted for visiting the viewpoint.
N.B. IMAGES TO ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera with 50mm lens in line with best practice and current guidance. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 65° and when printed at A2, should be viewed at a distance of 330mm curved through the same radius in order to correctly illustrate the existing landscape context. To ensure considered judgements are accurately assessed, images should not be substituted for visiting the viewpoint.
Vegetation structure along a steep slope adjacent to visual containment of the site on the eastern side.

Railway line forming a backdrop to the site.

Site visible through fencing associated with the south eastern corner.

Froghall Road corridor.

Vegetation structure lining most of the site's northern boundary.

N.B. IMAGES TO ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera with 35mm lens in line with best practice and current guidance. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 61° and when printed at A2, should be viewed at a distance of 330mm curved through the same radius in order to correctly illustrate the existing landscape context. To ensure considered judgements are accurately assessed, images should not be substituted for visiting the viewpoint.