

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

Land at Carpenders Park, Watford

On behalf of Burlington Property Group Limited

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1. Introduction.

- 1.1. Pegasus Group have been commissioned by Burlington Property Group Limited to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in support of an outline planning application on a 12.7ha Site at Land at Carpenders Park, Watford shown on **Figure 1: Site Location Plan**. The proposed development is an outline planning application with all matters reserved, other than principal means of access from Oxhey Lane, for the construction of up to 257 residential dwellings and housing with care, together with the provision of open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure (see **Appendix 1: Illustrative Masterplan**).
- 1.2. An initial desk-top study was carried out to review a range of published information relating to the Site and its context, landscape designations, published landscape character assessments and the accompanying guidance. A Site visit was carried out in February 2025 to review the findings of the desktop study and to determine the extent of the visual influence of the Site.
- 1.3. The main objectives of the LVIA are:
 - To describe the landscape character of the Site and its surroundings, evaluate its sensitivity to change and, taking into account the magnitude of change, assess the effect that the proposal would have on the landscape character.
 - To identify potential visual receptors (i.e. people who would be able to see the development), evaluate their sensitivity to change and, taking into account the magnitude of change, assess the effect that the proposal would have on visual amenity. A residential visual amenity study is excluded from this LVIA, noting that appropriate privacy distances between existing properties and new built development would be maintained.
 - To identify landscape elements associated with the Site, evaluate their sensitivity to change and, taking into account the magnitude of change, assess the effect the proposals would have on landscape elements.
- 1.4. As illustrated on the **Environmental Designations Plan (Figure 2)** the Site lies outside of any statutory or local/non-statutory landscape designations but is located within the Green Belt, and a small section within the western edge of the Site is identified as a Local Wildlife Site within the Local Plan.
- 1.5. This LVIA should be read in conjunction with the supporting Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement (DAS). The **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** is included at **Appendix 3**.

Assessment Approach and Methodology.

- 1.6. This LVIA assesses the operational stage of the proposed development only, as the construction stage is short and temporary in duration. The effects are therefore assessed at Year 1, immediately post-completion, and at Year 15 to consider the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures.
- 1.7. A preliminary 3km radii study area has been initially identified to review the baseline condition and planning policies that may be relevant to the proposed development. This study area captures the nearby settlements and publicly accessible locations that may offer views of or towards the Site.
- 1.8. The LVIA has been undertaken with regard to the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) (hereafter referred to as GLVIA3) – Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013);
- Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) – Landscape Institute (August 2024);
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment – Natural England (2014);
- An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management – Natural England (2019);
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note O6/19 – Landscape Institute (2019); and
- Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations, Technical Guidance Note O2/21 – Landscape Institute (2021).

1.9. The **Detailed Methodology** for this LVIA is provided at **Appendix 2**.

1.10. The GLVIA3 states in paragraph 1.1 that:

“...Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.”¹

1.11. GLVIA3 also states in paragraph 1.17 that when identifying landscape and visual effects there:

“...is a need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of the likely effects. Judgement needs to be exercised at all stages in terms of the scale of investigation that is appropriate and proportional.”²

1.12. GLVIA3 also recognises in paragraph 2.23 that:

“...professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements”³

Limitations to the Assessment

1.13. In undertaking the landscape and visual assessment in relation to the proposed development, there are limitations and constraints affecting the outputs from this work. These include:

- The baseline assessment has been based on information readily available at the time of undertaking the assessment.
- Every effort has been made to ensure that the photographs and their locations represent a variety of receptors and views from a range of distances and directions.

¹ Paragraph 1.1, Page 4, GLVIA3rd Edition

² Paragraph 1.17, Page 9, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

³ Paragraph 2.23, Page 21, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

- Due to the timing of instruction and the limited potential for views of the proposed development on the Site due to the flat topography and surrounding enclosure by built development and trees, publicly accessible viewpoint locations were selected based on professional judgement and were not formally consulted upon with the Local Planning Authority.
- The assessed development is based on planning application drawings that accompany the planning application including the **Illustrative Masterplan** as shown at **Appendix 1**, and the **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** as shown at **Appendix 3**, and is assessed on the assumption that the proposals are delivered in line with these drawings including estimated conservative growth of existing and proposed planting.

1.14. The focus of this report is on the landscape and visual effects arising from the proposals; however, whilst effects on cultural heritage and ecology are beyond the scope of this LVIA, heritage assets and nature conservation designations in the study area are shown on **Environmental Designations Plan** at **Figure 2** as they have the potential to inform considerations of landscape value.

Nature of Effect

1.15. The degree of landscape or visual effect is identified by means of a descriptive scale as per the GLVIA 3rd Edition guidance. However, it is also necessary to consider the nature of the landscape and visual effects. GLVIA 3 assists on this point noting paragraph 5.37 concerning landscape effects which states that:

“One of the more challenging issues is deciding whether the landscape effects should be categorised as positive or negative. It is also possible for effects to be neutral in their consequences for the landscape. An informed professional judgement should be made about this, and the criteria used in reaching the judgement should be clearly stated. They might include, but should not be restricted to:

- ***The degree to which the proposal fits with existing character.***
- ***The contribution to the landscape that the development may make its own right, usually by virtue of good design, even if it is in contrast to existing character.***
- ***The importance of perceptions of landscape is emphasised by the European Landscape Convention, and others may of course hold different opinions on whether the effects are positive or negative, but this is not a reason to avoid making this judgement, which will ultimately be weighed against the opinions of others in the decision making process.”***

1.16. A precautionary approach is applied to this LVIA that assumes all landscape and visual effects are considered to be negative or adverse unless otherwise stated.

2. Site Location and Description.

- 2.1. Carpenders Park is a suburb of Watford, within the Three Rivers district of Hertfordshire, and is located approximately 4km southeast of Watford and 22km northwest from the centre of London.
- 2.2. The Site covers 12.7ha of land located to the eastern edge of Carpenders Park to the immediate east of the A4008 Oxhey Lane, which would accommodate the vehicular access point into the development. The Site comprises three main fields of grassland bound by belts of trees. There is one Public Right of Way, footpath ref 'Watford Rural 013' which passes broadly east to west through the northern section of the Site. Carpenders Park Care Home is a modern, 3-storey building off Oxhey Lane immediately adjacent to the western boundary, with existing residential development to the west beyond the road. Properties generally back onto the A4008, and those along Carpenders Avenue to the northwest of the Site are perpendicular to the Site and are mostly bungalows. There are mature hedgerows flanking both the eastern side of Oxhey Road along the Site's western boundary, and along the western side of the road along the boundary of the rear gardens of properties along Five Fields Close, Wellington Close and Hangar Ruding which back onto the road. The northern boundary is defined by a hedgerow with mature trees, with the eastern boundary enclosed by mature trees with woodland at Merry Hill nature reserve beyond. The southern boundary is currently open to the field parcel to the south, however there are mature trees with scrub along the course of Hartsbourne Stream between 20–70m south of the boundary which encloses the Site.
- 2.3. Existing tree and hedgerow vegetation associated with the Site includes overgrown hedgerows forming belts of blackthorn scrub and mature trees that follow the internal field boundaries, and along the boundaries with the A4008 Oxhey Lane to the west. There are mature trees along the eastern boundary with young woodland at Merry Hill to the eastern boundary. A tree survey was carried out in November 2024 by ACD Environmental which identified that tree cover within the Site is predominantly Oak trees along the northern, eastern and western boundary, with overgrown Blackthorn scrub and brambles having overtaken internal hedgerows. The survey identified 27 Category A – 'high' value trees, 30 Category B 'Moderate' value trees, with 19 individual trees and 3 tree groups of Category C 'Low' value.
- 2.4. An initial review by Ecology Solutions in November 2024 concluded the fields within the Site comprise other neutral grassland which is tall and tussocky. The species composition is not overly diverse, however the grassland and trees throughout the Site are identified as having habitat potential for reptiles, bats and water voles with the watercourse to the south.
- 2.5. The Site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory landscape protection designations, as illustrated in **Figure 2: Environmental Designations Plan**. The Site is, however, located within the metropolitan Green Belt, and the Watling Chase community forest, which covers approximately 18,840 ha of land within Hertfordshire and the northern fringe of London. There are no listed buildings or structures on or immediately adjoining the Site, the closest of which is approximately 740m to the southeast including a 'COAL DUTY BOUNDARY POST OUTSIDE NUMBER 1 (THE HOLLIES)' and a 'LONDON COAL DUTY MARKER ON COUNTY BOUNDARY IMMEDIATELY NORTH WEST OF BURNT OAK FARM'. Carpenders Park has no Conservation Area, and the closest is the 'Brookshill Drive and Grimsdyke Estate' Conservation Area within Harrow, approximately 900m to the southeast. Due to the intervening-built form and belts of woodland and mature hedgerows and trees along the Site and surrounding field boundaries, there is no intervisibility of the Site with the listed buildings or surrounding conservation areas.

- 2.6. There are a range of community facilities within Carpenders Park and South Oxhey west of the railway line, including various primary and secondary schools, pre-schools, grocery stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, leisure centres, parks, garden centres and offering railway links into London city centre, and further connections north with the overground via Watford Junction.
- 2.7. The adjacent residential development at Carpenders Park is located on land situated between 60–100m AOD, rising towards the eastern and western edges of the settlement (**Figure 3: Topography Plan**). High points in the immediate surroundings reach over 130m AOD approximately 2.5km to the west at Eastbury and reaching 150m AOD approximately 2km to the northeast at Bushey Heath.
- 2.8. The landform of the Site itself is between 77–104m AOD, with the lowest point at approximately 77m AOD along the southern boundary, up to 104m AOD along the northeastern boundary adjacent to Merry Wood. A localised low point along the course of Hartsbourne Stream is located to the south of the Site, however there are no waterbodies or watercourses within the Site itself.

3. Description of Proposals.

3.1. The **Illustrative Masterplan** (prepared by Pegasus Group Ltd) is contained at **Appendix 1** and the **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** is included as **Appendix 3**. At a macro level, the proposed green infrastructure would ensure that the proposed development is accessible, to ensure that it would be an attractive place to live, manage surface water attenuation in a sustainable way, create new opportunities to enhance habitats for local wildlife and facilitate improved opportunities for recreation. The key new landscape features proposed are:

- A visually attractive and multi-faceted area of public open space to the northern section of the Site, providing a range of opportunities for play and informal outdoor recreation and gateway into the Site from the Oxhey Lane,
- A landscape-led approach to the Site layout which allows for green infrastructure corridors throughout the development. This comprises landscape buffers around the Site boundary to retain existing trees with species rich grassland margins, native hedgerow and tree planting throughout areas of public open space and tree-lined streets throughout the development, and
- Sustainable urban drainage systems to manage surface water runoff that include attenuation basins to the northern and southern areas of open space, enriched with appropriate native wetland planting.

3.1. In addition to the Green Infrastructure elements, the following proposals are integrated within the public open space on the Site:

- A new circular pedestrian route around the perimeter of the Site through green corridors to provide connections between the Site, Oxhey Lane and the existing Public Right of Way network passing through the Site along the northern boundary (ref 'Watford Rural O13').
- New equipped play space catering to a variety of age ranges with a range of both naturalistic and equipped play equipment within the Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) in the northern area of public open space, and
- Locally distinctive tree planting respects local character and adds to the sense of place.

3.2. The proposed development could deliver a cohesive and high-quality green infrastructure network that would:

- Sustainably manage surface water runoff improving resilience to climate change, while enhancing visual amenity and creating additional opportunities for biodiversity,
- Encourage and promote healthy and active lifestyles through the provision of high-quality, safe, and accessible open spaces for informal recreation and play for all ages and abilities,
- Enhance pedestrian connectivity to promote and facilitate sustainable travel movements,
- Respect local landscape character to enhance visual amenity and promote a sense of place, and

- Create new opportunities for biodiversity through the integration and establishment of a variety of new habitats providing foraging, nesting, and shelter to a range of species.

3.3. The green infrastructure could deliver a broad range of benefits considered enhancement, which could include:

- Protecting and enhancing landscape character and biodiversity by implementing in-keeping landscape improvements and appropriate management practices to deliver biodiversity gain and overall enhancement to the landscape resource of the Site,
- Improving physical and mental health and social well-being by creating good quality green spaces and opportunities for relaxation and health, physical activity as well as providing the overall built infrastructure necessary to ensure people can run, walk, cycle and play,
- Investment in the green infrastructure network which could provide multi-functional open spaces and parks for the benefit of local people, wildlife, and the environment,
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation through increased tree cover for natural air-cooling and CO₂ absorption and sustainable surface water management features,
- Improving the quality of place by using the natural environment to create high-quality living and recreational environments for people to live,
- Creating an attractive setting to new and existing residential areas, and
- Sustaining economic growth and investment through high-quality environments of comparative location advantages to attract and retain business locally.

3.4. The iterative design of the scheme has been landscape-led and considered the opportunities to deliver strategic hedgerow, tree and woodland planting that would minimise the visibility of the built elements of the scheme from the adjacent settlement and wider countryside. The indicative design could deliver the following:

- Existing trees to be retained where possible.
- Existing Blackthorn scrub associated within the overgrown hedgerows to be brought under management, with belts of blackthorn scrub retained and maintained to approximately 5m width and height, with infill planting where necessary and new native shrub planting alongside the scrub to enhance species diversity and provide visual amenity for residents. Infill planting to contain native species reflective of species existing within the Site.
- Proposed new development to be offset from the Site boundary, creating green corridors for native woodland, shrub and individual tree planting to soften views of new built form from the surrounding context,
- Native hedgerow planting proposed along the northern and western edge of new built form in the northern parcel, softening potential views of the new buildings and defining the interface with the public open space,
- Existing boundary vegetation to be supplemented with new woodland, hedgerows, native shrub and individual tree planting, including:

- Native hedgerow planting along the western boundary adjacent to the A4008 Oxhey Lane, to bolster the existing vegetation along the boundary to reflect existing views from along the road, and assist in mitigating views from points along the road and within the settlement to the immediate west,
 - Native shrub and larger individual native tree planting bolstering the belts of retained blackthorn scrub forming green corridors through the development parcels and along the western boundary adjacent to the care home and Oxhey Lane for more immediate visual softening of new built form from points to the west,
 - A minimum of 15m landscape buffer retained adjacent to the eastern boundary to protect the existing trees along the boundary and within Merry Hill beyond, allowing for circular footpath routes around the perimeter of the Site and additional tree planting where possible to further filter potential views of new buildings,
 - A large area of public open space within the northern parcel of the Site with native woodland planting, scattered individual native tree planting, fruit trees of local provenance set within a community orchard with wildflower meadow grassland and mown footpath routes, with an equipped play space enhanced with ornamental shrub planting and feature trees
 - Attenuation basin adjacent to the northwestern boundary bolstered with native shrub planting and wetland trees with marginal and aquatic planting to the banks,
 - New native shrub and tree planting within the area of open space to the southeastern edge of the Site and around the attenuation basin, which helps to frame views towards the open spaces and provide an attractive setting to the development, while providing filtering effects to views of the proposed dwellings from points to the south.
- New vehicular access road and internal streets would be tree-lined, with larger stature, extra heavy standard trees where appropriate, breaking up the new built form and helping to integrate the new development into the existing settlement edge context.

4. Effect on Landscape Elements.

- 4.1. The following section assesses the effects upon the landscape elements that currently characterise the Site. It considers the introduction of the new landscape elements as indicated on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan, with any indicative measures clearly identified.

Land Cover.

- 4.2. The Site covers 12.7ha and is currently privately owned, comprising rough grassland with overgrown hedgerows forming belts of blackthorn and bramble scrub and mature trees around field boundaries. The land cover within the locality comprises several larger sized fields to the east of Oxhey Road south of the Site, with those to the north used for arable agriculture. The Site field parcels are typical in their size, however the surrounding field parcels are not overgrown or unmanaged. The Site with its overgrown nature is reflective of Merry Hill wood to the east, with its expanses of young woodland and scattered trees. Other land uses within proximity to the Site include the residential area to the west, woodland at Merry Hill Wood to the east, and Grim's Dyke golf courses to the south, and Hartsbourne golf course to the southeast. The existing susceptibility and value of the land cover is considered to be **Medium**, which results in a **Medium** sensitivity.
- 4.3. Approximately 53% of the Site area would change from grassland to residential development that includes housing with care, private gardens, roads, pavements, and driveways. Approximately 47% of the Site would be dedicated to public open space and green infrastructure elements including retained hedgerow and trees, proposed structural planting, attenuation ponds, a play area, community orchard and proposed footpath routes.
- 4.4. The **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** contained at **Appendix 3** outlines the Green Infrastructure proposals of the development. The proposed development would be offset from the Site boundary to maximise the retention of all existing trees which are located mostly around the Site periphery. Landscape buffers around the Site boundary allow for additional native woodland, hedgerow, shrub, and individual tree planting, with species-rich meadow grassland to the woodland and hedgerow margins.
- 4.5. The main area of public open space is proposed to the northern section of the Site, where the proposed vehicular access road approaches the development from Oxhey Lane. An existing Public Right of Way footpath ref 'WATFORD RURAL 013' passes broadly southwest to northeast through the Site between Oxhey Lane to Merry Hill Wood, where it merges into 'BUSHEY 025' as it crosses the district boundary from Watford Rural within the Three Rivers District into Bushey, Hertsmere at the Site's northeastern boundary. A SUDs basin is proposed within the area of open space along the lowest landform adjacent to the northwestern boundary adjacent to the proposed vehicular access. A further area of open space is proposed to the southeastern boundary with a second, larger SUDs basin. The attenuation features would be enhanced with native marginal and aquatic planting with wet meadow grassland to the banks to aid biodiversity, with blocks of native shrub and wetland trees to enhance opportunities for biodiversity.
- 4.6. A Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) within the area of Public Open Space to the north of the Site, adjacent to the Public Right of Way, provides opportunities for play accessible to both the existing and proposed community, and benefits from natural surveillance from users of the footpath and with properties fronting onto the area of open space. A community orchard with fruit trees of local provenance and mown routes through wildflower meadow grassland also provides recreational opportunities for existing and proposed community, along with seasonal interest. Areas of retained grassland and amenity grassland provide opportunities for informal recreation, and footpath links pass through the areas of open

space around the Site to enhance pedestrian permeability which encourages sustainable transport and active lifestyles. The benefits of proposed new hedgerow and tree planting as structural planting elements are discussed separately below.

- 4.7. While the proposed public open space would provide an increase in accessible open space for the community, with benefits to biodiversity, visual and recreational amenity, the proposed new built form would inevitably have an adverse effect upon baseline land cover as a whole. The magnitude of change from the proposed development is assessed as **Medium**, which when combined with the **Medium** sensitivity, results in a **Moderate adverse** effect upon the land cover of the Site.

Topography.

- 4.8. The landform of the Site itself is sloping, with an approximate 27m topographical variation across the Site broadly from northeast to southwest, ranging between approximately 77–104m AOD (**Figure 3 – Topography Plan**). The lowest point of the Site is to the southwestern edge at approximately 77m AOD. The highest point within the Site is adjacent to the northeast boundary, adjacent to Merry Hill Wood, where the ground reaches 104m AOD. The other corners of the Site range between 84m AOD to the northwestern corner adjacent to Oxhey Lane, and 80m AOD to the southeast adjacent to Merry Hill Wood. The susceptibility of the topography to the type of development proposed is **Medium**, which when combined with a **Medium** value, would result in an overall **Medium** sensitivity.
- 4.9. The overall gradients across the Site would remain as existing, with only minor changes to the landform proposed. This would include localised excavations to facilitate construction of the SUDs basins, the road network, paths, parking areas and driveways, and with the digging of the new building foundations.
- 4.10. Once the construction of the proposed development is completed, the overall pattern of topography of the Site would be maintained with landform largely retained at existing levels within the areas of public open space. The proposed development would avoid the steepest gradient land within the northwestern corner of the Site, with the proposed vehicular access designed to follow a gentler gradient across the contours within the northern parcel of the Site. The magnitude of change to the overall ground profile of the Site would be **Low**. With a **Medium** sensitivity and a **Low** magnitude of change, the overall effect upon topography would be **Minor adverse**.

Tree and Hedgerows.

- 4.11. The Arboricultural Survey was carried out by ACD Environmental in November 2024 and sets out the location and condition of trees and hedgerows within and adjoining the Site.
- 4.12. The survey identified 68 individual trees and 3 tree groups. Grading can be summarised as.
- Category A – ‘High’ value’: 27 individual trees,
 - Category B – ‘Moderate’ value: 30 individual trees,
 - Category C ‘Low’ value: 9 individual trees, 3 tree groups and both hedgerows,
 - Category U – ‘unsuitable for retention’: 2.
- 4.13. Most mature trees within and immediately adjacent to the Site boundary are English Oak with occasional Ash trees, and a high proportion are of ‘High’ and ‘Moderate’ value, with veteran

trees along the northern boundary. Overall, the trees within the Site are assessed as having a **High** value.

- 4.14. The susceptibility to change arising from the development proposed would be **High**, reflecting the time this landscape element takes to mature. With a High value and High susceptibility, the overall sensitivity of the tree resource is **High**.
- 4.15. The tree survey did not record any hedgerows within the Site, as the original hedgerows have become so overgrown that they now comprise belts of overgrown Blackthorn-dominated scrub. The Blackthorn scrub and brambles encroaches widely across the field parcels. Overall, hedgerows are considered to be of **Low** value. Hedgerows are assessed to be of **Low** susceptibility due to their form being neglected and highly overgrown and being more reflective of belts of scrub. Combining value and susceptibility, hedgerows are considered to have an overall **Low** sensitivity.
- 4.16. The proposed development is designed to be offset from the Site boundary to allow adequate space for the existing trees around the periphery of the Site to be retained and while some small areas of vegetation may be lost, it is anticipated that all existing mature tree cover identified within the tree survey across the Site would be retained, protected during the construction phase with measures to comply with BS: 5837 (see ADC Environmental Tree Retention and Removal Plan). A section of boundary vegetation would be removed to accommodate the new vehicular access from Oxhey Lane to the northern section of the Site, and short sections of blackthorn scrub as the access road passes through the Site. New native hedgerow planting is proposed behind the visibility splays associated with the new junction and along the western boundary adjacent to Oxhey Lane as shown on the **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix 3)**. This would, once established define the boundary of the Site and reflect the existing character of views from along the road, softening views of new built form. New native hedgerow planting is also proposed along the interface of development parcels within the open space in the northern section of the Site, and throughout the green corridors between the development parcels. The localised losses would represent a **Negligible** magnitude of change and a **Negligible adverse** effect.
- 4.17. Overall, the proposed development could bring about an increase in the quantity of trees within the Site. The key areas of new planting, as shown on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (**Appendix 3**) are likely to comprise:
- Retention of all existing high and moderate value trees to define the structure of the proposed development, with landscape buffers retained adjacent to the woodland edge to the east and the belts of trees along overgrown hedgerows along the Site boundary and throughout the internal field boundaries,
 - New native hedgerow and tree planting along the edge of the proposed development to define the area of public open space within the northern parcel, to include native mixed species hedgerows and native tree planting
 - Individual native tree planting to the boundary, throughout public open spaces and feature trees positioned at key focal points,
 - Orchard trees underlain with wildflower meadow grassland within the public open space to the northeast, and
 - Avenue trees along the proposed main vehicular access road with tree lined streets and street trees within incidental areas of open space along the perimeter blocks.
- 4.18. It is assessed that the magnitude of change upon the tree resource would be **Medium (beneficial)**. This would translate to **Moderate beneficial** effects on the tree resource within

the Site, with the potential realised as the trees mature further integrating the proposals into the surrounding landscape context.

4.19. Similarly, in addition to bringing the existing blackthorn scrub of the overgrown hedgerows under management, new hedgerows could be planted across the Site to increase the diversity of the hedgerow resource whilst also defining the curtilages of properties. This would include:

- Replacement of the existing vegetation to be removed adjacent to the proposed access off Oxhey Lane to the northwestern boundary, with mixed-species native hedgerow planting behind the visibility splays,
- Planting of native hedgerows along the existing historic tree-line adjacent to the proposed housing with care parcel, supplemented with native tree planting and connecting with new hedgerows planted along the interface of the care home with the adjacent proposed residential buildings,
- Mixed native hedgerow planting around the northern area of public open space along the interface with the proposed development frontage and throughout green corridors throughout the development parcels, with more formal single-species hedgerow planting to the property frontages and the interface of plots with incidental areas of open space along the internal streets.

4.20. New hedgerows would help deliver local green networks that benefit amenity and biodiversity. On balance it is likely that the magnitude of change would be **Low (beneficial)**, and this would translate to **Minor beneficial** effects upon the hedgerow resource within the Site.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW).

4.21. There is one PRoW footpath route which passes through the northern section of the Site, ref 'Watford Rural O13'. This route connects with 'Bushey O25' as the route passes into Hertsmere District at the Site's northeastern boundary before passing through Merry Hill nature reserve. The Site is not otherwise accessible to the public, however there is evidence of informal pedestrian use within the Site with tracks through the internal field parcels.

4.22. The PRoW Footpath ref 'Watford Rural O13' is set to be retained within the area of open space to the northern section of the Site, along its existing alignment. Effects upon the visual amenity of people using PRoW O13 and PRoW in the wider landscape are assessed in Section 6 of this report.

4.23. The proposed new pedestrian footpaths through the Site would provide access from the new development into the village and enable a connection to the wider countryside via connections with the existing PRoW. In the context of the play area and community orchard within the Site these linkages would provide benefits for both new residents and the wider community.

5. Effects on Landscape Character.

- 5.1. This section seeks to establish how the proposals would have a bearing on landscape character locally. The effects on landscape character consider how the introduction of new landscape elements may physically alter the landform, landcover, landscape pattern, and perceptual attributes of the Site, and/or how the visibility of the proposals could change the way in which landscape character is perceived. Landscape character is defined in GLVIA3 as the:

“Distinct and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.”

- 5.2. The landscape around the Site has been subject to two separate landscape character assessments, undertaken at different scales, including:

- National Character Area (NCA) 111 – ‘Northern Thames Basin’, and
- The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005).

National Character Area.

- 5.3. At the national level, England is divided into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs) defined by combinations of landscape character, biodiversity, and geology. The Site is located to the western edge of National Character Area: 111 – ‘Northern Thames Basin’. The NCA extends from Hertfordshire in the west to the Essex coast in the east, covering the northern outer suburbs of London, Basildon, Brentwood, the southern edge of Chelmsford, Colchester and extending to reach Clacton-on-Sea in the east. It is separated from the North Sea and Thames Estuary by the narrow Greater Thames Estuary (NCA81).

- 5.4. Key characteristics of the NCA, relevant to the Site and study area include:

- ***“The landform is varied with a wide plateau divided by river valleys. The prominent hills and ridges of the ‘Bagshot Hills’ are notable to the northwest and extensive tracts of flat land are found in the south.***
- ***Characteristic of the area is a layer of thick clay producing heavy, acidic soils, resulting in retention of considerable areas of ancient woodland.***
- ***Areas capped by glacial sands and gravels have resulted in nutrient-poor, free-draining soils which support remnant lowland heathlands, although these are now small. Areas that have alluvial deposits present are well drained and fertile...***
- ***The pattern of woodlands is varied across the area and includes considerable ancient semi-natural woodland. Hertfordshire is heavily wooded in some areas as are parts of Essex, while other areas within Essex are more open in character. Significant areas of wood pasture and pollarded veteran trees are also present.***
- ***The field pattern is very varied across the basin...***
- ***Mixed farming, with arable land predominating in the Hertfordshire plateaux, parts of the London Clay lowlands and Essex heathlands. Grasslands are characteristic of the river valleys throughout. Horticulture and market gardening are found on the light, sandy soils of former heaths in Essex, particularly around Colchester, along with orchards, meadow pasture and leys following numerous narrow rivers and streams.***

- *The diverse range of semi-natural habitats include ancient woodland, lowland heath and floodplain grazing marsh and provide important habitats for a wide range of species including great crested newt, water vole, dormouse and otter.*
- *Rich archaeology including sites related to Roman occupation, with the Roman capital at Colchester and City of St Albans (Verulamium) and links to London. Landscape parklands surrounding 16th- and 17th-century rural estates and country houses built for London merchants are a particular feature in Hertfordshire.*
- *... Market towns have expanded over time as have the London suburbs and commuter settlements, with the creation of new settlements such as the pioneering garden city at Welwyn and the planned town at Basildon.*
- *Brick-built dwellings are characteristic from the late 17th century onwards...*

5.5. Four 'Distinct Areas' have been identified within Northern Thames Basin, and the Site is within the 'Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys', and the description as relevant to the Site and surrounding landscape includes:

"It is a well-wooded landscape, especially to the east, with a number of ancient broadleaved woodlands including oak...

The area merges with the outer London suburbs of Enfield, Barnet, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow. It also contains many large towns including Watford, Hatfield, Hertford and St Albans which have developed as commuter settlements...

Road and rail routes plus utility infrastructure are now dominant features of some parts of the area. To the far south the area is heavily urbanised as it becomes part of London, where housing, industrial areas and shops dominate.

5.6. Landscape opportunities listed for the NCA which are considered relevant to the proposals include:

"SEO 1: Manage rivers and river valleys to protect and improve water quality and help to alleviate flooding in the downstream urban areas, while also helping to improve aquifer recharge and provide a sufficient store of water to meet future need, especially with predicted climatic changes. Conserve the riparian landscapes and habitats, for their recreational and educational amenity for their internationally significant ecological value...

SEO 3: Protect and appropriately manage the historic environment for its contribution to local character and sense of identity and as a framework for habitat restoration and sustainable development, ensuring high design standards (particularly in the London Green Belt) which respect the open and built character of the Thames Basin. Enhance and increase access between rural and urban areas through good green infrastructure links to allow local communities recreational, health and wellbeing benefits.

For example by:

- *...Preserving and enhancing current public access sites including nature reserves, common land, country parks and public footpaths and rights of way to attract the wider community...*
- *Creating better access to the countryside with an increased number of public footpaths and rights of way so that more of the area is open access...*

- **Restoring the connectivity of key habitats as well as expanding and creating new habitats which will maintain and enhance their attraction for visitors.**

SEO 4: Manage and expand the significant areas of broadleaf woodland and wood pasture, and increase tree cover within urban areas, for the green infrastructure links and important habitats that they provide, for the sense of tranquillity they bring, their ability to screen urban influences and their role in reducing heat island effect and sequestering and storing carbon.

For example by:

- **Promoting the establishment of a coherent and resilient network of treescapes (native woodland, wood pasture, parkland, coppice, scrub, field trees and hedgerows) through expanding and linking existing woodland with areas of new planting...**
- **Creating new woodlands, taking into account natural processes and bringing them into wood production management. Sensitively incorporating them into and around new developments to enhance landscape character. Community woodlands should be maintained and increased where possible for this purpose as well as for recreation..."**

5.7. The overall characteristics and description of the 'Northern Thames Basin' NCA broadly reveal a mixed landscape with more urbanising characteristics and influences to the southwest towards London, and a more open agricultural landscape and dispersed settlement pattern to the north and east. The Site is currently undeveloped however the surrounding landscape comprises the more urbanised features typical for the proximity the northern edge of London, directly adjacent to recent large-scale development of the care home, the busy A4008 Oxhey Lane, and a strong visual relationship with the adjacent built-up area of Carpenders Park and South Oxhey in the distance. This document is inevitably a high-level character assessment, which provides a useful overview by which to understand the character of the local and wider landscape and its surroundings.

The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005).

5.8. The South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies 13 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the Three Rivers district and locates the Site within the 'Bushey Hill Pastures' LCA (**Figure 4 – Landscape Character Plan**). This LCA is bound to the west by Carpenders Park, to the north by Oxhey, to the east by Bushey and to the south by Old Redding Road and woodland at Old Redding Nature Reserve.

5.9. The description for the LCA includes:

“The area consists of the eastern and undeveloped slopes of Bushey Hill, a distinctive east-west ridge extending from Merry Hill to Caldecote Hill. Despite being enclosed on the majority of its perimeter by built development, the area maintains a comparatively rural and tranquil atmosphere. The majority of the land use is grazing, with considerable new areas of planting encouraged by the Watling Chase Community Forest and the Woodland Trust. A good number of mature oak trees make a strong contribution to the character of the area.”

5.10. The Key Characteristics for the 'Bushey Hill Pastures' LCA are listed as:

- ***“strong rising slopes up towards Merry Hill,***
- ***extensive grazing and equestrian activity,***
- ***considerable new planting,***
- ***suprisingly rural and panoramic views to the west,***
- ***parkland areas at Haydon Hill,***
- ***golf courses (3 no.),***
- ***strong containment by urban settlement although generally visually well screened”***

5.11. 'Visual and Sensory Perception' is summarized as:

“The area is only locally visible from outside, being restricted by the surrounding built development. Within the area there are a number of good viewpoints, e.g. south of Merry Hill House. There are also good views out of the area, particularly to the west, to a remarkably wooded horizon including Oxhey Woods, Pinnerwood and Harrow Weald Wood.”

5.12. 'Rarity and distinctiveness' is described as:

“The area is relatively unusual in the county. The main distinctive quality is the maintenance of rural and pastoral character within a wider urban context.”

5.13. The LCA is said to be in 'Moderate' condition with a 'Moderate' strength of character. The 'Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change' are identified as: 'IMPROVE AND CONSERVE', with the following potentially relevant to the development, including:

- ***“support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area,***

- *promote the management of existing woodlands to establish a rich ground flora and a range of different woodland habitats,*
- *promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links,*
- *use ancient hedge and field boundaries to determine the most appropriate location for wood restoration and further expansion,*
- *promote the continued establishment of the network of new woodlands planted by the Woodland Trust,*
- *expand the network of new tree planting to the west of the A4008 to soften the surrounding residential areas,*
- *promote through education and access the multiple uses of the landscape and seek to resolve conflicts arising from competing uses and activities...*
- *promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible,*
- *promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds,*
- *promote the creation of new orchards, with community involvement, using traditional varieties of fruit and minimal use of herbicides and pesticides...*
- *promote the use of traditional hedge or metal parkland railings as field enclosure for equestrian pasture in place of timber fencing,*
- *promote planting schemes that soften the visual impact of unsightly agricultural and industrial buildings,*
- *conserve unimproved, semi-improved and heathland grassland communities in order to maintain their nature conservation value...*
- *maintain and enhance public access to and over the entire area,*
- *ensure that the distinctive long-distance views are framed and not lost by emerging woodland areas,*
- *where new development adjoins the character area ensure areas of local native tree and hedge species are planted to ensure there is minimal impact on the rural character,*
- *ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses including golf courses are managed to enhance the existing landscape setting and ecological value."*

Three Rivers District Council Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2019)

- 5.14. The Three Rivers District Council Landscape Sensitivity Assessment considers the sensitivity to the principle of built development on a range of Sites within Three Rivers, to provide context for policies and proposals within the emerging Local Plan. The assessment considers the variations in character based on Hertfordshire's Landscape Character Assessment. The

document assesses the Site within parcel CFS69, 'Land at Carpenders Park Farm', which extends southwards to include further grassland fields, a portion of woodland at Mutton Wood identified as a Local Wildlife Site in the local plan, and a section of the Hartsbourne Stream.

- 5.15. The document assessed each parcel against 10 separate landscape and visual criteria. These include 5 landscape criteria relating to landform and landscape features, complexity (variety of land uses, patterns), enclosure by vegetation, historic character and built development/ Visual criteria include openness to public view, openness to private view, views towards landmark buildings / natural features, perceptual quality, prevention of merging / coalescence. The document identifies parcel CFS69 as having a 'Medium High' sensitivity for residential use, which is defined as:

"Landscape and /or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are susceptible to change and / or its values are medium through to high. It may be able to accommodate the relevant type of development but only in limited situations without significant character change or adverse effects if defined in the relevant land parcel summary. Thresholds for significant change are low."

- 5.16. It states that the following key characteristics from the 'Bushey Hill Pastures' LCA are present in the parcel:

- ***"Strong rising slopes extend up towards Merry Hill and the north***
- ***Rural and panoramic views extend out towards the west over South Oxhey, and down towards the golf courses to the south***
- ***Located in close proximity to Hartsbourne Golf Course and Grims Dyke Golf Course to the south"***

- 5.17. The 'Summary' states:

"The strong rising south west facing slopes and rural panoramic views over South Oxhey and local golf courses are very characteristic of the Bushey Hill Pastures LCA. In addition, the undulating landforms, landscape features and strong perceptual quality all contribute towards increased sensitivity to built development. The views from the public footpath running through the centre of the site towards natural features to the north east and urban landscape towards the south west, alongside views in to the site from South Oxhey and footpaths, all increase the sensitivity of the area. As the site is located in close proximity to the Watford suburb of South Oxhey, the overall sensitivity of the site is increased as the area has a feeling of rurality even though it is in close proximity to a large urban development within the M25. Although the site begins to spread the urban development out of the Oxhey Lane ring road to the east, therefore increasing the boundary of South Oxhey, the site is considered to have medium-high sensitivity to development, as the site does not compromise the coalescence of two urban areas together, and it is relatively enclosed by vegetation on the immediate surroundings.

For this reason, the Land at Carpenders Park Farm has been classed as having Medium-High sensitivity to built development."

- 5.18. It is noted that the assessment sets out '***overall sensitivity for the majority of the area but does not include variation of sensitivity within the area.***' While the Site does present some of the elements outlined in terms of key characteristics of the LCA, the summary description mentions views from the public footpath running through the centre of the Site, which traverses the higher landform. There is no public access permitted within the Site other than

along PRoW Footpath ref 'Watford Rural O13' to the north, and any other routes through the Site are used informally. The Site itself excludes the more sensitive landscape elements such as the woodland at Mutton Wood identified as a Local Wildlife Site in the local plan, and the Hartsbourne Stream. There are urbanizing influences perceptible from the Site including views of the immediately adjacent residential areas and roads, with the recent development of the 3-storey care home and a communications tower adjacent to the Site boundary that are visible from much of the Site.

- 5.19. Some of the key elements of the area are identified as 'high' sensitivity are listed as the 'landform and landscape features' and the 'perceptual quality'. These elements are anticipated to remain unaltered as a result of the proposed development, with the existing public right of way retained within the Site and further footpath connections throughout the open space within the development providing additional recreational opportunities.

Assessment of the Landscape Character of the Site.

- 5.20. The Site lies on the eastern edge of Carpenders Park and has no public access, save for a Public Right of Way (Footpath ref 'Watford Rural O13') which passes through the northern section of the Site. The Site currently comprises parcels of unmanaged grassland with overgrown hedgerows and trees along the Site boundary and the boundaries of the internal field parcels. Due to the neglected nature of the Site, the internal hedgerows have been taken over by the more dominant species such as Blackthorn and brambles, which have been allowed to extend either side of the hedgerows to form 20m wide scrub corridors across the Site. To the immediate west is Carpenders Park Care Home, a recent 3-storey development off the A4008 Oxhey Lane, which also comprises a large parking area visible from along the road. To the immediate east, Merry Hill is an area of open access land managed by the Woodland Trust, containing woodland (Little Hartsbourne Wood) and planted fruit orchards with dedicated PRoW (footpath ref 'BUSHEY O25' to the immediate east of the Site, with informal footpath routes passing through the area and connecting to PRoW footpath ref 'WATFORD RURAL O13' within the Site. To the immediate north are arable agricultural fields bound by mature hedgerows and trees and further sections of the open access land at Merry Hill. Grassland fields are also located to the south with vegetation along the Hartsbourne Stream, with the Hartsbourne Stream Flood Storage Area mature trees at Mutton Wood and belts of woodland through golf courses at Grims Dyke golf course to the south and Hartsbourne golf course to the southeast.
- 5.21. The character of the Site and local countryside is not of such value that it has warranted a statutory or non-statutory landscape designation, and the landscape has no features that would indicate a 'valued' landscape in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) from December 2024, Paragraph 187(a). For these reasons, the Site falls at the lower spectrum of the landscape value continuum, representing an area of pleasant, but unremarkable settlement edge landscape.
- 5.22. Paragraph 187 notes that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by **"...(a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes..."** in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the Development Plan with 187 b) stating: **"recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services (...) and of trees and woodland..."**. This is further clarified in Paragraph 188 of the NPPF, which states: **"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites..."** therefore, clearly establishing the principle of hierarchy between designated and non-designated countryside. This is further reinforced by the Planning Practice Guidance (its section 'Natural Environment') which puts more emphasis on protected landscapes such as National Parks and National Landscapes (previously AONBs). The Site clearly falls at the lower end of the spectrum, with the local landscape not being

designated and not identified in the Local Plan as a non-statutory landscape designation. There are no development plan policies that would indicate the Site has a special character or value, in landscape character terms. It therefore transpires that the Site should be considered against Paragraph 187 b) alone.

- 5.23. The following paragraphs analyse the Site's landscape character, based on the field appraisal by Pegasus. The following section identifies the landscape value and landscape susceptibility of the Site to residential development of the type proposed with reference to Box 5.1 of the GLVIA3, and Technical Guidance Note O2/21 prepared by the Landscape Institute.
- 5.24. The GLVIA3 clearly identifies a hierarchy of valued landscapes when discussing the level of importance which they signify. It clearly states that the value decreases from internationally valued landscapes such as World Heritage Sites to nationally valued landscapes such as National Parks and National Landscapes (AONBs), to locally valued landscapes: **"...locally valued landscapes, for example, local authority landscape designations or, where these do not exist, landscapes assessed as being of equivalent value using clearly stated and recognised criteria..."** The Site and the surrounding landscape do not fall under any of the above categories.
- 5.25. There is one PRow route within the Site, and beyond the Site there is a relatively low density of PRow (see **Figure 1 – Site Location Plan**), however there is a large area of open access land associated with Merry Hill to the immediate east extending towards Bushey Heath. In terms of its recreational value, save for PRow Footpath route 'WATFORD RURAL O13' in the northern parcel, the Site is privately owned and not otherwise accessible to the public. The topographical profile of the Site is sloping, and while the northern parcel is elevated in relation to its context, the woodland, hedgerows and tree cover along the Site and surrounding agricultural field boundaries, restricts opportunities to experience views towards the ground level of the Site from the landscape to the north, east and south. Views into the northern parcel are possible from the residential streets to the immediate west.
- 5.26. Generally, the Site does not contain landscape features that would be considered rare or unique. The existing hedgerows and groups of trees along the Site boundary and along the internal field parcel boundaries, contribute towards perceptions of enclosure within the Site and are reflective of the surrounding context. Most trees and tree groups were 'Medium Arboricultural value, with some 'High value trees / groups identified within the survey, and some 'Low' value trees. The hedgerows within the Site and around the boundary are largely overgrown with Blackthorn and brambles, representing a more neglected character compared to the surrounding field boundaries. Almost all trees within the Site would be retained, and development offset to avoid the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) identified on the Tree Survey, with 15m wide landscape buffers retained along the eastern boundary to limit conflicts with the adjacent woodland at Merry Hill, and wide green corridors along the course of the internal hedgerows to be retained through the centre of the development, giving structure to the development parcels and creating opportunities for informal recreation with footpaths and improved permeability through the Site. The section of hedgerow requiring removal for the vehicular access and through the development is to be mitigated with substantial new native hedgerow and shrub planting proposed throughout the public open space of the development.
- 5.27. The Site does not contain or adjoin any designated heritage or nature conservation assets. There are no Listed Buildings within proximity to the Site, with the closest being a grade II Listed 'LONDON COAL DUTY MARKER ON COUNTY BOUNDARY IMMEDIATELY NORTH WEST OF BURNT OAK FARM' and a 'COAL DUTY BOUNDARY POST OUTSIDE NUMBER 1 (THE HOLLIES)' approximately 740m south of the Site, along Oxhey Lane, with the grade II Listed 'OXHEY GRANGE' approximately 790m to the northwest off Oxhey Lane, and the grade II listed 'BARN ABOUT 30 METRES NORTH OF MERRY HILL FARM HOUSE' approximately 830m northeast at Bushey Heath. Approximately 860m to the southeast is the boundary with the 'Grim's Ditch:

section extending 1500yds (1370m) NE from Oxhey Lane' Scheduled Monument, 'GRIMS DYKE' grade II Registered Parks and Garden, and 'Brookshill Drive and Grimsdyke Estate' Conservation Area. There is no intervisibility between the Site and these designated areas due to the dense, mature woodland which surrounds them, and which extends across the intervening landscape including belts of woodland through Grims Dyke and Little Hartsbourne golf courses.

- 5.28. The Site is not covered by any landscape conservation designations that would relate to ecology or biodiversity, and any localised value is restricted to the peripheral field boundary vegetation. There are also no known cultural associations with the Site or its immediate context that have been recorded in notable works of literature or art.
- 5.29. **The Tranquility Plan** shown on **Figure 5** identifies the Site and surrounding area as being predominantly within the 'Least Tranquil' end of the spectrum, which is typical of the suburban setting being close to the boundary of Greater London. The level of tranquility increases slightly across the landscape to the east associated with Merry Hill and the golf courses. The southwestern parcel of the Site appears to be less tranquil than the northern or southeastern parcel. It is considered that the level of tranquility across the Site and surrounding landscape is influenced by the residential development to the immediate west of the Site along with the 3-storey care home adjacent to the boundary with traffic along the busy A4008 Oxhey Lane.
- 5.30. The Site is enclosed to the north, east and south by some mature / overgrown hedgerows and trees along the boundary and along the route of the Hartsbourne stream. This vegetation combines with the associated unmanaged land use to provide a modest scenic value from localised publicly accessible locations close to the Site boundary along Oxhey Lane and limited points along the PRoW within the Site and to the immediate east within Merry Hill, where parts of the Site are visible.
- 5.31. Based on the above analysis the value of the Site is assessed as **Medium** and the susceptibility of the Site to the type of development proposed is assessed as **Medium**, resulting in a **Medium** overall sensitivity.

Effect on the Landscape Character of the Site and immediate context.

- 5.32. The immediate landscape context is influenced by the settlement edge character of Carpenders Park, the A4008 Oxhey Lane, and the recently constructed 3-storey care home immediately adjacent to the western boundary. The elevation of the land within the northern field parcel allows for some open views to the west across the settlement, and across some of the adjacent arable fields to the north. The Site is well enclosed to the east by the woodland at Merry Hill immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary, with mature trees along field boundaries and large trees within field parcels to the north, with woodland throughout Merry Hill further to the north / northeast. The well-wooded landscape to the south with Mutton Wood and established vegetation along the course of the Hartsbourne Stream south of the Site, and with belts of mature trees along field boundaries and throughout the golf courses at Grims Dyke golf course and Hartsbourne golf course to the southeast encloses the Site from points to the south / southeast. The mature vegetation along the route of the A4008 Oxhey Lane also helps to enclose the Site from points to the immediate west.
- 5.33. The Site itself has a neglected character, with highly overgrown internal field boundary hedgerows forming wide corridors of overgrown Blackthorn and brambles encroaching throughout the field parcels, and scrubby grassland throughout the Site. Trees associated with the Site are generally located along the Site boundary or within the overgrown

hedgerows along the internal field parcel boundaries and are mostly comprised of Oak trees of high and moderate value. While there are some distant views possible from the Site and the highest landform within the northern field parcel is visible from some more distant locations to the west, the Site is well enclosed to the east, and is relatively enclosed to the north and south. There is a strong relationship of the Site with the built edge of the settlement to the immediate west, with the modern 3-storey care home visually prominent immediately adjacent to the western boundary. The well-wooded character of Merry Hill to the north and east, and belts of mature trees along highways and field boundaries, limits the extent from which views into the Site are possible, to points where existing settlement is already visible.

- 5.34. As part of the development proposals, a large area (47%) of the Site would be dedicated to public open space including green infrastructure elements, with the remaining 53% of the Site comprising new dwellings including private gardens and the access road. The proposed development parcels which have been structured around the existing hedgerows and trees. Existing landscape features of value would be mostly retained, with limited lengths of existing hedgerows and a small number of low-value trees requiring removal to facilitate construction of the proposed development, namely the vehicular access off Oxhey Lane, and through the centre of the development. The **Illustrative Landscape Proposals (Appendix 3)** illustrate a significant amount of proposed new woodland and tree planting, particularly throughout the area of open space in the northern parcel, in order to mitigate the more sensitive parcel of the Site in terms of views of new built form. The development proposes to bring the overgrown hedgerows into management to ensure longevity of the habitat, with new native hedgerow planting to bolster the Site boundaries and along areas of public open space, and a range of habitat types to be created through planting native marginal and aquatic species to the proposed attenuation basins to create more opportunities for biodiversity. Fruit trees of local provenance are also proposed to form a community orchard set within wildflower meadow grassland for the existing and proposed community. The existing grassland would be retained and maintained where possible. Tree-lined streets are also proposed throughout the development. The proposed planting would aid in integrating the new built development into the receiving landscape over time, as well as further restricting visibility of new buildings available from the immediate settlement edge context.
- 5.35. The proposed development is also offset from the adjacent woodland edge by a minimum of 15m, which allows for landscape buffers around the periphery of the development where root protection areas (RPAs) are avoided to protect existing trees, where proposed new tree planting would bolster existing vegetation and aid in filtering views of built form, and new circular footpath routes are proposed to provide opportunities for informal recreation and to provide improved connectivity with the wider PRow network. A further area of public open space to the southern boundary proposed a second attenuation basin, with new native shrub and tree planting and marginal and aquatic planting to the basin, enhancing opportunities for biodiversity and aiding in breaking up views of built form from potential locations to the south of the Site.
- 5.36. The magnitude of change within the Site, changing from open field to housing, albeit within a well-considered, landscape-led Site layout that would allow notable green infrastructure enhancement, results in an overall **High** magnitude of change and a **Major Adverse** effect upon baseline landscape character of the Site itself, and the immediate landscape context.

Effect on the Landscape Character of the wider context.

- 5.37. It is also relevant to consider the effects of the proposed development upon the wider landscape character beyond the Site and the immediate context.

- 5.38. The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005) identifies 13 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the Three Rivers district and locates the Site within the 'Bushey Hill Pastures' (**Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan**).
- 5.39. The summary for the LCA reflects attributes characteristic of the landscape surrounding the Site, including:
- “...a distinctive east-west ridge... Despite being enclosed on the majority of its perimeter by built development, the area maintains a comparatively rural and tranquil atmosphere... the land use is grazing, with considerable new areas of planting... A good number of mature oak trees make a strong contribution to the character of the area.”*
- 5.40. The Site and surrounding landscape context reflect several of the Key Characteristics outlined for the LCA – namely the adjacent developed character of the settlement edge location to the west, combined with the enclosed nature of the woodland to the immediate east, and well-wooded fields and field boundaries to the north and throughout the fields and golf courses to the south.
- 5.41. The Site comprises **'strong rising slopes up towards Merry Hill'**, which is immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary, and where there is **'grazing'** being implemented as a management practice within Merry Hill. There is also **'considerable new planting'** throughout Merry Hill over the last decade throughout the Site, which is managed by the Woodland Trust. While there are **'panoramic views'** possible from the adjacent Merry Hill wood, these are focussed southeast away from the Site, and views into the Site are restricted by the dense and growing area of woodland immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary. From within the Site, there are some extensive views west, there are only short-range views north and south possible from within the Site due to the enclosure afforded by the mature trees along adjacent field boundaries, along nearby streams, or within adjacent woodlands. There are **'golf courses'** adjacent to the Site to the south/southeast, which do not share intervisibility with the Site due to the intervening woodland at Mutton Wood, within Merry Hill and within the golf courses themselves. Extensive views are possible to the west, however these views are characterised by the expanse of built settlement visible within Carpenders Park and over towards South Oxhey, and not reflective of the **'surprisingly rural and panoramic views to the west'** characteristic listed for the LCA. The Site and surrounding landscape does reflect **'strong containment by urban settlement although generally visually well screened'** characteristic, with most surrounding areas very well enclosed by woodland, and the more open locations visually influenced by the adjacent settlement edges.
- 5.42. The proposed development would strongly reflect the existing character of the adjacent settlement edge, and link visually with the recent 3-storey care home development adjacent to the boundary. Whilst extending the existing settlement edge eastwards, it would be well contained by the existing woodland within Merry Hill, Mutton Wood to the south, and belts of mature trees along field boundaries and streams to the south and north. The existing hedgerows and trees within the Site and along its boundaries will be retained, and while brought under management, would ensure their longevity and the existing structure to the landscape. With the establishment of the landscape mitigation proposed, comprising a significant amount of new native tree planting and hedgerow restoration, which strongly reflects the key characteristics and strategy and guidelines for change listed for the LCA, and the overall key characteristics of the LCA which would not be altered as a result of the development. Beyond the Site, there would be no change to any of the listed key characteristics of the LCA, and opportunities to perceive indirect perceptual effects upon landscape character from lighting or increased traffic movements would be limited. The effects upon visual amenity and longer-range views are set out in the following section 6 of the LVIA below.

6. Effects on Visual Amenity.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility.

- 6.1. The **Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV)** – **Figure 6** has modelled both 2 storey development at a maximum of 9m height, and appropriate locations for 3-storey flat-roof development at 10.5m height, within the Proposed Development cells on the Site. The SZTV model does not account for existing hedgerow vegetation or tree cover beyond woodland blocks, and consequently the resulting plan provides an exaggerated depiction of likely visibility that requires review in the field. It should also be considered that most of the land covered by the SZTV is private farmland and a smaller proportion of existing residential areas, whilst the LVIA is necessarily focussed on publicly accessible locations including public roads, public rights of way and settlement edges.

Baseline Visual Context.

- 6.2. A selection of representative public viewpoints from all directions and distances from the Site have been reviewed, with an emphasis on high sensitivity receptors including settlement edges and public rights of way (see **Figure 7: Viewpoint Location Plan**). A series of **Annotated Photoviews** from Viewpoints 1–17 are included at **Figure 8**.
- 6.3. The combination of the undulating landform, adjacent built development along Oxhey Lane and further west into Carpenders Park, and surrounding woodland within Merry Hill, Mutton Wood, along adjacent field boundaries and scattered throughout the surrounding landscape, create a visually contained Site where there are limited opportunities for publicly accessible views. Due to the locally elevated landform within the northern field parcel, there are glimpsed views into the Site are possible from some points, through gaps in intervening hedgerows and trees or above the adjacent residential buildings across the settlement edge. Some partial views into the northernmost field parcel are possible from some points to the east due to this elevated landform. Woodland to the immediate east of the Site within Merry Hill obscures the view from most points to the west, and mature trees along the Site boundary, along intervening field boundaries and along the Hartsbourne Stream obscures the view into the Site from points to the north and south. There are occasional glimpses of the Site through infrequent gaps in the vegetation along Oxhey Lane, and from points immediately adjacent to Carpenders Park care home, which otherwise completely obscures the Site from view due to its scale. The road has mature hedgerows along both sides of the route and is winding in character, which effectively encloses views while travelling along the route. Views towards the Site from within residential streets to the west are, particularly from points where the landform is more elevated, although these views already comprise the adjacent residential built form and the 3-storey care home.
- 6.4. There are partially restricted views of the Site from private properties, particularly the upper floors of dwellings immediately adjacent to the Site and from the ground floor windows from a very limited number of properties. This includes properties along Carpenders Avenue to the west, Primrose Avenue and Greenfield Avenue to the west, with the direction of the roads aligning with the highest point within the northern field parcel of the Site. There are some more distant, oblique views from properties within South Oxhey to the far west, however these views already comprise the wider settlement of Carpenders Park and the care home adjacent to the Site. It is an established planning principle that there is no private right to a view.
- 6.5. Residential views have been assessed as part of the settlement edge where public access is available, however an individual assessment of the impact upon the views of all individual scattered dwellings with potential views of the proposed development does not form part of

the scope of this assessment. It should be noted that it is an established planning principle that there is 'no private right to a view', and consequently if suitable privacy distances between existing properties and proposed development are maintained, any private views of new built development should not be a valid consideration in the determination of the planning application.

6.6. The following receptors that fall within the Study Area and are partially covered by the SZTV, have been scoped out of the detailed visual assessment as it is assessed that there would be no potential for any readily discernible visual effects:

- Users of South Oxhey Playing Fields to the far west due to the intervening settlements of Carpenders Park and South Oxhey, and with additional screening by tall intervening hedgerows and blocks of trees
- The settlement of Hatch End to the far southwest, due to a very small area of the northern settlement edge being located within the SZTV, and due to the intervening built form of Carpenders Park and the railway line with associated vegetation which would further restrict views towards the Site.

Views from the north

6.7. PRoW Footpath ref 'Watford Rural O13' passes through the northern field parcel within the Site, from the A4008 Oxhey Lane through the northwestern boundary, and out through the northeastern boundary into Merry Hill along PRoW Footpath ref 'Bushey O25'. **Viewpoint 1** is taken from within the Site adjacent to the northwestern boundary from the lower ground adjacent to the road, with the steeply rising landform within the Site enclosing the view east, with the roof of the adjacent Carpenders Park Care Home visible south of the route above the boundary vegetation. **Viewpoint 2** is taken from the higher landform within the Site from the PRoW adjacent to the northeastern boundary. From this point, the view west across the adjacent settlement is open, with a degree of enclosure from the mature trees along the northern boundary, and the overgrown hedgerow enclosing the view to the east. The care home and communications tower are visible above the intervening landform.

6.8. Views from the settlement edge to the north of the Site are illustrated by **Viewpoint 3**, taken from the pavement at the corner of Greenfield Avenue and Penrose Avenue. The bungalows along Penrose Avenue are visible to the south, and traffic along Oxhey Lane. The view southeast allows for some partial views into the Site, with the rising landform of the northern field parcel visible above the hedgerow and through the trees along Oxhey Lane, and through the mature trees along the northern field parcel. The central and southern sections of the Site are not visible, however the communications tower and roof top of the care home adjacent to the Site's western boundary is visible on the higher landform.

6.9. The view south from PRoW Bridleway ref 'Watford Rural O31' within Merry Hill open access land is illustrated by **Viewpoint 4**. The view is partially enclosed by the mature trees along the field boundary to the south of the route, and by the scattered mature trees within the intervening field parcels and along the Site's northern boundary, however a glimpsed view of the rising landform within the northern field parcel is visible above the intervening vegetation and through the trees. The 3-storey block of flats off By the Wood are visible beyond Oxhey Lane through a gap in the trees along the road.

6.10. **Viewpoint 5** is also taken from Merry Hill from adjacent to a bench along an internal informal footpath route. From this point, the Site is screened from view by the maturing woodland within Merry Hill.

Views from the east

- 6.11. Merry Hill open access land is located immediately adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary, extending to the east towards Bushey Heath and north towards Merry Hill Road. The land is managed by the Woodland Trust and has become increasingly more wooded over the past 13 years. The woodland to the immediate east of the Site is fairly young, although connects up with the mature trees along the Site's eastern boundary
- 6.12. There are a number of informal footpath routes through Merry Hill to the east of the Site, including immediately adjacent the Site's eastern boundary. There are some partial views into the Site possible from gaps in the boundary vegetation from these routes, where views west are possible across the settlement of Carpenders Park. **Viewpoint 6** looks west from the boundary, and Carpenders Park care home and communications tower is visible adjacent to the Site's western boundary, with glimpsed views of roof tops of the residential settlement visible beyond the intervening trees within the Site and along the Site's western boundary.
- 6.13. PRoW Footpath ref 'BUSHEY O25' traverses northeast through Merry Hill towards Bushey Heath, with a number of benches located along the route which look out across the sloping landform to the southeast towards Hartsbourne golf course. **Viewpoint 7** looks southwest from adjacent to one of the benches adjacent to the footpath. The view is most open towards the southeast, and the view southwest towards the Site is more enclosed with hedgerows, scrubby young woodland and trees within Merry Hill open access land obscuring the view towards the ground level of the Site. Glimpsed views of Carpenders Park care home and communications
- 6.14. **Viewpoint 8** looks southwest from a bench off an internal footpath route within Merry Hill, where the intervening young woodland and larger mature trees within the open Woodland Trust Site obscures the view towards the Site.
- 6.15. PRoW Footpath ref 'BUSHEY O25' extends east to meet Merry Hill Lane in Bushey, and **Viewpoint 9** is taken within Merry Hill from the route adjacent to Bushey's western settlement edge, looking southwest towards the Site. The view is much more enclosed from this point with more dense young woodland located

Views from the south

- 6.16. The landscape to the south of the Site is also well wooded, with belts of trees along the course of Hartsbourne Stream which runs along the lower landform approximately 20–40m south of the Site boundary. Beyond that, Mutton Wood spreads between the northern edge of Grims Dyke golf course and the western edge of Hartsbourne golf course, with belts of mature trees throughout both courses and along field boundaries and Oxhey Lane to the south of the Site. **Viewpoint 10** looks north from the pavement along the A4008 Oxhey Lane. From this point, there is a filtered view into the southern field parcel of the Site where the landform rises above the intervening field boundary vegetation. The view is generally well enclosed due to the vegetation along both sides of the road, and only glimpsed, filtered views of the existing 3–storey care home development west of the Site are visible through the trees along the road and along the Site's southern boundary.
- 6.17. Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery is located to the western edge of Oxhey Lane, with internal vehicular access tracks, seating, notice boards and regular visitors. **Viewpoint 11** looks north from the access road within the cemetery, and the dense belt of trees along the road and evergreen trees to the northern edge of the cemetery obscures the view towards the Site. Heavily filtered glimpsed views of the rising landform within the central field parcel of the Site are possible through the intervening vegetation.

- 6.18. **Viewpoint 12** looks northwest from PRow Footpath route 'HARROW 37' / London Loop long distance route from a high point within Grims Dyke Golf Course. The mature trees along the northeastern boundary of the golf course, throughout the golf course and within Mutton Wood, actively obscure the Site from view, from both this route and PRow Footpath ref 'Harrow 38'.

Views from the west

- 6.19. The recent 3-storey development of Carpenders Park Care Home is immediately west of the Site boundary along Oxhey Lane. **Viewpoint 13** looks east from the pavement along Oxhey Lane adjacent to Highfield and illustrates how the building is visually prominent and obscures most of the Site from view. A small part of the ground level of the Site is visible above the boundary wall to the north of the care home beyond the busy car park. Existing mature trees and other overgrown hedgerow vegetation along the Site's western boundary obscures the view into the Site from the road.
- 6.20. **Viewpoint 13** looks southeast from the pavement along the A4008 Oxhey Lane adjacent Carpenders Avenue. The dense overgrown hedgerow vegetation along the road obscures the view into the Site, save for some heavily filtered views of the rising landform within the northern field parcel which is visible through the vegetation. A steel kissing gate provides access to the PRow footpath route 'Watford Rural O13' through the Site, visible from the road. The roof top of the care home development is just visible above the boundary vegetation along the road.
- 6.21. Some residential streets within Carpenders Park are oriented towards the highest point of the Site within the northern field parcel. The view from Carpenders Avenue is shown in **Viewpoint 15**, which looks east towards the Site from the pavement along the road. Partial views of the rising landform of the northern part of the Site are possible above the bungalows on the southern side of the road. The central and southern part of the Site are not visible from this location, nor is the care home adjacent to the western boundary.
- 6.22. There are other locations along high points within the settlement where views southeast towards the Site are possible, and glimpsed views above the intervening properties are possible. **Viewpoint 16** looks southeast from the pavement along Greenfield Avenue adjacent to On the Hill, and a glimpsed view of the high landform in the northern field parcel is visible above the bungalows on the southern side of the road, through the Site's northern boundary vegetation.
- 6.23. There are some distant views possible from higher landform within South Oxhey to the far west. Viewpoint 17 looks east from Fairfield Avenue within South Oxhey, through the intervening built form of blocks of flats and across Carpenders Park towards the Site. A distant, glimpsed view of the steeply sloping, high landform within the northern field parcel is visible above the intervening built form and trees. The central and southern field parcels are not visible from this point.

Visual Receptor Assessment.

- 6.24. Based on the field assessment and the representative viewpoints shown on **Figure 7**, the following receptors have been identified where public views of the proposed development would be available, illustrated in the **Annotated Photoviews Nos. 1-17 (Figure 8)**.
- 6.25. **Table 2** below sets out the assessment of receptor sensitivity in accordance with the **Detailed Methodology at Appendix 2**.

Table 2: Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Receptor	Viewpoints	Value	Susceptibility to change	Sensitivity
Settlements & Places of Interest				
Carpenders Park	3, 13, 14, 15 & 16	Medium	Medium	Medium
South Oxhey	17	Medium	Medium	Medium
Bushey Heath	9	Medium	Medium	Medium
Oxhey		Medium	Medium	Medium
Merry Hill Open Access Land	4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9	High	High	High
Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery	11	Medium	Medium	Medium
Hartsbourne Golf Course	-	Medium	Medium	Medium
Public rights of way / Long-Distance Footpaths & Public Open Space				
Users of PRoW Footpath ref 'WATFORD RURAL 013' within the Site	1 & 2	Medium	High	High
Users of PRoW Footpath ref 'BUSHEY 025'	7 & 9	High	High	High
Users of PRoW Footpath ref London Loop long distance route	12	High	High	High
PRoW Bridleway ref 'WATFORD RURAL 031'	4	High	High	High

Receptor	Viewpoints	Value	Susceptibility to change	Sensitivity
Highways				
Users of the A4008 Oxhey Lane	10, 13, 14	Medium	Medium	Medium

6.26. Based on the **Detailed Methodology** at **Appendix 2** and with reference to the **Annotated Photoviews (Figure 8)** and field survey, **Table 3** below, sets out the assessment of the visual effects at Year 1 and Year 15 following construction. The assessment is based on the **Illustrative Masterplan** at **Appendix 1** and the **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** at **Appendix 3**.

Table 3: Operational Effects on Views from Visual Receptor Groups

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
Settlement & Places of Interest			
Carpenders Park (Viewpoints 3, 13, 14, 15 & 5)	Medium	Year 1: From much of Carpenders Park, views towards the Site are restricted by the intervening residential properties along the eastern settlement edge. There are some locations in close proximity to the Site's western boundary where partially restricted views into the Site are possible, including streets which are aligned towards the Site (Viewpoint 3), however the existing vegetation along the road screens the view from most points in proximity to the Site or views are well filtered by the intervening vegetation (Viewpoint 14). The recently constructed 3-storey care home development adjacent to the Site's western boundary obscures the view from other points close to the Site (Viewpoint 13). There are some streets where partial views into the northernmost field parcel are possible due to the elevated landform within the northern field parcel being visible above the intervening built form (Viewpoints 15), with some more distant views from higher landform are possible (Viewpoint 16). Whilst partial views of some new built form would be experienced, this would mostly be limited to the 2-storey development within the northern field parcel, which would be offset from the boundary with a large area of open space. Proposed new dwellings would be seen within the within the context of existing residential built form	Year 1: Moderate Adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
		including the recent care home and the wider settlement edge of Carpenders Park, and consequently would not appear incongruous in terms of density and height. The overall magnitude of change would be Medium .	
		Year 15: Proposed reinforcement of existing perimeter vegetation with native hedgerows, an area of native woodland planting including individual scattered native trees throughout the open space, and native hedgerows maintained at 3m height and width along the interface of the proposed new development, will all have established by year 15 to soften and obscure the view of the new buildings. Over time the proposed green infrastructure would reduce the overall visibility of new built development and help integrate the development into the local context. The overall magnitude of change would be Low .	Year 15: Minor Adverse
South Oxhey (Viewpoint 17)	Medium	Year 1: South Oxhey is located approximately 850m to the west of the Site beyond Carpenders Park and the trainline. There are some points within South Oxhey where some distant, glimpsed views of the higher landform within the northern part of the Site is visible (Viewpoint 17), however are seen within the context of dense urban built form including high rise buildings, and distant views over the extensive built form of Carpenders Park. By year 1, there would be distant, glimpsed views of the proposed new residential properties from some high points within South Oxhey, however would not be incongruous given the densely urban setting. The magnitude of change would be Negligible .	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Proposed woodland and individual tree planting within the area of open space to the north of the Site will have established to further obscure views of new built form. The overall magnitude of change would remain Negligible .	Year 15: Negligible
Bushey Heath	Medium	Year 1: Bushey Heath is located approximately 1.1km to the northeast of the Site. There is a significant area of woodland throughout Merry Hill between the Site and the western	Year 1: Negligible

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
(Viewpoint 9)		settlement edge of Bushey Heath including Little Hartsbourne Wood and the woodland adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary, with belts of woodland throughout Hartsbourne golf course. The densely wooded landscape restricts the possibility of visibility of the Site and proposed new built form from Bushey Heath (Viewpoint 9). The overall magnitude of change at year 1 is Negligible .	
		Year 15: The intervening woodland throughout Merry Hill will have continued to establish to further restrict views of the proposed development, and structural planting throughout the Site will have established to further limit potential visibility of new built form from Bushey Heath. The magnitude of change would remain Negligible .	Year 15: Negligible
Oxhey	Medium	Year 1: The southernmost edge of the settlement of Oxhey is located approximately 850m to the northwest of the Site boundary. While the SZTV (Figure 6) indicates potential views from the southeastern edge of the settlement, in reality there are large areas of woodland south of the settlement which obscure the view of the Site itself, and further mature hedgerows and trees along intervening field boundaries and within intervening fields which are not considered within the SZTV, and which would further restrict the view of any new built form within the Site. Overall, the magnitude of change for the settlement are considered to be Negligible	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Proposed native woodland and individual scattered tree planting within the area of public open space within the northern section of the Site, and native hedgerows along the interface of the new buildings will have established, to further limit visibility of the new built form once established. The magnitude of change would remain Negligible .	Year 15: Negligible
Users of Merry Hill open access land	High	Year 1: Merry Hill is a 76ha area of open access land managed by The Woodland Trust located immediately east of the Site boundary, and spreading between Bushey, Oxhey and Carpenders Park. There are several PRoW	Year 1: Minor Adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
(Viewpoints 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9)		<p>routes which traverse the parkland and a number of informal routes. Users of the park would experience partial views of new built form from locations in closest proximity to the Site, including from the informal pedestrian route immediately adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary (Viewpoint 6), however from here there are partial views of the Carpenders Park care home visible adjacent to the Site, along with views across the wider settlement edge. From the north, there would be some glimpsed views into the northern field parcel and of the proposed new built form located on higher ground, visible through the intervening trees (Viewpoint 4). From more distant locations located to the northeast / east of the Site, the dense woodland vegetation throughout Merry Hill and to the east of the Site, encloses the view and would largely obscure views of new built form (Viewpoints 5, 7, 8 & 9). The magnitude of change would be Low.</p>	
		<p>Year 15: Proposed new built form would be further obscured from most locations within Merry Hill with the continued establishment of the woodland throughout the park, and with the establishment of the scattered tree planting along the eastern edge of the Site throughout the landscape buffer. Glimpsed views of roof tops would be possible from some limited number of locations, or from points immediately adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible.</p>	Year 15: Negligible
Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery (Viewpoint 11)	Medium	<p>Year 1: The vehicular access into the cemetery is approximately 130m southwest of the Site. There are internal roads and benches throughout the cemetery, and a wide belt of trees along the course of the Hartsbourne stream and along Oxhey Lane which obscures the view into the Site (Viewpoint 11). Filtered views of the rising landform of the southernmost field parcel in the Site are possible from the northern section of the cemetery, and filtered views of new built form may be possible from a limited number of</p>	Year 1: Negligible

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
		locations at year 1. The magnitude of change would be Negligible .	
		Year 15: Proposed scattered native shrub and tree planting along the attenuation feature within the southern section of public open space will establish with time. This would further obscure the view towards the new built form, and the magnitude of change would be Negligible at year 15 overall.	Year 15: Negligible
Hartsbourne Golf Course	Medium	Year 1: Users of the golf course may experience distant, glimpsed views of new built form from a small number of locations from within the Golf Course, and from the club house off Hartsbourne Avenue in Bushey Heath. These views would be highly filtered by the intervening mature trees throughout the golf course, within Little Hartsbourne Wood and throughout Merry Hill, and along intervening field boundaries. Overall, the magnitude of change would be Negligible .	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Proposed scattered native shrub and tree planting along the attenuation feature within the southern section of public open space and along the eastern boundary will establish with time. This would further obscure the view towards the new built form, and the magnitude of change would remain Negligible at year 15.	Year 15: Negligible
Public rights of way & Long-Distance Footpaths			
Users of PRow Footpath ref 'WATFORD RURAL 013' within the Site (Viewpoints 1 & 2)	High	Year 1: The footpath passes along the northern boundary within the Site between Oxhey Lane at the Site's northwestern corner, and into Merry Hill at the northeastern corner. The landform rises towards the northeastern boundary. The view is quite enclosed by the steep landform at the western edge of the route (Viewpoint 1); however, Carpenders Park care home is visible on top of the high landform south of the route, to the centre of the Site. Towards the eastern edge of the route, the view opens up across the surrounding settlement from the higher landform (Viewpoint 2), with some enclosure created by the mature trees along the	Year 1: Major adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
		northern boundary. With the new built form in the northern parcel, the experience from the higher landform of the route to the northeast would become more enclosed with built form. The magnitude of change would be High .	
		Year 15: The establishment of the proposed belt of woodland, native hedgerows along the interface of the new built form, the fruit trees within the community orchard and scattered native tree planting along the northern area of public open space would have established, to obscure views of new built form. The experience from the route would retain a degree of openness where views west across the footpath route and over Carpenders Park would be possible. The overall magnitude of change would be Medium .	Year 15: Moderate adverse
Users of PRow Footpath ref 'BUSHEY O25' (Viewpoints 7 & 9)	High	Year 1: The footpath extends northeast from the Site's northeastern boundary, through Merry Hill open access land. It continues to Merry Hill Road along the western edge of Bushey Heath. The view west towards the Site is largely obscured by the mature trees along the Site's eastern boundary, and by trees along old field boundaries which the route passes through. There are also many scattered young trees and shrubs within Merry Hill which limit visibility towards the Site and would obscure the view of new built form. Partial views of new buildings would be possible from points close to the eastern boundary. Glimpsed views would be possible from most locations (Viewpoint 7), and further towards Bushey Heath there would be a higher degree of screening by intervening vegetation (Viewpoint 9). Overall, the magnitude of change would be Low .	Year 1: Minor Adverse
		Year 15: The significant amount of new native hedgerow and tree planting within the area of public open space to the northern boundary and along the eastern boundary will have established to further obscure views of new built form. Overall, the magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible .	Year 15: Negligible

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
Users of London Loop Long Distance Footpath (Viewpoint 12)	High	<p>Year 1: The long-distance route passes within 500m south of the Site along the northern edge of Grim's Dyke golf course. There is no view towards the Site from the majority of the route, due to the intervening mature hedgerows and trees along the northern edge of the golf course, and due to blocks of woodland south of the Site (Viewpoint 12). The route crosses Oxhey Lane and along the B4542 Little Oxhey Lane, however there are belts of trees along the road not shown on OS mapping which obscures the view towards the Site, with further screening by Carpenders Park Garden Centre and throughout the cemetery. There may be distant, glimpsed views of new built form visible from small sections of the route, from higher landform, where roof tops may be visible above the intervening woodland. Overall the magnitude of change would be Negligible.</p>	Year 1: Negligible
		<p>Year 15: Proposed native shrub and tree planting within the area of open space surrounding the proposed attenuation basin in the southern part of the Site will have established, to further soften any potential views of new built form. The magnitude of change would remain Negligible.</p>	Year 15: Negligible
Users of BRoW Bridleway ref 'WATFORD RURAL 031' Viewpoint 4	High	<p>Year 1: PRoW Bridleway ref 'Watford Rural 031' runs adjacent to PRoW Footpath ref 'Watford Rural 12'. The routes merge into footpath route 'Bushey 17' and Bridleway ref 'Bushey 65' within Hertsmere district, passing northeast through Merry Hill towards Merry Hill Road at Bushey. There are some filtered views south through the intervening trees of the rising landform in the northern field parcel of the Site, from locations immediately north of the Site (Viewpoint 4). There would be some filtered views of new built form in through the intervening trees and potentially above the trees from this short section of the route. Users would not experience views from majority of the route as it travels northeast through some dense areas of woodland, therefore views would be localised. Overall, the magnitude of change would be Low.</p>	Year 1: Minor Adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
		<p>Year 15: A significant amount of new tree planting with a proposed area of woodland, with scattered native trees, native hedgerows along the interface of the residential built edge and a new community orchard located within the northern area of open space will have established and would provide a high level of visual screening which would limit the potential for new built form being visible from the route. Effects would reduce to Negligible at year 15.</p>	<p>Year 15: Negligible</p>
Highways			
<p>Users of the A4008 Oxhey Lane (Viewpoints 10, 13 & 14)</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Year 1: The A4008 Oxhey Lane runs adjacent to the Site's western boundary. It is a busy road with mature hedgerows and trees along both sides of the route, and along the Site's western boundary, save for where the recently constructed Carpenders Park Care Home is located between the Site and the road. There is a pavement along the eastern side of the road when approaching the northwestern corner of the Site from the north, and a pavement along both sides of the road between Carpenders Avenue and Highfield. South of Highfield there is a narrow pavement along the eastern side of the road adjacent to the care home and a short section of the Site's western boundary. On the approach to the Site from the south (Viewpoint 10) the mature hedgerows and trees along both sides of the road encloses the view, however there are some short sections where the view across the intervening field south of the Site allows for filtered views into the southern parcel of the Site, and the care home is visible through the trees. On the approach to the Site from the north (Viewpoint 14) the overgrown hedgerow along the road also obscures the view into the Site, however some filtered views of the rising landform in the northern field parcel is visible through the vegetation, with glimpsed views of the rooftop of the care home. From a high point along the road adjacent to Carpenders Park Care Home (Viewpoint 13) the 3-storey care home entirely obscures the view into the Site,</p>	<p>Year 1: Moderate adverse</p>

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effects
		<p>with only a glimpsed view of the central western field parcel visible adjacent to the care home.</p> <p>From much of the route the existing vegetation along the road and the Site's western boundary would obscure the view of the new built form, however there would be partial fleeting views of new built form possible from some points along the route through gaps in the boundary vegetation, and where the proposed new vehicular access road would open up the view from the northwestern corner of the Site with the removal of some of the boundary vegetation. Overall, the magnitude of change would be Medium.</p>	
		<p>Year 15: Proposed new planting will have established by year 15 to further reduce visibility of new built form within the Site, including a large area of native woodland planting between the proposed attenuation basin and the development parcel, native shrub and tree planting around the basin, and scattered individual native trees throughout the northern area of public open space, with native hedgerows planted along the interface of the northernmost development parcel. will have established to further limit views into the Site, and of new buildings on the approach to the Site from the north. The western boundary adjacent to the care home will also be bolstered with new native hedgerow, shrub and tree planting to soften intervisibility between the existing care home and proposed housing with care buildings, and reduce any potential views into the Site from the road. Once established, the new planting will reflect the existing enclosed nature of the experience from along the road, with only a small section of the Site visible along the proposed access road. Overall, the magnitude of change would be Low.</p>	<p>Year 15: Minor adverse</p>

Summary of Visual Effects.

- 6.27. Based on the **Detailed Methodology** at **Appendix 2** and with reference to the **Annotated Photoviews (Figure 8)** and field survey, **Table 4** below, sets out the assessment of the visual effects at Year 1 and Year 15 following construction. The assessment is based on the **Illustrative Masterplan** at **Appendix 1**, with the Year 15 assessment factoring in the growth of mitigation planting as shown on the **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan** in **Appendix 3**.

Table 4: Summary of Effects upon Visual Receptor Groups

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Overall Effect
Settlement & Places of Interest			
Carpenders Park (Viewpoints 3, 13, 14, 15 & 5)	Medium	Year 1: Medium	Year 1: Moderate adverse
		Year 15: Low	Year 15: Minor adverse
South Oxhey (Viewpoint 17)	Medium	Year 1: Negligible	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Bushey Heath (Viewpoint 9)	Medium	Year 1: Negligible	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Oxhey	Medium	Year 1: Negligible	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Users of Merry Hill open access land (Viewpoints 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9)	Medium	Year 1: Low	Year 1: Minor Adverse
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery (Viewpoint 11)	Medium	Year 1: Negligible	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Hartsbourne Golf Course	Medium	Year 1: Negligible	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Public rights of way			

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Overall Effect
Users of 'PRoW Footpath ref 'WATFORD RURAL O13' within the Site (Viewpoints 1 & 2)	High	Year 1: High	Year 1: Major adverse
		Year 15: Medium	Year 15: Moderate adverse
Users of PRoW Footpath ref 'BUSHEY O25' (Viewpoints 7 & 9)	High	Year 1: Low	Year 1: Minor adverse
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Users of London Loop Long Distance Footpath (Viewpoint 12)	High	Year 1: Negligible	Year 1: Negligible
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Users of BRoW Bridleway ref 'WATFORD RURAL O31' (Viewpoint 4)	High	Year 1: Low	Year 1: Minor adverse
		Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Highways			
Users of the A4008 Oxhey Lane (Viewpoints 10, 13 & 14)	Medium	Year 1: Medium	Year 1: Moderate adverse
		Year 15: Low	Year 15: Minor adverse

7. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

7.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration in planning decisions and any development would need to accord with the following planning provisions. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out at Paragraph 11. The NPPF sets out overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. For decision-taking, a development that accords with a current development plan should be approved without delay; and, where the development plan is absent, silent, or relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

“i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.”

7.2. Footnote 7 outlines the protected areas or assets of particular importance to the NPPF policies (rather than those in development plans) which relate to:

- Habitat sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 187); and/or
- Designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, National Landscapes (previously AONBs), a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast;
- Irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and
- Areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

7.3. The Site and its immediate setting do not lie within any area designated for its landscape value. At Paragraph 8, criterion ‘c’ describes the ‘environmental objective’ to **“protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”**.

7.4. The Site is located in Green Belt and the policy back-ground and how the proposals would impact upon openness and the purposes of the Green Belt is covered in a separate report by Pegasus Group. Consequently, no further reference to Green Belt policy is included in this section of the LVIA to avoid duplication.

7.5. Paragraph 20 refers to strategic policies that should make sufficient provision for the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built, and historic environment, including landscapes, and green infrastructure and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation. Paragraph 135 relates to achieving well-designed places, criterion ‘b’ requires developments to be **“visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout**

and appropriate and effective landscaping". Criterion 'c' also sets out to ensure that developments **"are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)"**.

- 7.6. Para. 136 describes how trees make an **"important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change."** It states how **"new streets [should be] tree-lined"**, and **'that opportunities area taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible'**". In relation to the proposed development the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan indicates that the vast majority of existing trees would be retained, that tree-lined streets are proposed along the main access road and internal streets, with blocks of native woodland and orchard trees set within the area of public open space and scattered tree planting along the Site boundary.
- 7.7. Section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment specifies how planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Paragraph 187a states that protection and enhancement of **"valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils"** should be **"in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan"**. Critetion 'b' also notes that the **"intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services"** should be recognised. As set out in the baseline section of this report it is not considered that the Site is located within a valued landscape.
- 7.8. Paragraph 188 makes it clear that there is a hierarchy to the importance and value attributed to landscapes, and that the development plan should identify and allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, while taking a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing existing habitat and green infrastructure networks. Para. 189 describes how the **"scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas"**. The proposed development is not in a designated area.
- 7.9. Within Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, Paragraph 203 states how local authorities should consider amongst other things, **"the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness"**. The **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix 3)** and Design and Access Statement that accompanies the application illustrate the potential for the proposed development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Three Rivers Development Plan

- 7.10. The main documents which form the adopted Development Plan for Three Rivers District Council include the Core Strategy adopted in October 2011, the Site Allocations Local Development Document (LDD) adopted in November 2014 and the Development Management Policies Local Development Document Adopted July 2013.

Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2011)

- 7.11. The Core Strategy identifies Carpenders Park as a Secondary Centre, however, locates the Site itself as outside of the settlement and within the Green Belt (see separate Green Belt Assessment document by Pegasus Group).
- 7.12. The following policies are of relevance to the Site or landscape and visual matters:

Policy CP1 – Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development

7.13. The policy includes:

“All development in Three Rivers will contribute to the sustainability of the District. This means taking into account the need to...

C) Minimising flood risk through the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems...

D)... incorporate mixed-use development wherever possible...

f) Protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environments from inappropriate development and improve the diversity of wildlife and habitats...”

Policy CP9 – Green Infrastructure

7.14. The policy states:

“The Council will seek a net gain in the quality and quantity of Green Infrastructure, through the protection and enhancement of assets and provision of new green spaces.

Priorities for Green Infrastructure focus on conserving and enhancing the following key assets and the linkages between them which are illustrated in Appendix 5:

...d) the District’s Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, wildlife sites, key biodiversity habitats, species and areas identified in the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and heritage assets and landscape character within areas of Green Infrastructure.

It is also important to improve connectivity between key assets through the establishment of linked and coherent networks and corridors of green spaces and sustainable transport links...

The Council will require new development to contribute to the delivery of new Green Infrastructure and the management of a linked network of new and enhanced open spaces and corridors.

Development will not compromise the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network, by causing fragmentation, damage to, or isolation of Green Infrastructure assets including natural habitats and species.”

Policy CP12 – Design of Development

7.15. The policy states:

“In seeking a high standard of design, the Council will expect all development proposals to:

a) Have regard to the local context and conserve or enhance the character, amenities and quality of an area

b) Conserve and enhance natural and heritage assets

c) Protect residential amenities by taking into account the need for adequate levels and disposition of privacy, prospect, amenity and garden space

- d) Make efficient use of land whilst respecting the distinctiveness of the surrounding area in terms of density, character, layout and spacing, amenity, scale, height, massing and use of materials**
- e) Build resilience into a site's design taking into account climate change (for example flood resistant design)**
- f) Use innovative design to reduce energy and waste and optimise the potential of the site**
- g) Ensure buildings and spaces are, wherever possible, orientated to gain benefit from sunlight and passive solar energy**
- h) Design out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour through the incorporation of appropriate measures to minimise the risk of crime and create safe and attractive places**
- i) Incorporate visually attractive frontages to adjoining streets and public spaces**
- j) Ensure all appropriate frontages contain windows and doors that assist informal surveillance of the public realm**
- k) Use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping; also provide/contribute towards street furniture and public art where appropriate**
- l) Ensure the development is adequately landscaped and is designed to retain, enhance or improve important existing natural features; landscaping should reflect the surrounding landscape of the area and where appropriate integrate with adjoining networks of green open spaces**
- m) Make a clear distinction between public and private spaces and enhance the public realm**
- n) Ensure that places, spaces and buildings are accessible to all potential users, including those with mobility difficulties**
- o) Provide convenient, safe and visually attractive areas for the parking of vehicles and cycles without dominating the development or its surroundings**
- p) Be durable and, where practical, buildings should be capable of adapting to other uses and functions in order to ensure their long-life.**

Detailed design guidance and standards will be provided in the Three Rivers Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document."

Development Management Policies Local Development Document (LDD) (2013)

- 7.16. The Development Management Policies LDD sets out the criteria against which all planning applications within the district will be considered, to deliver the vision and objectives set out in the Core Strategy.

DMI Residential Design and Layout

- 7.17. The policy includes:

"All applications for residential development should satisfy the design criteria as set out in Appendix 2 to ensure that development does not lead to a gradual

deterioration in the quality of the built environment, and that landscaping, the need for privacy and amenity space and the creation of identity in housing layouts are taken into account.

a) New Residential Development

The Council will protect the character and residential amenity of existing areas of housing from forms of “backland”, “infill” or other forms of new residential development which are inappropriate for the area...”.

DM6 Biodiversity, Trees, Woodlands, Watercourses and Landscaping

7.18. The policy includes:

“Development should result in no net loss of biodiversity value across the District as a whole...

a) Development that would affect a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve, Local Wildlife Site or protected species under UK or European law, or identified as being in need of conservation by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan or the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan , will not be permitted where there is an adverse impact on the ecological, geological or biodiversity interests of the site, unless it can be demonstrated that:

i) The need for the development would outweigh the need to safeguard the biodiversity of the site, and where alternative wildlife habitat provision can be made in order to maintain local biodiversity; and

ii) Adverse effects can be satisfactorily minimised through mitigation and compensation measures to maintain the level of biodiversity in the area...

c) In the first instance development should seek to avoid impacts on designated sites and important habitats/species through sensitive design and consideration of alternatives. Proposals should seek to incorporate measures for biodiversity enhancement and Green Infrastructure delivery wherever possible.

d) Development must conserve, enhance and, where appropriate, restore biodiversity through:

i) Protecting habitats and species identified for retention

ii) Providing compensation for the loss of any habitats

iii) Providing for the management of habitats and species

iv) Maintaining the integrity of important networks of natural habitats, and

v) Enhancing existing habitats and networks of habitats and providing roosting, nesting and feeding opportunities for rare and protected species.

e) Linked habitats are important in allowing species to adapt and respond to circumstances.

Development must not result in fragmentation or isolation of wildlife habitats and should seek opportunities for habitat connectivity with the wider landscape.

f) Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping

i) Proposals for new development should be submitted with landscaping proposals which seek to retain trees and other important landscape and nature conservation features. Landscaping proposals should also include new trees and other planting to enhance the landscape of the site and its surroundings as appropriate.

ii) Development proposals on sites which contain existing trees and hedgerows will be expected to retain as many trees and hedgerows as possible, particularly those of local amenity or nature conservation value or hedgerows considered to meet the criteria of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

iii) Development proposals should demonstrate that existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands will be safeguarded and managed during and after development in accordance with the relevant British Standards.

iv) Development should be designed in such a way as to allow trees and hedgerows to grow to maturity without causing undue problems of visibility, shading or damage.

Development likely to result in future requests for significant topping, lopping or felling will be refused.

v) Planning permission will be refused for any development resulting in the loss or deterioration to protected woodland (including ancient woodland), protected trees (including aged or veteran trees) and hedgerows, unless conditions can be imposed to secure their protection.

vi) Where the felling of a tree or removal of a hedgerow is permitted, a replacement tree or hedge of an appropriate species, size and in a suitable location will be required, taking account of issues such as landscape and biodiversity.

vii) Areas forming part of development proposals which are to be transferred to the local authority for maintenance should be designed for ease of access and low cost maintenance overheads and management regimes.

g) Watercourses

Any development adjacent to, over or in a watercourse needs to take into account consideration of the Water Framework Directive requirements and opportunities outlined in the Thames River Basin Management Plan. All developments should seek to improve the biodiversity of the site and contribute towards the riparian corridor's ability to be used by migrating species."

7.19. The Site is located adjacent to a small section of Local Wildlife Site as identified within the local plan. The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan illustrates how the proposed development the proposals would comply with this policy.

DM7 Landscape Character

7.20. The policy includes:

"...b) Landscape Regions

In all landscape regions, the Council will require proposals to make a positive contribution to the surrounding landscape. Proposals that would unacceptably harm the character of the landscape in terms of siting, scale, design or external

appearance will be refused planning permission. The Council will support proposals that:

i) Lead to the removal or a reduction in the impact of existing structures and land uses that are detrimental to the visual quality of the landscape

ii) Enhance public access and recreation opportunities without detriment to the landscape or wildlife

iii) Contribute to delivery of Green Infrastructure

iv) Contribute to the measures identified in the Hertfordshire Landscape Strategy 2001 to strength, reinforce, safeguard, manage, improve, restore and reconstruct landscapes.

c) When considering proposals for development which may affect the management of an area of particular feature of the landscape, details of management proposals to protect or enhance the contribution of the site to the wider landscape will be required."

DM11 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities and Children's Play Space

7.21. The policy includes:

"...g) In order to ensure that new residential developments do not exacerbate deficiencies in open space and children's play space, new residential development will be expected to provide for amenity and children's play space:

i) Developments of 25 or more dwellings or 0.6ha (whichever is greater) should make provision on site for open space and play space. 10% of the site area should be set aside as open space, and where the development is likely to be occupied by families with children 2% of the site area should provide formal equipped play facilities..."

Local Plan Regulation 18 Three Rivers Preferred Local Plan Lower Housing Growth Option Protecting More Green Belt Land (2023)

7.22. The council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, which underwent consultation between October to December 2023. The Three Rivers district council have recently paused the emerging draft local plan and are currently gathering further evidence considering the new government planning regulations to support their case. The new local plan is anticipated to be approved in late 2026.

Three Rivers Nature Recovery Strategy 2023–2028 (2023)

7.23. This document sets out the actions that the Three Rivers District Council will use to address its approach to nature conservation, habitat management and enhancement in response to the climate and ecological emergency. It sets out the strategy based on four main themes: Rivers and Wetlands, Trees and Woodlands, The Urban Environment and The Countryside.

Three Rivers Tree Strategy 2022–2027 (2023)

7.24. This document sets out the actions that the Three Rivers District Council will take over the 5 years in order to protect and sustainably manage existing trees and woodlands, along with its plans to increase tree numbers with planting new ones, and ensuring the right tree is planted in the right place, and properly maintained.

7.25. Paragraph 73 sets out a motion that the council passed to:

“... plant at least one tree for every new dwelling built and where appropriate replace one tree for every one removed in the District due to poor health or planning needs. Trees to be of native British stock, and full sized not miniature trees.”

Watling Chase Community Forest – A Guide for Landowners, Developers and Users SPG

7.26. This document aims to highlight the importance of the Watling Chase Community Forest and set out how development proposals within it can help achieve its objectives. The community forest covers approximately 18,840 hectares of land in Hertfordshire and northern fringe of London.

7.27. The main objectives of the Community Forest are outlined as:

- ***“creating a visually exciting and functionally diverse environment***
- ***regenerating the environment of the Green Belt and similar areas***
- ***protecting sites of nature conservation value and creating new opportunities for nature conservation***
- ***protecting areas of high quality landscape***
- ***increasing opportunities for sport and recreation and improving access to the countryside***
- ***providing new opportunities for the educational use of the area***
- ***protecting the best agricultural land and increasing opportunities for farm diversification***
- ***establishing a supply of timber and other woodland products***
- ***increasing community commitment to the Community Forest concept and involvement in its implementation***
- ***encouraging the private sector to implement the Forest’s aims and invest in the area***
- ***creating jobs in the woodland and leisure industries.”***

7.28. The document sets out what contributions by development proposals towards the Forest could include, such as wildlife/habitat creation of existing and new woodlands and other habitats, improving accessibility in terms of routes for both pedestrians and other non-motorised users included those with disabilities, promoting the use and enjoyment of the Forest by encouraging understanding and providing facilities, ensuring that development has an acceptable impact both on landscape, visually, tree numbers, on open space and amenity provision.

7.29. The document sets out examples of good design and practice, including:

- ***“planting native, locally present species of trees and other vegetation in the vicinity of ancient semi-natural woodland and important broadleaved settings***
- ***ensuring a diversity of species and ages within woodlands***

- *creating a balance of woodland and open space, including wildlife-rich grassland*
- *ensuring that new woodland habitat is not created at the expense of existing habitat that is valuable to wildlife such as coarse grassland, tall herb and scrub*
- *ensuring the scale of woodland reflects the scale of the landscape*
- *maintaining, framing or enhancing views to and from significant viewpoints*
- *not planting trees where archaeological heritage will be compromised*
- *ensuring any newly planted trees or newly created habitats become established by planning and implementing a maintenance programme*
- *discouraging development which diminishes the quality of the Forest environment such as the fragmentation of rural landscapes by fencing and other measures*
- *taking into account landscape character assessments*
- *incorporating 'planning out crime' features which will help increase community safety and reduce and prevent crime and disorder, for example in the creation of new routes."*

7.30. The **Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix 3)** and Design and Access Statement that accompanies the application illustrate the potential for the proposed development to implement sustainable design principles as an integral part of the development that respects and enhances the natural environment and existing landscape features. As part of this, the proposals include the enhancement of lower lying parts of the Site as a wetland habitat through developing the SuDs strategy with attenuation basins enhanced with marginal and aquatic planting and wet meadow grassland.

8. Summary and Conclusions

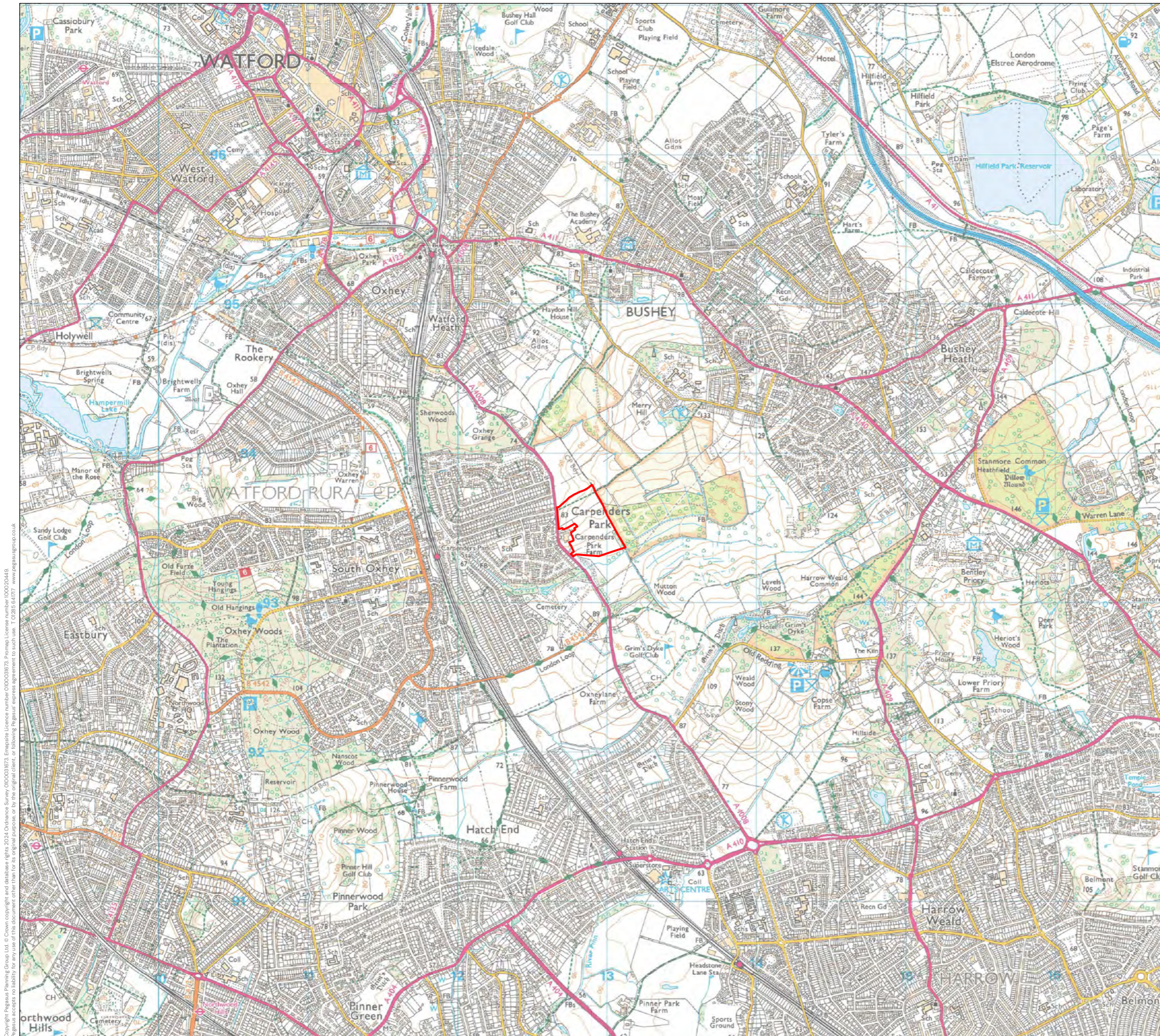
- 8.1. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared following best practice guidance, in support of an outline planning application with all matters reserved, other than principal means of access from Oxhey Lane, for the construction of up to 257 residential dwellings, housing with care, with the provision of open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure on a 12.7ha Site at Land at Carpenders Park.
- 8.2. The Site is located at the eastern edge of the settlement and comprises three main fields of grassland bound by mature belts of trees. Public Right of Way footpath ref 'Watford Rural 013' passes broadly east to west through the northern section of the Site. Carpenders Park Care Home is a modern, 3-storey building off Oxhey Lane immediately adjacent to the western boundary, with existing residential development to the west beyond the road. Properties generally back onto the A4008, with properties along Carpenders Avenue to the northwest of the Site being mostly bungalows angled perpendicular to the Site. There is mature hedgerows and vegetation flanking both the eastern side of Oxhey Road along the Site's western boundary, and along the western side of the road along the boundary of the rear gardens of properties which back onto the road. The northern boundary is defined by belts of mature trees and scrub, with the eastern boundary enclosed by mature trees with woodland at Merry Hill nature reserve beyond. The southern boundary is currently open to the field parcel to the south, however there are mature trees with scrub along the course of Hartsbourne Stream between 20–70m south of the boundary which encloses the Site.
- 8.3. Other than being located within the metropolitan Green Belt and part of the Watling Chase Community Forest, the Site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory landscape protection designations. There are no listed buildings or structures on or immediately adjoining the Site, the closest of which is approximately 740m to the southeast. Carpenders Park has no conservation area, and the closest is the 'Brookshill Drive and Grimsdyke Estate' Conservation Area approximately 900m to the southeast. Due to the intervening-built form and belts of woodland and mature hedgerows and trees along the Site and surrounding field boundaries, there is no intervisibility of the Site with the listed buildings or conservation areas.
- 8.4. The adjacent settlement Carpenders Park is located on land situated between 60–100m AOD, rising towards the eastern and western edges of the settlement. High points in the immediate surroundings reach over 130m AOD approximately 2.5km to the west at Eastbury and reaching 150m AOD approximately 2km to the northeast at Bushey Heath. The landform of the Site itself is between 77–104m AOD, with the lowest point at approximately 77m AOD along the southern boundary, up to 104m AOD along the northeastern boundary adjacent to Merry Wood. A localised low point along the course of Hartsbourne Stream is located to the south of the Site, however there are no waterbodies or watercourses within the Site itself.
- 8.5. Pegasus Group conclude that the landscape character of the Site has a Medium overall sensitivity to the type of development proposed with reference to Box 5.1 of the GLVIA3, and Technical Guidance Note 02/21 prepared by the Landscape Institute.
- 8.6. The iterative design of the scheme has been landscape-led, and as such, the development proposals include new landscape features which are locally appropriate. The landscape proposals include retaining and bringing into management the belts of the existing Blackthorn scrub throughout the Site and creating green corridors through the development, supplemented with mixed native shrub planting. Creating new native woodland and native hedgerows maintained at 3m height and width along the interface of the proposed new built form within the northern section of the Site, defining the area of public open space and aiding in the mitigation of views towards new built form from points to the immediate west. SUDs features including attenuation basins along the lower points within the Site to the northwestern and southern boundaries are proposed to be seeded with appropriate wet

meadow grassland and enhanced with marginal and aquatic planting, with blocks of native shrub planting and trees to create benefits for biodiversity while also aiding in softening views from points to the west and south. The proposals incorporate a variety of recreational opportunities for the existing and proposed community, including a community orchard to the northern area of open space, supplemented with wildflower meadow grassland and mown routes through the trees, an informal area of amenity grassland to encourage a range of informal activities including sports and play, and a dedicated equipped place space to comprise timber and natural material play equipment and seating. Dedicated paved footpath routes throughout the development and around the areas of open space within the landscape buffers around the Site boundary and through the internal green corridors connect within the local public right of way and highway network for improved accessibility. Together, these elements could provide increased habitats for biodiversity, improved pedestrian permeability and access to both dedicated and informal recreation to be enjoyed by both new residents and the wider existing community.

- 8.7. The Pegasus landscape assessment concludes that there would be a **Moderate adverse** effect on landcover from the loss of the rough grassland field parcels to new residential development and a **Minor adverse** effect upon topography where the landform would be largely retained at existing levels. All trees identified within the tree survey would be retained, and only localised sections of scrub would be removed to accommodate the proposed road network. There would be a notable increase in the quantity of new tree planting comprising a block of native woodland and scattered native tree planting within the northern area of open space and throughout the green corridors between the development parcels, with native hedgerows and individual trees planted throughout the green corridors and around the attenuation basins. A new a community orchard to the northern area of open space would comprise species of local provenance, and tree-lined streets are proposed throughout the development. There would be the potential for **Moderate beneficial** effects upon the tree resource within the Site and **Minor beneficial** effects upon hedgerows.
- 8.8. The baseline landscape character has been considered with reference to National Character Area 111: 'Northern Thames Basin', and the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005) that identifies the Site as lying within the 'Bushey Hill Pastures' Landscape Character Area (LCA). The Three Rivers District Council Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2019) considers the sensitivity to the principle of built development on a range of Sites and identifies parcel CFS69 containing the Site, as having a 'Medium High' sensitivity for residential use.
- 8.9. The magnitude of change within the Site, changing from open field to housing, albeit within a well-considered, landscape-led Site layout that would allow notable green infrastructure enhancement, results in an overall High magnitude of change and a **Major Adverse** effect upon baseline landscape character of the Site itself, and the immediate landscape context. Beyond the Site, there would be no change to any of the listed key characteristics of the LCA, and opportunity to perceive indirect perceptual effects upon landscape character from lighting or increased traffic movements would be **Negligible**.
- 8.10. A computer-generated Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV) has been used to inform the selection of representative public viewpoints from all directions and distances from the Site, with an emphasis on high sensitivity receptors including settlement edges and public rights of way.
- 8.11. It is an established planning principle that there is 'no private right to a view', and consequently if suitable privacy distances between existing properties and proposed development are maintained, any private views of new built development should not be a consideration in the determination of the planning application.

- 8.12. The Site has a very limited visual envelope due to surrounding built form of Carpenders Park to the west, the wooded character of the surrounding landscape and the undulating character of the surrounding landform, and a limited number of publicly accessible locations where views towards the Site are available.
- 8.13. The visual impact assessment concludes that initial changes to visual amenity would be **Major adverse** for users of the PRoW footpath route 'Watford Rural O13' which passes through the northern section of the Site, reducing to a **Moderate adverse** effect at Year 15 following the growth of mitigation planting.
- 8.14. The settlement of Carpenders Park and users of the A4008 Oxhey Lane would experience **Moderate adverse** effects at year 1 reducing to **Minor Adverse** at year 15 with the screening afforded by the significant amount of woodland, hedgerow and tree planting along the western boundary and throughout the open space by year 15.
- 8.15. Users of Merry Hill open access land, users of PRoW Footpath ref 'Bushey O25' which traverses Merry Hill to the east of the Site, and users of PRoW Bridleway ref 'Watford Rural O31' to the north within Merry Hill, would all experience **Minor adverse** at year 1 due to the limited visibility into the Site due to intervening vegetation, and reducing to **Negligible** at year 15 with the establishment of the proposed planting.
- 8.16. All other visual receptors including the settlements of South Oxhey, Bushey Heath and Oxhey, visitors to Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery and Hartsbourne Golf Course and users of PRoW within the wider landscape including the London Loop long distance footpath, were assessed as experiencing **Negligible** effects at both year 1 and 15 due to the high degree of woodland cover within the surrounding landscape preventing views of the proposed new built form.
- 8.17. A review of the NPPF and the documents which form the adopted Three Rivers Development Plan indicates that the proposed development has the potential to comply with the relevant landscape planning policies. This has been achieved by the adoption of sustainable design principles, and a landscape led approach to the Site Layout and Illustrative Landscape Masterplan. The approach has minimised adverse effects upon visual amenity and existing landscape features, whilst providing landscape elements and features which aid in integrating the development into the receiving landscape. This would be achieved through an increase in tree cover and creating a variety of habitat opportunities for wildlife, along with providing benefits of both the existing and proposed community, including play areas, a community orchard, and opportunities for informal recreation through the provision of improved access to walking routes connecting to the surrounding PRoW network.
- 8.18. It is concluded that the proposed development has the potential to respect the surrounding landscape context and relationship to the existing settlement edge of Carpenders Park, and the receiving landscape has the capacity to accommodate the proposed development without causing unacceptable harm to the existing landscape and visual resource.

Figure 1: Site Location Plan



KEY

Site Boundary

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REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

SITE LOCATION PLAN

LAND AT CARPENDERS PARK

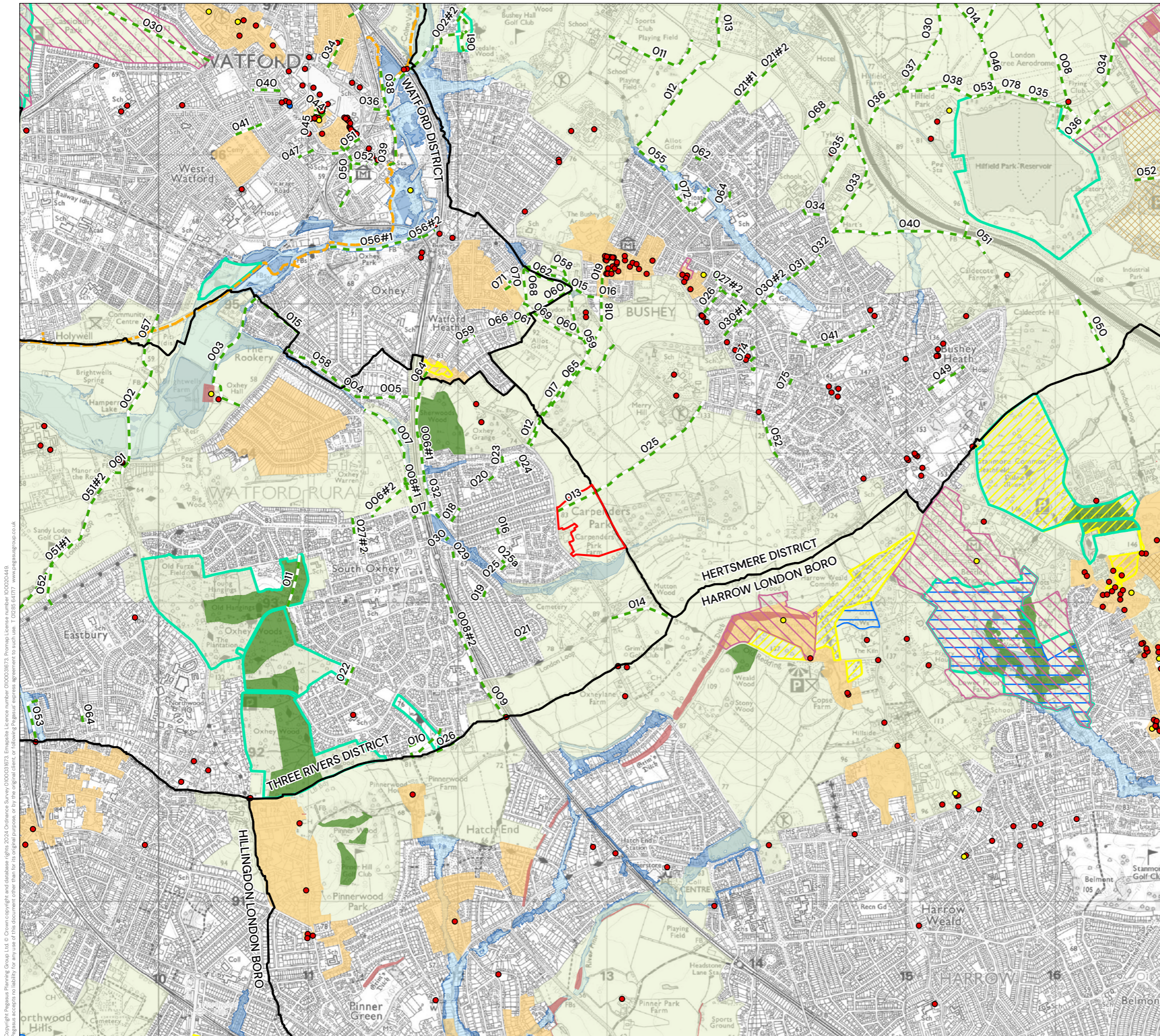
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Figure 2: Environmental Designations Plan



- KEY**
- Site Boundary
 - District Boundary
 - Grade I Listed Building
 - Grade II* Listed Building
 - Grade II Listed Building
 - Public Rights of Way
 - National Cycle Network
 - CRoW Access Land
 - Country Parks
 - Registered Parks and Gardens
 - Scheduled Monuments
 - Conservation Area
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest
 - National Nature Reserves
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Green Belt
 - EA Flood Zone 3
 - EA Flood Zone 2

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REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATION PLAN

LAND AT CARPENDERS PARK

BURLINGTON PROPERTY GROUP LTD

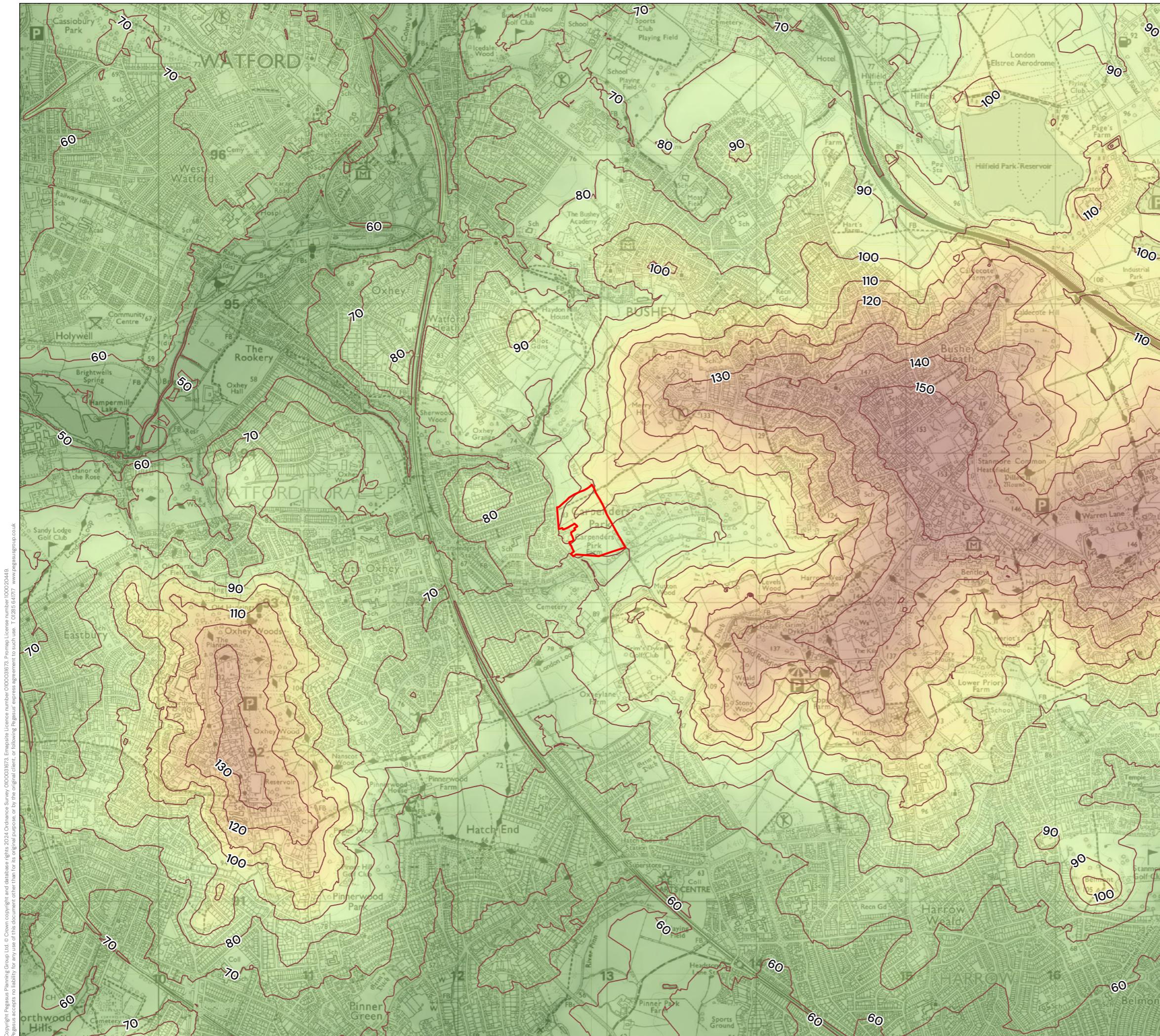
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Figure 3: Topography Plan



KEY

- Site Boundary
- 10m Contours
- OS Terrain 5 DTM
- High: 155m
- Low: 50m

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REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

TOPOGRAPHY PLAN

LAND AT CARPENDERS PARK

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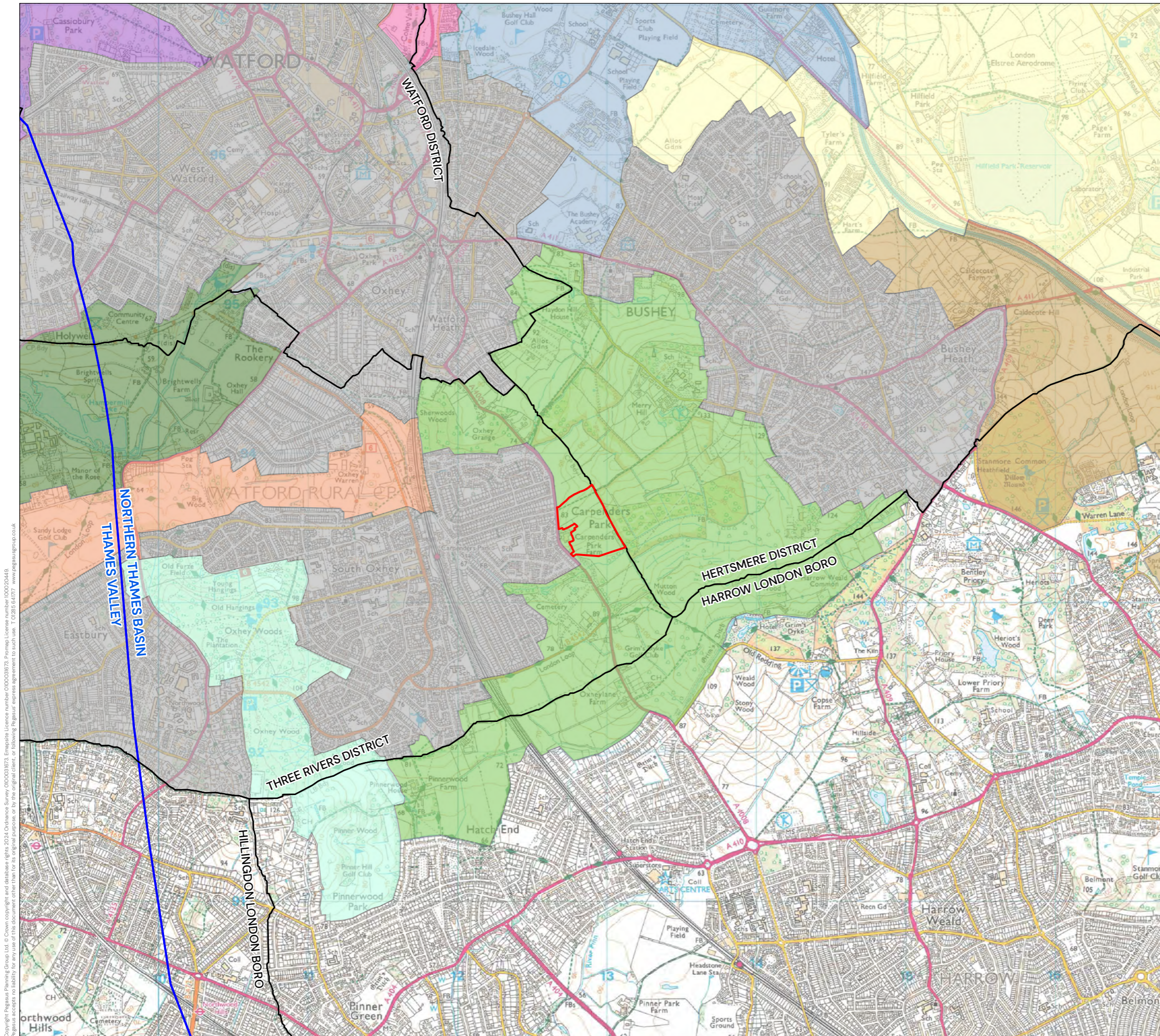
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Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan



- KEY**
- Site Boundary
 - District Boundary
 - National Character Areas
- Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Landscape Character Areas
- Borehamwood Plateau
 - Bushey Hill Pastures
 - Bushey Swards
 - Croxley Moor
 - Elstree Ridge and Slopes
 - Lower Gade Valley
 - No LCA
 - Oxhey Golflands
 - Oxhey Wood
 - Ver / Colne River Valley

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REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PLAN

LAND AT CARPENDERS PARK

BURLINGTON PROPERTY GROUP LTD

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Figure 5: Tranquility Plan