A SMARTER NEIGHBOURHOOD

WARMLEY

Landscape and Visual Appraisal: Initial Study
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WARMLEY

JANUARY 2016
Figure 1: Aerial Site Location Plan
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1. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL BASELINE

1.1 APPOINTMENT, PROPOSAL, SCOPE AND LEVEL OF STUDY

Landscape Architects at Barton Willmore were appointed in 2015 to carry out an initial Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for the site currently known as ‘Warmley’. (Red line in Fig: 2).

The site is located within the South Gloucestershire’s administrative area and is being promoted through the planning process as a mixed use development. This LVA is a report of field and desk based work that through a process of evaluation and analysis has contributed to the initial master planning process. The work has been carried out to support the promotion through the planning process in a manner that establishes the principle of development but not the detail.

This LVA, in terms of its references and focus of study examines the composition of the landscape and visual baselines of the site and its setting. The landscape baseline comprises the physical components of the landscape including: its form; use; and character. The visual baseline in this study is defined in extent by use of specialist mapping tools that predict areas or ‘zones of theoretical visibility’ (ZTV) that through analysis enable the extent of the predicted maximum ‘visual envelope’ (VE) to be identified. The work is at a high level of study but it allows consideration of considerable areas to be evaluated and sieved down to a finer grain of study on the ground. The visual baseline analysis contains informed judgements about who is likely to see the site, their location, their likely activity and some level of prediction about their expectation of the view: i.e. is the view of the site the reason for their enjoyment of the experience: a national or local area of scenic beauty, or is it incidental to a journey or a backdrop to their garden.

This is an initial study, prepared to inform a development proposal and to ensure that the promotion of the site has a robust evidence base. Even at this stage it has been possible to identify or predict the components in the landscape baseline that may experience a change as a consequence of development of the site. These components are called ‘Landscape receptors’. Similarly those people that may experience a change in their view of the site, from identified viewpoints, have also been identified and been described as ‘Visual Receptors’. They commonly fit within broad groups sharing a similarity of some regard: near neighbours; commuters; amenity walkers etc.
This stepped approach to the analysis of the landscape and visual baseline of the Site and its setting, from a wide base of data searching down to a Site based description and analysis, enables the identification and recording of a thorough knowledge of the key components that form the character and composition of the Site and its setting. In this LVA the proposed change of use of the Site land, from farmland to settlement, has been tested and modified and iterated through application and testing against this early analysis of receptors in the landscape and visual baseline.

At this early stage of study the landscape architects have looked at the relationship between the Site and the settlements of Warmley and the east edge of Bristol; at the role the Site plays as a setting for these settlements; and at its relationship within the landscape of the host countryside. The Site is outside of the existing settlement edge and is within the countryside and the development of the Site would change this categorisation; the Site would become part of the settlement of Warmley and would form the edge of the City of Bristol and the countryside. The site is situated within the Bristol Green Belt; its boundary marked by the eastern edge of Bristol. This important matter is central to the considerations within this initial LVA.

The desk and field work recorded in this LVA study has been used by the development team specialists that has already contributed to the drafting of early concepts for the development proposal. The LVA work has been applied at these early stages within a strategy that looks to limit effects and to make a development proposal that finds a sympathetic and successful fit in the landscape of its setting.

At this stage the development proposal is for a change of use from agriculture to a mixed use development of new homes and public amenity open space. Proposals for the site are further explained within the 'Promotional Document'.

The LVA sets out the consideration that has been given to achieving an informed and accurate understanding of the relationship that the Site has with its setting. The study has the intended change of use to a mixed use development that will change the status of the land from countryside to settlement as a clear point of reference for the research work. The containment of the new extent of the settlement and the protection of the countryside are important considerations. This LVA study has had the task of formulating advice, drawn from an appropriate knowledge of the landscape and visual baseline, that can provide robust guidance on a sympathetic and successful landscape led development proposal.

The subtleties and complexities of landscape and settlement and rural character, of field pattern, the patterns and form of the built environment, and the lines and engineering works of the network of transportation routes have all made marks in this settled and changing within Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge landscape. They all contribute to the consideration of the setting for the development proposal. The judgement of the success or failure of the proposal for change of use that lies behind this LVA work also has to consider how people regard the landscape of the site. The analysis of these and other elements in the landscape and visual baseline of the site and its setting are set out in this LVA.
An important output of this LVA has been the preparation of the Landscape and Visual Key Constraints and Opportunities Plan. The plan is a graphic map that records some of the main landscape and visual assets, detractors, constraints and opportunities. Analysis of these landscape and visual issues, considered in combination with the information documented in this study, has been applied to the drafting of the Promotional Document vision. The vision shows an indication of an initial outline concept for the development proposal. It has flowed from this landscape led approach. Consideration of the existing heritage assets: Roman Road, listed buildings etc. has been given at a high level with further work to be undertaken by appropriately qualified experts. The process of mitigation that designs out harmful impacts through knowledge of the baseline and the sensitivities of its constituent elements, has therefore, been an integral process within the evolution of the initial development concept.

In summary, the key landscape and visual issues, in consideration of the potential development of the site, that are examined in Part 2 of this LVA, include:

- The Site’s physical relationship with the rural edge;
- The Site’s visual relationship with the rural edge
- The effect of proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and its setting, and
- The site’s relationship with the settlement edge of Bristol.
1.2 LVA METHODOLOGY

The structure of this study follows the current best practice approach set out in the principal publication for LVA work: ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’, Third edition (GLVIA [Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. 2013]) The Institute gives guidelines for the process of Landscape and Visual Assessment.

The Third edition of the GLVIA set out a differential between Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) studies. The LVIA study sits within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and the assessment of specific effects that may cause impacts on components and receptors in the landscape and visual baseline. The LVIA centres on assessment of effects. The preparation of Landscape and Visual Appraisal studies – such as this study for the site at Warmley, has the rigour of the EIA process but has looked to identify issues of possible harm that might arise from the development proposal and offset them through change and modification of the proposals before a fix of the proposal – this LVA has been devised as tool or body of information that will inform an evolving proposal rather than an assessment of a finalised proposal. This LVA study is not however part of a formal Environmental Statement and it is therefore described as an appraisal.

The LVA process is non-prescriptive, and experienced practitioners are required to make informed objective, and subjective judgments in the process of assessment of environmental effects. In this study a structured approach consistent with good practice has been followed. In overview this document is a report of initial research undertaken, recorded and set out with a sub-division into three main parts:

- PART 1: BASELINE STUDIES
  - sets out the landscape and visual baselines and is a record of the field based study of the site and its setting. It includes a record of the desk based data trawl of published landscape character studies; identifies landscape and visual receptor groups.

- PART 2: ANALYSIS, DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL, AND CAPACITY
  - defines the main landscape and visual issues in concerning to the character of the site and its setting and the relationship with the development proposal, a key output is the baseline-led analysis contained in the Landscape and Visual Key Constraints and Opportunities Plan;
  - contains a description of the substance of the development proposal as a response to the potential interactions that may be caused to the landscape and visual receptors. It looks at the analysis-led development concept as a Vision Plan, suggesting mitigation as an inclusive process within the iteration of the development proposals;
  - records and gives commentary on the published landscape capacity studies for the Site and the setting.

- PART 3: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
GLVIA Steps in Assessing Landscape Effects (glva figure 5.1)

1. **Define scope of assessment**
   - Area
   - Range of possible landscape effects

2. **Describe characteristics of proposal**

3. **Identify landscape receptors**

4. **Judge susceptibility of landscape receptor to specific change**

5. **Judge size/scale of landscape effect**

6. **Judge duration of landscape effect**

7. **Judge reversibility of effect**

8. **Judge value attached to landscape receptor**

9. **Identify interactions between proposal and landscape receptors**

10. **Combine to judge sensitivity of landscape receptor**

11. **Combine to judge magnitude of landscape effect**

12. **Propose measures to mitigate adverse effects**

13. **Final Statement of likely significant landscape effects**

---

GLVIA Steps in Assessing Visual Effects (glva figure 6.1)

1. **Define scope of assessment**
   - Study area
   - Range of people and places that may be affected

2. **Describe characteristics of proposal**

3. **Establish the visual baseline**
   - Identify extent of possible visibility (ZTV)
   - Identify people who may be affected
   - Identify views and viewpoints

4. **Identify visual receptors and select representative, illustrative and specific viewpoints**

5. **Judge susceptibility of visual receptor to specific change**

6. **Judge size/scale of visual effect**

7. **Judge duration of visual effect**

8. **Judge reversibility of effect**

9. **Judge value attached to particular views**

10. **Identify interactions between proposal and visual receptors**

11. **Combine to judge sensitivity of visual receptor**

12. **Combine to judge magnitude of visual effect**

13. **Propose measures to mitigate adverse effects**

14. **Final statement of likely significant visual effects**
1.3 THE LANDSCAPE BASELINE OF THE SETTING IN OVERVIEW

The proposed development site lies within South Gloucestershire, north of Warmley on the eastern edge of Bristol. It is located 5 miles from Bristol City Centre and in close proximity to the existing built-up area of Bristol to the west and south, it has an urban context. Its position at the edge of Cotswolds, and its role as part of the green belt between Bristol and Bath are important considerations.

The site is bounded by a local highway network to the east and south providing direct access to connect to the wider area. The Avon Ring Road (A4174) is to the west of the site and connects a number of retail parks and M4 to the north, and provides direct links towards Bath and Bristol Airport to the south. The A420 is to the south of the site and provides direct connection to Kingswood Town Centre and Bristol City centre to the west and links to A46 to further east at Cold Aston Pedestrian and Cycle paths.

The site lies alongside the well-used Bristol to Bath cycle path, which provides a high quality link between the cities. The route uses the disused railway route which is traffic free and passes through Warmley, leading along the ring road and then west towards Bristol.

The Regional Cycle Routes (RCR) 10 and 16 are to the north of the site and provide a link towards retail parks in the north.
Figure 3: Explorer Location Plan
1.4 THE LANDSCAPE BASELINE OF THE SITE IN OVERVIEW

The site lies within South Gloucestershire, north of Warmley and is located approximately 5 miles to the east of Bristol City Centre. The site boundaries are broadly defined by the Avon Ring Road (A4174) to the west; Warmley and A420 to the south; Webbs Heath/Siston Lane to the east and Shortwood Golf Course/woodland and agricultural land to the north and northeast.

The site area comprises of 147 hectares of agricultural land and the small settlements at Goose Green and Webbs Heath. It is a gently undulating landscape, which rises gradually towards ridgelines within the adjoining Shortwood Golf Course and is crossed by Siston Brook and a number of field hedgerows.

The site is crossed by several country lanes (Goose Green, Webbs Heath and Siston Lane), while the primary vehicular access points are from the west off the A4174 Bristol Ring Road via Carsons Road Link and from the east off the A420 London Road via Webbs Heath. Local connections are available via Siston Hill and Carsons Road to Warmley and Mangotsfield.

The site is also crossed by several Public Rights of Way and a Community Forest Path, which offer further opportunities for integration of the development into the established urban area.

Siston Brook runs through the site from the north east to south west. The watercourse flows from the nearby Siston Conservation Area, which comprises a well preserved, Grade I Listed Elizabethan manor and adjacent church, hamlet and rural landscape. This historic area is separated from the proposed development site by established woodland and hedgerows, as well as significant additional planting.

The site is crossed by a number of field hedgerows, while there are significant areas of common land at Goose Green and Webbs Heath which will be retained. Warmley Forest Park is a significant area of open space to the south west of the site.
On site on the Public Right of Way near Mill Farm looking north to the golf course and Lodge Farm
The landscape character assessment is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. This approach recognises the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just 'special' landscapes, as contributing factors in people's quality of life, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas, in accordance with the NPPF Core Principles.

The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, development or landscape management. The Site is covered by a number of published and current character studies at a national, county and local levels.

### NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA

As part of Natural England's responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England has developed a series of National Character Area (NCA) profiles.

The Site and surrounding landscape is situated within NCA Profile 118: Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges published in 2013. The NCA outlines key characteristics of the Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges NCA, not all of which are relevant to the Site and its context due to the vast area the NCA covers. Key Characteristics of relevance have been extracted below:

- **Low-lying, shallow vales that contrast sharply with high, open downland ridges as the varied landform reflects the complex underlying geology... Coal Measures are also present.**
- **...Other streams and rivers in the south-east flow eastwards to join the Avon outside the NCA...**
- **...Elsewhere, woodlands are smaller and fragmented and mainly confined to steeper land; the majority are broadleaf.**
- **Agriculture is predominantly livestock rearing, with arable in the flatter land to the north-east, with larger field sizes and infrequent hedgerow trees. Valleys and steeper slopes in the south-east tend to have irregular fields and overgrown, species-rich hedges.**

- **A diverse landscape important for greater and lesser horseshoe bats. Grasslands of high nature conservation interest remain on the wetter valley bottoms and dry downland slopes...**
- **Settlements dating from the medieval period, clustered around springheads of the Cotswold scarp or along the springline of the Mendips. In the vales they are scattered, linked by a complex network of lanes, with linear mining villages superimposed. Settlement becomes especially dense in the southeast, with many villages enlarged as commuter settlements.**
- **Older village buildings, gentry houses and mansions of local ashlar, which includes pale yellow Jurassic oolitic limestones and grey Carboniferous and Lias limestones...**
- **Bristol and its commercial, industrial and residential areas; major roads (M4 and M5 motorways); the airfields (Filton and Bristol); and reservoirs, which occupy a substantial area around Bristol. There is considerable commercial development around Cribbs Causeway, Aztec West and Abbey Wood.”**

Statement of Environmental Opportunity 1:

- “Conserve and manage the distinction between small rural settlements and the densely urban City of Bristol, the urban fringe transitional zone and the commuter settlements; and ensure that new development is sensitively designed to contribute to settlement character, reduce the impact of the urban fringe and provide well-designed green infrastructure to enhance recreation, biodiversity and water flow regulation.”

...For example by...

- Encouraging local planning authorities and developers to incorporate landscape design into urban extensions from the start of the process, to include biodiversity, green infrastructure and access enhancements together with well-planned transport routes, including public transport, to reduce the impact of traffic.”
LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (Draft Proposed for Adoption 12 November 2014) identifies the Site and surrounding landscape within Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge Landscape Character Area (LCA). In brief the areas character area is described as comprising “a diverse and intricate mix of farmland, settlement, roads, commons and industrial heritage”.

The LCA is a narrow LCA between the eastern edge of Bristol and the Pucklechurch and Oldland Ridge and stretches north-south from the railway line at Westerleigh to the A431 at Bitton. The Key Characteristics specific to the Site and surrounding area include:

• “A gentle to rolling landscape, contained by the prominent Pucklechurch and Oldland Ridge to the east and influenced by the dominant and continuous urban edge of Bristol to the west.

• Great variety and mix of land uses including pasture, arable, horse paddocks, a golf course, with public open space and playing fields along the urban edge.

• The relatively limited arable farmland provides ground nesting opportunities while the winter stubble provides foraging potential for farmland birds including Amber and Red listed species.

• Common land is frequent and diverse.

• Diverse vegetation structure of overgrown and clipped hedges and limited areas of woodland providing habitat and connectivity across the character area. Variable hedgerow and woodland tree cover often associated with older settlement and commons, with generally more frequent cover to the east.

• Many and diverse habitats identified as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, including neutral, marshy and acid grassland including those that are species rich, broadleaf and ancient woodland, flowing water and bankside vegetation.

• Generally a dispersed settlement pattern including a village, hamlets and scattered farms, with a significant area of new and proposed development to the east of Emerson’s Green.
• Historic remains of coal industries are evident to the north and east of the area with disused tramways, railways, chimneys, scattered worker settlements, excavations and spoil mounds.

• Contained to the west by the residential urban edge, with large scale commercial/industrial sheds in the north by M4.

• Major residential development between the M4 and the Ring Road is under construction and will become a prominent element in views from the Pucklechurch Ridge.

• Main roads cross and segment the area. Frequent, winding minor roads and lanes with grass verges / open grassland adjacent to commons, cross the area.”

The report outlines a Landscape Strategy for the Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge LCA, extracts of which are below.

• “Active management of both the hedgerow and woodland framework to help to ensure the conservation of the landscape and biodiversity value of these key features for the long term…

• Ensure the conservation and enhancement of the diverse mosaic of habitats within this character area and ensure their continued connectivity via hedgerows, broadleaf tree cover and water courses…

• Secure the delivery of robust landscape infrastructure to create a high quality setting both to the built development and the wider setting to the new northeast boundary of the Bristol conurbation.

• Strengthen the green open and rural character, and the landscape structure of the hillsides, ridges and skyline that form an important part of the rural setting to east of the existing urban area and the proposed new development areas.

• Transport proposals including new structures should be sensitively located and designed to protect the character and amenity of the host landscape and wider views.

• Carefully consider issues such as layout, massing, colour and texture to ensure high quality views are maintained from surrounding elevated vantage points.

• Ensure that the character and biodiversity value of the remaining rural landscapes in this character area is reinforced, and that any new development is sensitively designed and landscaped to achieve this, including careful consideration of details such as lighting to ensure that wildlife is not disturbed.

• Encourage and support the management, restoration and enhancement of the relic industrial landscape of this area and the structures and tramways associated with the coal mining industry at Parkfield North, Brandy Bottom (Parkfield South) and Ram Hill Collieries.

• Ensure that new development does not harm the particular character, significance or setting of the formal grounds, former parkland, fields and woodlands associated with Siston Court.

• Enhance, extend and manage grasslands of ecological importance, including common land.

• Encourage and support the repair and retention of natural stone walls and other traditional features such as historic stiles, pennant stone kerbing and copper slag coping stones.

• While much of this character area comprises an enclosed valley, careful consideration should be given to ensure that new development or change does not adversely impact on the Cotswolds AONB or its setting, and conversely change in the AONB does not impact on prominent skylines that form the setting to the Golden Valley landscape.”
**Figure 3b: Landscape Character Areas**

**Figure 5: Landscape Character:**
Local Character Area

**Major areas of settlement**
- Severn Shoreline & Estuary (21)
- Oldbury Levels (19)
- Severn Ridges (18)
- Rudgeway & Tytherington Ridge (17)
- Avon Valley (16)
- Patchway & Filton and the Stokes (15)
- Severn Ridges (18)
- Oldbury Levels (19)
- Pilning Levels (20)
- Severn Shoreline & Estuary (21)

**The site**

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**Character overview**
The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies. It provides a planning framework within which the local community and local authorities can produce distinctive local plans which respond to local needs and priorities.

The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan, and policies set out in the NPPF.

Twelve Core Planning Principles are set out, of which the following are relevant to consideration of landscape and visual matters, and state that planning should:

- “not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;”
- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; and conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;”

Paragraph 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments, inter alia:

- “Establish a strong sense of place.
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”

Paragraph 61 states that:

- “planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.”

The Site is located within the Bristol Green belt, the boundary of which runs around the edge of the settlement of Pill.

Green Belt policy is set out in Chapter 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF states: "the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attributes of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence” (Paragraph 79).

There are five purposes that Green Belt serves, these are:

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

With regard to the natural environment, Paragraphs 109-125 of Section II focus on conserving and enhancing the local and natural environment. The framework states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by inter alia:

- “protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...”
Paragraph 110 sets out that the aim, in preparing plans for development, should be to minimise adverse effects on the local and natural environment, and that plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.

PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (MARCH 2014)

To support the policies of the NPPF, the Government has produced Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) covering a number of topics.

Under the heading of Natural Environment, sub-heading Landscape, paragraph 1, PPG supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identifying the features that give it a sense of place, as a means to informing, planning and managing change. PPG makes reference to Natural England guidance on landscape character assessment.

Under the heading of Natural Environment, sub-heading Biodiversity, ecosystems and green infrastructure, paragraph 15, PPG supports positive planning for networks of multi-functional green space, both urban and rural, which deliver a range of benefits for local communities and makes reference to Natural England guidance on Green Infrastructure.

WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT SPATIAL PLAN (JSP), ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION (NOVEMBER 2015)

The West of England (WoE) covers the four Unitary Authorities (UAs) of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

General objectives of the JSP relevant to the site fall under the subheading of Environment. The JSP states that the spatial strategy should:

- "Maintain or enhance the environmental quality and the attractive character and identity of the WoE’s cities, towns, villages, and countryside and embeds the services provided by the environment into our patterns for sustainable growth.

- Respond to the challenges of climate change and minimise flood risk.

- Have place making at its heart with high quality design that positively responds to local context and heritage assets.

- Maximise the use of brownfield land & minimise the use of greenfield land."

South Gloucestershire Council

The Local Plan for South Gloucestershire comprises of three documents. The Core Strategy is the key document forming the strategic component of the Council’s new Local Plan. It sets out a vision for the area based on evidence, community objectives and the detailed spatial strategy for future development in South Gloucestershire to 2027.

Core Strategy (2006-2027)

Is the key planning policy document, setting out the general location of development, its type and scale, as well as protecting what is valued about the area. The Core Strategy was adopted on 11 December 2013.

Policy CSI – High Quality Design

“Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that:

- Siting, form, scale, height, massing, detailing, colour and materials, are informed by, respect and enhance the character, distinctiveness and amenity of both the site and its context;

- density and overall layout is well integrated with existing adjacent development and connected to the wider network of foot, cycle and public transport links;"
existing features of landscape, nature conservation, heritage or amenity value and public rights of way, are safeguarded and enhanced through incorporation into development;

if the proposed scheme is of a sufficient scale or significance, explain how the development contributes towards the vision and strategic objectives of the locality and (as appropriate) how account has been taken of:

…Green Infrastructure objectives

the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (2005)

the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan...

ensure soft landscape proposals form an integral part of the design for the site and seek to make a net contribution to tree cover in the locality (particularly in urban areas), and prioritise biodiversity objectives and local food cultivation where possible.”

Policy CS2 – Green Infrastructure

“… GI objectives:

• realising the potential of Green Infrastructure to assist with mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change;

• delivering high quality multi-functional and connected open spaces (including Green and Blue Infrastructure);

• protecting, creating and improving recreational, play, access and local food cultivation opportunities;

• protecting and enhancing species and habitats, and creating new habitats and wildlife linkages between them;

• conserving and enhancing landscape character, historical, natural, built and cultural heritage features; and

• securing ongoing management and maintenance and creation of GI assets.”

Policy CS5 – Location of Development

“In order to deliver the Strategy for Development, the framework for the location and scale of development is:

• Most new development will take place within the communities of the North and East Fringes of Bristol urban area…

• The extent of the Green Belt will remain unchanged from that shown in the South Gloucestershire Local Plan…”

Elsewhere in the Green Belt, “other proposals for development in the Green Belt with need to comply with the provisions in the NPPF or relevant local plan policies in the Core Strategy”

Policy CS9 – Managing the Environment and Heritage

“…new development will be expected to:

...conserve and enhance the character, quality, distinctiveness and amenity of the landscape…”

Policy CS16 – Housing Density

“Housing development is required to make efficient use of land… providing adequate levels of public open space, semi-private communal open space and provide private outdoor space.”

Policy CS24 – Green Infrastructure, sport and recreation standards

“Provision for Green Infrastructure, outdoor space, sport and recreation facilities will be sought according to the following principles:

• new developments must comply with all the appropriate local standards of provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility

• provision must be delivered on-site, unless it is demonstrated that partial or full off-site provision or enhancement creates a more acceptable proposal; and

• the functionality and usability of spaces and facilities must be suitable for their intended purposes.”
“New developments may also be required to contribute to Green Infrastructure schemes identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the requirements contained within the Design Policy CS1. New Green Infrastructure should be an integral part of new employment areas, and should meet local objectives to be agreed as part of the planning application process. These spaces should adhere to the Green Infrastructure objectives (Policy CS2) and be managed to allow open access to both local workers and residents...”

South Gloucestershire Local Plan 2006

The South Gloucestershire local plan was adopted in 2006 and set out the overall planning policies for the district. On 11th December 2013 a number of polices in the local plan were superseded by the Core Strategy. The saved policies which are relevant to the Site its setting are as follows.

Figure 6: Local Plan Designations
Policy L1 - Landscape Protection and Enhancement

“In order that the character, distinctiveness, quality and amenity of the landscapes of South Gloucestershire are conserved and enhanced, new development will be permitted only where:

• Those attributes of the landscape which make a significant contribution to the character of the landscape are conserved and where possible enhanced;

• Those features in or of the landscape which make a significant contribution to the character or distinctiveness of the locally retained, protected and managed in a manner which ensures their long-term viability; and

• The amenity of the landscape is conserved and where possible enhanced.”

Policy L4 - Forest of Avon

“Development that is permitted within the community forest area as defined on the proposals map should:

• Respect the developing woodland setting;

• Not conflict with the community forest objectives; and

• Not prejudice community forest projects.”

Policy L10 - Historic Parks and Gardens and Battlefields

“Development likely to affect the Historic Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields, or their settings, will only be permitted where:

• The historic character and appearance of the Site would not be unacceptably harmed; and

• The development enables features, landscaping or planting schemes of historic interest to be conserved, enhanced or restored.

Policy L11 - Archaeology

“Development which would not physically preserve sites of national archaeological importance, whether Scheduled or not, or would have a significant impact on the setting of visible remains, will not be permitted.”

Policy L12 - Conservation Areas

“... proposals should demonstrate that:

• Size, form, position, scale, materials, design, colour and detailing have proper regard to the distinctive character and appearance of the conservation area; and

• Buildings, groups of buildings, historic street and plot patterns, open spaces, building lines, views, vistas, ground surfaces, boundary walls and other architectural or hard landscape features which contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area are retained; and

• Existing trees, hedges and green spaces, or other natural features, which contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area will be retained and protected.”

Policy L13 - Listed Buildings

“Development including alterations or additions affecting a listed building or its setting will not be permitted unless:

• The building and its setting would be preserved; and

• Features of architectural or historic interest would be retained; and

• The character, historic form and structural integrity of the building would be retained.

Policy L15 - Buildings and structures which make a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the locality

“Development proposals will be expected to retain buildings and structures which make a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the locality.

Development proposals involving demolition of such buildings or structures will be required to incorporate measures to mitigate for the resulting loss of character and distinctiveness.”
Figure 7: Designations Plan
DESIGNATIONS

There are a number of statutory designations both within the site and in the immediate context that are relevant to the development proposals. These are identified on the plan opposite and summarised below.

Common Land

Common land is frequent and a defining characteristic of the landscape, and includes Siston, Goose Green and Webb’s Heath Common. It runs diagonally through the site and there are some settlements and farms which can be found on either side.

Listed Buildings

There are a number of listed buildings in and around the site. There are few Grade II listed buildings along Siston Brook and along Webb’s Heath. The setting of this and other listed buildings will need to be carefully considered as part of developing a concept for the development of the site.

Public Rights Of Way

There are a number of Public Rights of Way crossing the site, especially in the area around Warmley Forest and Siston Common to the west of the site, and to the north towards Overscourt Wood. These routes which provide for direct pedestrian movement to recreational and other facilities will be protected and incorporated into the development wherever possible. This existing network of routes will provide a structure for the movement network of pedestrians and cyclists conservation areas.

Conservation Areas

The north-east of the site abuts Siston Conservation Area and there are some parts of Warmley, approximately 1 mile south-east of the site, identified within Warmley Conservation Area. The character of these conservation areas and any key views from them towards the site will need to be considered as part of the design process.

National Cycle Route 4 which connects Bath and Bristol City and provides an off-road traffic free direct route, runs south-west of the site. This route provides the potential for direct bike journeys of 25 minutes from the site into Bristol city centre along car-free routes. A National Trail route runs north-south and passes through the site. Access to it for cyclists should therefore be maximised and any potential to make the route more direct or attractive to cyclists should be explored.

Forest of Avon

The site lies entirely in the designated Forest of Avon. A new 207 acre woodland has been planted at Overscourt Wood, off Siston Lane, which is designated access land. Hedgerows and isolated areas of small woodland are prominent across the site, which is for the most part grade 3 agricultural land with small areas of grade 4 and 5 along the edge of Warmley. There are no significant cultural heritage constraints within the site, although the conservation area of Siston abuts the north-eastern edge of the site.
Figure 8: Siston Conservation Area

Figure 9: Siston Court Listed Building

Figure 10: Mill Farmhouse Listed Building
1.7 LANDFORM

The desk study of the landform of the site is recorded in Figures 11 and 12 and at its broadest level topography forms the wider context for the site – it creates, through natural process or the intervention of man, the form of the land of the site and the setting. It is also, therefore, a major determinant in the significance of the visual qualities of the site in terms of prominence or concealment.

The site is on the much lower slopes of the local ridge bounded to north and east. Most of the site is between 40 AOD and 70 AOD and contained well below the local ridgeline to north and north-east. The plan demonstrates how much of the existing development in the area (around Webbs Heath Lane and Goose Green Lane) has been at similar topographic levels to the site. It is also possible to see how existing development has responded to the topography with roads following the contours. It is important that any development of the site should respond to and reflect these existing characteristics.

Figure 11: Site Topography Plan
Figure 12: Wider Landform Plan
Cultural sensitivity rests, to no small degree, in the ‘deep time’ of man’s activity on the land. The nature and content of the activity and its products, is of course also central to the perception and definition of a ‘sense of place’. Landscape and settlement character is shaped over time and an appreciation of the stages and activities that have happened in farming practices, in settlement and transport as well as commerce can all leave markers in the landscape that contribute to the ‘local distinctiveness’ (the phrase first invented by Common Ground in 1983) of a place. For a new development to have a successful relationship, and achieve a positive interaction with its human context as well as its landscape setting a clear understanding of the history of the place can provide invaluable parameters and prompts.

The history of the land has relevance as many of the manmade elements in the settlement and the countryside can be better understood through some reference to the chronology of their mapped history. This LVA is not a Historic Landscape Character study but through simple evaluation of recorded elements on historic maps some measure of the changing patterns and uses of the site land can be usefully deduced.

The plan below shows how the development of the Bristol grew to the east over the last century and how individual settlements with their own local centre where absorbed due to expansion.

Historically Warmley was a small rural village in the countryside surrounding Bristol. There were a few houses along the main road and farms in the surrounding countryside. There was a school, church and brick and tile works, as can be seen on the 1904 map opposite.

Warmley grew with further residential development around the 1960s. This development was based around the main route. The village has developed in this ribbon form which is typical of other settlements along this main route into Bristol.

Little changed in the village between 1965 and 1989 although Bristol was expanding east and the village was now on the outskirts of the City.

The images below show how Warmley has developed in the context of the wider development of Bristol.

Expansion of Bristol:

Historically Bristol has expanded to the East along the A420.

Historically the settlements of St George and Kingswood were separate settlements from Bristol based along a main route into the city. Today they have been absorbed into the city but each one remains a distinct neighbourhood.

Warmley is the next settlement along this route and is a logical area to expand the city.

Setting of Listed buildings:

There is also an opportunity to reintroduce the setting of Grade II listed buildings identified within the settlements along Siston Brook Green Corridor.

- Historically the settlements of St George and Kingswood were separate settlements from Bristol based along a main route into the city. Today they have been absorbed into the city but each one remains a distinct neighbourhood.

Warmley is the next settlement along this route and is a logical area to expand the city.

Setting of Listed buildings:

- There is also an opportunity to reintroduce the setting of Grade II listed buildings identified within the settlements along Siston Brook Green Corridor.
Figure 13: Historic Map 1880s - Epoch 1

Figure 14: 1897

Figure 15: 1945

Figure 16: 1984

Figure 17: 2015
1.9 ESTABLISHING THE VISUAL BASELINE OF THE SITE (ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY, VISUAL BARRIERS, BASELINE VISUAL ENVELOPE MAPPING)

This is a computer generated 3D model of the landform of the site and setting. The maps within this LVA Appendix give a pictorial representation of how the shape and form of the ground may affect views across the landscape. It is an analytical process that is an aid to understanding the possible visual effects of a development proposal. It also has been used in this study to inform the early visual baseline study - as a guide to where work on the ground should be focused.

The ZTV is a specialist programme and is defined within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment as an: “Area within which a proposed development may have an influence or effect on visual amenity”. ZTV’s can be used to define the Visual Envelope Map. These are predictive analytical ‘tools’ and are only as accurate as the input data. (The industry standard is the Key TERRA-FIRMA ZTV software and this has been used in this study). The principle of the application works by a series of ‘rays’ plotted to radiate from the Target Point, or multiple points from CAD polylines, in a manner that represents hundreds of section lines drawn and calculated through the mapped topography of the setting. The ZTV illustrations in this LVA give a computer representation of zones or areas that may be visible from the defined locations within the site.

The ZTV's have been mapped on the 3D OS base and then for the Local maps have been placed on the aerial photograph. For the Wider ZTV maps the OS map is used. The hedgerows along the site boundaries have been modelled as Visual Barriers. The programme enables the placement of known obstructions: trees, buildings etc in the model. These have to be carefully modelled and are placed using topographic data from the site survey or other verifiable and declared sources. The baseline ZTV’s show these Visual Barriers as annotated additions to the map (Fig. 18).

The illustrations of ZTV’s for the site take no account, other for the Visual Barriers annotated on the drawings, of any other obstacle: the houses, structures, trees and hedgerows, within the extent of the Map. The computer model is based on the 3D Ordinance Survey Digital Ground Model data. The illustrations are a landform based study. The extent to which landform may affect the visual amenity is represented within the limitations of the computer software is depicted. The rays record the interruption that results from intervening high ground. Where there are no rays the site cannot be seen from an eye level vantage point of 1.60m above ground. The landform will obscure the view (Figs. 19,20,21).

The predicted visual situation after development is shown on separate maps: the 'After Development' drawings. On these ZTV’s the height of the buildings had been provided by the project architect at a known elevation. The high point has been taken as the roof ridge line unless otherwise specifically stated.

The illustrations of ZTV’s for the site take no account, other for the Visual Barriers annotated on the drawings, of any other obstacle: the houses, structures, trees and hedgerows, within the extent of the Map. The computer model is based on the 3D Ordinance Survey Digital Ground Model data. The illustrations are a landform based study. The extent to which landform may affect the visual amenity is represented within the limitations of the computer software is depicted. The rays record the interruption that results from intervening high ground. Where there are no rays the site cannot be seen from an eye level vantage point of 1.60m above ground. The landform will obscure the view (Figs. 19,20,21).

The predicted visual situation after development is shown on separate maps: the 'After Development' drawings. On these ZTV’s the height of the buildings had been provided by the project architect at a known elevation. The high point has been taken as the roof ridge line unless otherwise specifically stated.

In this LVA deskwork involving a detailed Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) modelling has been used to inform the study and guide the fieldwork. The 3D ground model has been produced and then known dimensions of the boundary tree lines and hedgelines have been introduced as Visual Barriers. Informed judgements about the likely Visual Receptors Groups that may experience a change in the visual baseline after the development is implemented have also been defined. Generally this is straightforward and logical: leisure walkers along PRoW’s, motorists along the roads and residents at home. The intention is to record a representative and appropriate record of the visual baseline and the visual receptors and their various activities. An estimation of the likely visual receptor groups that may experience a change in their visual baseline after any future development has been set out in section 2 of this LVA. This selection process is appropriately robust and provides sufficient information to enable informed judgements to be made and to enable an informed evaluation of the development proposal.
Figure 18: Visual Barriers Plan

- **Woodland 10m**: This barrier is derived from GIS shapefile information then converted into CAD polylines, an assumed height of 10m has been attributed to the shapes.
- **Buildings 10m**: This barrier is derived from GIS shapefile information then converted into CAD polylines, an assumed height of 10m has been attributed to the shapes.

Boundaries and Rights of Way
- Site boundary
Figure 19: ZTV Target Point 1 - Baseline (With Barriers)
Figure 20: ZTV Target Point 2 - Baseline (With Barriers)
Figure 21: ZTV Target Point 3 - Baseline (With Barriers)
On site on the Community Forest Path (Public Right of Way near Mill) looking north east to Hanging Wood
1.10 Viewpoints and Views on Site and in the Setting

LVA Photographic Appraisal

Photographs were taken with a Cannon EOS 6D with a standard fixed 50mm lens.

The photographs are eye level views with the camera held at approximately 1.60m above the ground.

Photomontages have been made with panoramic images taken at approximately 50% overlap of the image. Photographs have been joined manually in Photoshop and cross checked against each process for accuracy.

These are not high resolution professional Visually Verified imagery ready photographs. They have been taken by Landscape Architects working on the LVA. They are selected to give a representational record of the Site and its setting.

Figure 22: Aerial Location Plan
Figure 23: Photo Location Plan
VIEWPOINT 1: SISTON HILL LOOKING SOUTHWEST TO KINGSWOOD
VIEWPOINT 2: SISTON HILL LOOKING SOUTH TO WARMLEY
VIEWPOINT 3: ON SITE AT SISTON HILL LOOKING EAST ALONG GOOSE GREEN TO TOGHILL
VIEWPOINT 4: ON SITE AT GOOSE GREEN LOOKING WEST TO SISTON HILL
VIEWPOINT 5: ON SITE AT GOOSE GREEN NEAR CHERRYORCHARD FARM LOOKING SOUTHEAST
TOGHILL

VIEWPOINT 6: ON SITE ALONG THE COMMUNITY FOREST PATH PROW LOOKING EAST TO TOGHILL
HANGING WOOD
VIEWPOINT 7: ON SITE ALONG THE COMMUNITY FOREST PATH PROW LOOKING EAST TO TOGHILL
VIEWPOINT 8: ON SITE ON PROW LOOKING NORTH TO LODGE FARM
VIEWPOINT 9: ON SITE ON PROW AT MILL FARM LOOKING NORTHWEST
VIEWPOINT 10: ON SITE ON PROW AT MILL FARM LOOKING NORTHWEST
MILL FARM

VIEWPOINT II: ON SITE AT MILL FARM DRIVE LOOKING NORTH TO LODGE FARM
VIEWPOINT 12: OFFSITE AT SHORTWOOD ROAD AND BAG LANE NEAR PUCKLECHURCH LOOKING SOUTHWEST TOWARDS WARMLEY AND KINGSWOOD
VIEWPOINT 13: OFFSITE ON PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY OFF LODGE ROAD NEAR BLUE LODGE LOOKING WEST TO KINGSWOOD

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL APPRAISAL: INITIAL STUDY

WARMLEY
The site’s key landscape resources and attributes have include the following assets. They are also the Setting and Site Landscape Receptors that have been identified at this initial stage of LVA work:

**Landscape Attributes: Setting Landscape Receptors:**
- The gently rolling countryside of the Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge LCA;
- The woodland and hedgerow pattern to the east;
- Surrounding common land;
- Setting of Siston Conservation Area; and
- The settlement edge location.

**Landscape Site: Site Landscape Receptors:**
- The landform of the Site land;
- The ecologically important habitats that the Site land supports;
- The Site boundary elements: tree cover and hedgerows;
- The setting of PRoW routes that cross the site;
- Hedgerows crossing the site;
- Withy Bed – woodland;
- Siston Brook;
- Setting of Mill Farm listed building;
- Goose Green common land;
- Setting of the Roman Road; and
- Attributes of the Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge LCA.

The site’s principle visual resources and attributes have been identified and described within this initial LVA. At this stage in the promotion of the Site and the development proposal the visual baseline has been defined to include the following assets and also the Visual Receptors Groups that may experience views to the Site at specific viewpoints:

**LVA BASELINE SUMMARY: VISUAL RECEPTORS**

- Users of the Community Forest Path long distance route;
- Users of the national cycle route (Bristol and Bath Railway Path);
- Road users (motorists, walkers, cyclists, horse riders etc.) along Goose Green;
- Road users (motorists, walkers, cyclists, horse riders etc.) close to the site;
- Residents within and along the site boundary;
- Residents in the wider area (eastern edge of Bristol – Kingswood).

- Users of the Common Land;
- Users of the Golf club;
- Users of Warmley Forest Park;
- Users of the PRoW (footpaths and bridleways) close to and around the Site;
- Users of the PRoW (footpaths and bridleways) in the wider area;
On site on the Community Forest Path (Public Right of Way near Mill) looking north east
2. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ANALYSIS

2.1 THE CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SITE

The work recorded in this initial LVA has been undertaken to explore the landscape and visual matters associated with the consideration of development of the Site and in so doing to further inform the refinement of a development concept for the Site.

The recording, description and analysis of the landscape and visual baseline, through desk and field based work, has identified key constraints and opportunities in the landscape of the Site. In part constraints to development have to be informed by a knowledge of a possible development proposal, and in part by an appreciation of the baseline components in the landscape. The process contributes to an approach that ensures that the proposal is informed by the landscape and responds directly to the character of the Site and the setting; the aim is to make a proposal that belongs to the setting and makes a successful fit in the landscape.

The early concepts for the Site have been informed by the landscape and visual analysis work recorded in this study. The LVA work has not been the only source of influence on the development proposal but the appreciation of the landscape character of the Site, its relationship with the settlement pattern and with the host countryside are relevant considerations that have contributed to the shape and placement of the proposed land uses. The findings of this study now provide a further layer of knowledge and appraisal of the landscape and visual baselines of the Site and its setting.

CONSTRAINTS

A comprehensive analysis of the site has been undertaken and the findings have been evaluated to identify key constraints and opportunities relevant to the development of the site. This will ensure that the development is as responsive to the site as possible and will help enable delivering a development with a strong sense of place.

The existing development constraints are summarised here as follows:

- There are a number of mature trees and hedges within the site that should be conserved where possible to enhance and maintain landscape and ecological value of the site;
- Siston Brook runs through the site and provides important ecological value which should be retained and enhanced;
- Pedestrian, cycle and public transport connections to local amenities have the potential to be enhanced;
- Common land runs through the site along;
- Goose Green and will need to be retained;
- Existing dwellings within the site, including listed buildings, will need to be maintained and incorporated into the development sensitively; and
- Parts of the site are steeply sloping and will need to be addressed sensitively site opportunities.
Figure 24: Constraints Plan
OPPORTUNITIES

The future development opportunities are summarised here as follows:

There is an opportunity for future development to use the natural topography and intrinsic values and deliver a unique and distinct neighbourhood access and movement;

There is an opportunity to connect to National Cycle Route 4 which is to the western boundary of the site. This is known as the Bristol to Bath Railway Path and is traffic free and will provide easy and safe pedestrian and cycle access to/from the site area;

The Community Forest Path passes through the site; there is an opportunity to retain and integrate this within the site;

Existing Public Rights of Way through the site will be retained and integrated within the open space provision;

To the north and east of the site the pronounced and undulating topography, of Oldland and Siston ridges, visually contains the site and forms a strong and significant feature in the landscape. Siston Brook, a tributary of the River Avon runs through the centre of the site. The Common Land is dominant, cutting diagonally through the site. There is an opportunity for the development to embrace these existing site features and provide embedded new multifunctional green links through the development that responds to the distinct landscape characteristics;

There is an opportunity to introduce a new strategic recreational facility to the north east of the site enhancing the setting of woodland along Siston Brook Green corridor;

A number of Public Right of Ways and important hedgerow/vegetation will be retained and integrated within the development;

Retained trees and vegetation, including those with TPOs where possible and desirable will add maturity and vitality to the development; and

There is an opportunity for slow food production by providing community allotment areas to the north-east corner along the ridge and to the south-west within Warmley Forest Park and Siston Common green.
Figure 25: Opportunities Plan
2.2 THE MAIN LANDSCAPE CONSIDERATIONS

In this initial LVA the points recorded here are an overview of the main landscape and visual considerations identified at this early stage of study. These points may not be an exclusive schedule: further work will be required to refine and deepen the consideration of the effects of a change of use on landscape and visual receptors.

The site does not have any specific landscape designations other than the designated Forest of Avon. It is important that any development respects the landscape setting and character of the wooded context.

Siston conservation area abuts the north eastern boundary with several listed buildings within it. Development should have regard for the setting of the Conservation Area which in itself protects the setting of Siston Court.

The LVA study has identified the key landscape baseline receptors of the Site. The value of the shape of the former field pattern and also existing and remaining field pattern, the strength and intact and enclosing nature of the boundary tree cover offer considerable potential to form a framework that belongs to the Site being drawn from the Site.

The physical landscape constraints present an opportunity for a development to find a sympathetic and appropriate response to the Site and setting. The shape and definition of the Site boundaries and its proximity to the settlement are strong factors that build a good relationship with the settlement and the host countryside.

There are various landscape features (receivers) present on the Site of varying condition and contribution to the overall landscape character. Their context and contribution to the published landscape character areas is noted.

Common Land
There are areas of Common Land alongside the western and eastern boundaries of the Site. They are known as Siston Common and Webbs Heath respectively. A belt of Common Land which runs through the Site along Goose Green/Webbs Heath roadway connects the two areas. A strip of common land also leads from Webbs Heath along Siston Lane to the north.

Woodland
There is a substantial area of woodland adjacent to the north-western extent of the Site boundary, this area of woodland contains a section of Ancient Woodland called Tut’s Wood. Within the northeast extent of the Site there is an angular block of woodland called the Withy Bed. Riparian vegetation which includes trees, lines much of the length of Siston Brook. Areas of woodland are a valuable asset within the Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge Landscape Character Area; the assessment identifies that there are limited areas of woodland throughout the LCA. Areas of woodland would need to be retained and enhanced as part of the Green Infrastructure for the site.

Hedgerows
Across the Site there is a comprehensive network of hedgerows, hedgerows in the southern part of the Site appear more pronounced. Many of the hedgerows are mature and create strong structural divides across the Site, resulting in a variety of shapes and sizes of fields. Trees are a common feature within many of the hedgerows. Boundaries around residential properties are predominantly demarcated with hedgerow vegetation which in many cases includes hedgerow trees. Webbs Heath roadway is lined by mature hedgerow vegetation which is gappy in places on both sides along much of its length. Hedgerows contribute to the character of the Site, and would need to be retained, replaced and/or enhanced as part of the Green Infrastructure strategy for the Site.
Groundcover

There is a mixture land uses across the Site including arable, horse paddocks and areas of Common Land. A strip of Common Land across the central portion. The fields of the Site have a degree of relation with the existing settlements and Kingswood due to its gently undulating generally west facing slopes. The Site is crossed by a single road which runs in a general east west orientation, located along this road are a number of residential dwellings and farms. The Site is crossed by a network of Public Rights of Way including the Community Forest Path National Trail.

There are areas of managed amenity grassland within the Common Land. Open space throughout the development would be created as part of the Green Infrastructure for the site.

Watercourses and ponds

There are a number of small ponds within the Site, a number of small ponds can also be identified within the surrounding area. Siston Brook flows across the Site, leading from near Siston Court through to the edge of Warmley. The brook is of important teleological value and should be retained and enhanced. Dense mature riparian vegetation can be found along much of the length of the brook, pockets of vegetation also surround many of the water bodies. There are number of small watercourses which meander across the surrounding landscape their routes demarcated by riparian vegetation.

Landform

The land slopes broadly west with a series of undulations and valleys, this gently rolling landform is a key characteristic of the Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge landscape character area. There is a Site high point in the far eastern corner adjacent to Hanging Wood. From this point the land slopes relatively steeply towards Mill Farm where it levels out to form a relatively wide valley containing Siston Brook. Beyond the Site to the southwest the land falls to around 30-40m Above Ordnance Datum.

Landscape Character

Landscape features within the Site contribute to the overall character of the Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge. The local character area covers an area which stretches from the southern extent of Yate to the A438 in the south, the eastern extent is contained by the rising landform, and the western boundary follows the urban edge of Bristol. The Green Infrastructure for the site would make a positive contribution to the existing character of the local area, adding to vegetation structure and cover.
The visual constraints are based on an initial ZTV analysis of how the Site may be seen and how the development may be placed to avoid harm to receptors in the visual baseline. ZTV Target Points have been modelled within the Site, at high points and low point locations and at places that explore openness and containment. The process has sought to model a representative sample of areas of the Site. Already a good understanding of the role the Site plays in the landscape and in the setting for the town has been established.

Public domain viewpoints exist along the edge of Bristol and along the PRoW across and leading to the Site. The complexities of the site topography and containment of the extensive tree cover restricts and limits many near Site views of the Site.

The main Visual Receptor groups were identified in Section 1.12. The GLVIA 3 at 6.13 ‘Receptors of visual effects’ explains the potential for ‘differing responses to changes in views and visual amenity’ that people will have depending on activity, expectation, location, time of day, season, and duration of consideration of the view. The analysis part I of this LVA draws some broad judgements about the Visual Receptors for the Site and describes the following groups:

- Residents of local properties
- Users of Public Rights of Way, the Community Forest Path and national cycle route (Bristol and Bath Railway Route)
- Users of the surrounding common land, Warmley Forest Park and Shortwood Lodge Golf Club; and
- Local road users

An initial visual assessment has been carried out earlier which has identified the site bounded by the local ridge to the north and east and there are no direct views to the site from nearby settlements of Wick and Pucklechurch.

The combination of local ridgelines, numerous hedgerows and small woodlands within the site and beyond limit views across the site. Views of the site from public areas within Kingswood are surprisingly limited, often being screened by vegetation or intervening buildings.

Significantly, whilst the majority of the site is undeveloped, views of Bristol’s east fringe and Warmley, in combination with urbanising features including London Road on the southern boundary, the Avon Ring Road, and the large pylons, adversely impact the quality of the landscape character of the area. Furthermore, an increase in horticulture and poor land management at Warmley Forest Park and other areas of green space means that significant parts of the site are urban fringe of Bristol in character.
GLVIA Edition 3 gives guidance on the use of the LVA as a ‘standalone appraisal’ in Chapter 3 and at 3.2 recommends that nature of the proposed change or development is described. It is important to define the development proposal in order to have a clear understanding of the terms of reference of the judgements and early assessments made by the team of Landscape Architects. The ‘Promotional Document’ gives a summary of the potential range of new uses that have been considered. They include a residential and employment-led, mixed use scheme.

The study within the LVA has been applied to inform these early concepts and to create a sympathetic response to the setting.

**LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN**

Warmley Urban Extension embeds green infrastructure within the heart of the design. This develops a strong green network of open spaces across the site that benefits biodiversity, the local community and retains links with the surrounding countryside. The provision of recreational and play amenities as well as allotments and orchards will promote healthy living. Through the retention and enhancement of pedestrian and cycle routes these spaces will be easily accessible.

The landscape and open space strategy will retain key rural characteristics of the site such as hedgerows and open rough grassland. The retention of hedgerows will retain the current local character of landscape with a mature landscape structure at day one. The open spaces will have a variety of characters from naturalistic woodland areas to formal open grassland, incorporating both formal and informal play areas.

Opportunities will be sought to enhance the ecological value of the site wherever possible. This will include the use of native species, plants with wildlife value (flowers, berries, shelter etc) and the retention and creation of a variety of habit types such as woodland ground flora, wetland and species rich grassland. Where amenity landscape is proposed in areas that are likely to go into private ownership, for example front gardens, these areas will be designed with a high quality and instant impact co-ordinated scheme.

New tree and shrub planting will be carefully detailed to ensure species selected are of a suitable size and habit and have appropriate growing conditions to thrive whilst requiring minimal maintenance. Consideration will also be given to service runs, highways standards, public safety and lighting standards therefore ensuring planting can develop to maturity and provide a sustainable and enduring landscape framework.

The setting of heritage assets such as Siston Conservation Area and Mill Farmhouse have been considered within the development proposals due to their location at the rural edge, their heritage importance in this context and their contribution to the character of the local landscape.

High quality, durable materials and street furniture will be selected for public realm areas. Paving materials will predominantly consist of a mixture of natural stone, concrete block paving and macadam providing surfaces that are durable, easily repaired/replaced if required and suitable for all users.

A management programme will be developed in conjunction with the landscape proposals to seek to ensure management requirements are effective and realistic for the long term success of the landscape infrastructure.
Figure 26: Concept Plan
3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The allocation of the Site as residential land will change the status of the land – countryside will become settlement and the findings of the LVA work suggest how a successful development proposal could demonstrate a sympathetic and successful response to the edge of settlement and countryside setting. The Landscape Constraints and Opportunities plan gives a summary of the key considerations and it drawn from a careful study of the landscape of the Site and its setting.

The landscape of Warmley and the Site sits within in the NCA 118 Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges National Character Area. Qualities of the National Character Area are evident in the Site and its immediate setting: shallow vales that contrast with high open ridges, predominance of agricultural land, influence of Bristol commercial, industrial and residential areas and major roads. Development on the Site would change it from farmland to settlement and this initial LVA has already set out constraints drawn from an evidence base that look to guide a development proposal to form a responsive, positive and successful fit in the host landscape and to make a positive intervention that contributes to the distinctiveness of the settlement without harm.

This LVA study has modelled the hedgerows, the tree cover and the settlement of East Grinstead within a Zone of Theoretical Visibility model that has been used to inform field work. The ZTV model has ensured that an appraisal of how the Site currently sits in the landscape and how a development may changes to specific Visual Receptors have been adequately predicted and investigated.

The LVA work has established that the Site sits discretely in both the local and wider landscape. The ridgeline provides strong visual and physical containment. It has well defined boundaries made by tree cover, by hedges and hedgerows with substantial trees.

A future residential development of the Site, guided by landscape led principles, set out in this LVA, could form a sympathetic and successful relationship with both countryside and the settlement. The future scheme needs to address this responsibility as the Site is located at the interface of rural/urban edge.

There are clear reasons, established as an evidence base and recorded within this LVA study, that have led the Landscape Architects working on this LVA to the finding that the Site has the capacity to accommodate residential development without significant harm to the setting – both countryside and town.
Off site at Shortwood Road/Back Lane, near Pucklechurch looking towards Warmley and Kingswood