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Land off Hempsted Lane,
Gloucester

Landscape Statement

Prepared by:

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on behalf of:
Gladman Developments Ltd

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CONTENTS

Page

1.0	Summary and Conclusion	1
2.0	Qualifications and Experience	4
3.0	Background and Methodology	5
4.0	Site Context and Landscape Studies	7
5.0	Site Description and Visibility	11
6.0	Ability of the Site to accommodate development	15
7.0	Response to third party comments	18

Appendices (in a separate report: (CSA/6036/07))

Appendix A:	Site Location Plan
Appendix B:	Aerial Photograph
Appendix C:	Photosheets
Appendix D:	Master Plan for 215 dwellings
Appendix E:	Extract from Landscape Sensitivity Analysis
Appendix F:	Extract from WSP's 2013 assessment of the Site
Appendix G:	Summary of Landscape and Visual Effects
Appendix H:	Townscape Appraisal Map of Hempsted Conservation Area

1.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd, in respect of an appeal against the non determination of an outline planning application for a residential development of up to 215 dwellings, on land to the south of Hempsted Lane, Gloucester ('the Site').
- 1.2 The original outline planning application was submitted in 2020, for up to 245 dwellings (application reference: 20/00315/OUT). For the reasons set out in the planning proof of evidence, that application remains undetermined.
- 1.3 The Council did however receive comments on the original planning application from their Landscape Consultant. As a result of those comments, CSA were appointed by Gladman to review the masterplan and to produce a new LVIA, to accompany the revised planning application. The revised scheme was resubmitted to the Council in May 2022, with the total number of dwellings reduced from 245 to 215. Further minor amendments were then made to address the specific concerns raised by the Council's Public Open Space Advisor, on the type of play facilities that were shown on the Development Framework Plan ('DFP').
- 1.4 The planning application was appealed for non-determination. After the appeal was lodged, the application was considered at the Planning Committee meeting on the 5th July 2022. The Planning Development Manager ('PDM') recommend that had the application not been appealed for non-determination, then it should be refused for a total of 8 reasons. The Planning Committee endorsed those recommendations.
- 1.5 Landscape was not one of the reasons for refusal. On the contrary, paragraph 4.3 of the PDM's report stated:

'Landscape Adviser – In landscape impact terms the harm is considered to be minor when considered with the proposed level of mitigation. Overall it is considered that a scheme can come forward at the reserved matters stage which would be acceptable in terms of landscape impact subject to an appropriate level of mitigation'.

- 1.6 The PDM's report went on to say (para 6.107) that:

'The Council's Landscape adviser identifies that the site is not a nationally or locally designated landscape, does not form the setting to any designated landscape, does not fall with the NPPF definition of a valued landscape and has no particular features or characteristics that are striking or unusual..'

- 1.7 Paragraph 6.107 of the PDM's report provides a fair and reasonable summary of the character of the Site and its wider setting.
- 1.8 The Council commissioned a number of landscape studies, which assessed the character of the landscape and its sensitivity to development. The most relevant to this appeal is the Landscape Analysis of Potential Development Sites that was undertaken by WSP in 2013.
- 1.9 WSP's analysis concluded that the opportunities for development on the Site were as follows:
- 'Any development on this site contained to the eastern side would not be detrimental in regard to landscape effect. This part of the site is in close proximity to other residential properties, the A430 trunk road and industrial units. Development here would be in keeping with the surrounding character'.*
- 1.10 Whilst I acknowledge that the western part of the appeal site was not identified for development, I consider that developing the Site as a whole is better as it allows the expanded settlement to extend to a clearly defined and defensible boundary. If only the eastern parcel of land were to be developed, then the residual parcel of land, to the west, would have development on two of its boundaries, with Rea Lane to the west.
- 1.11 The Site currently benefits from clearly defined and defensible boundaries and these are, for the most part, to be retained and reinforced with new planting. Where it is necessary to remove sections of hedgerows, to facilitate access, compensatory planting will be provided. The internal field boundaries are relatively weak.
- 1.12 There are a number of opportunities for views into the Site, but these are for the most part localised. The most open view is that from footpath 71, which lies immediately to the southwest of the Site. From here the Site is seen against the backdrop of housing which occupies the ridge of the hill. This housing does not lie within the Conservation Area. There are also opportunities to see the Site from sections of the A430.
- 1.13 Views from the neighbouring roads and footpaths are intermittent and for the most part screened by roadside vegetation. When the vegetation is out of leaf these views are filtered.
- 1.14 The Development Framework Plan has been informed by landscape considerations, amongst other things. The key objective of the DFP is to create a development that has a strong relationship to Hempsted and has generous areas of open space to the southwest and west. By adopting such an approach, robust and attractive boundaries will be created to these more

sensitive edges of the development. They will also provide areas for formal and informal recreation, wildlife enhancements and SuDs features.

- 1.15 The Site will change from arable land to an area of new housing and green infrastructure. The vast majority of existing structural vegetation on the Site will be retained and incorporated within the development. Large areas of native planting are proposed within the new areas of public open space.
- 1.16 Within the wider landscape, the development will be seen as an extension to Hempsted and will not appear discordant or unduly intrusive.
- 1.17 There is no intervisibility between the Hempsted Conservation Area and the Site. The Council's Townscape Appraisal Map, which accompanies their Conservation Area Appraisal, identifies the key views from the Conservation Area as being in an east-west direction, and not in a southerly direction, towards the Site. This is understandable as suburban development extends in depth from the southern edge of the Conservation Area to Hempsted Lane.
- 1.18 For the reasons set out above, and expanded upon in this statement, and the LVIA, I am in agreement with the Council's Landscape Adviser, who concluded that the *'landscape impact is minor when considered with the proposed level of mitigation'*.

2.0 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 2.1 I am Clive Self and I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and an Urban Designer. I hold a Diploma in Landscape Architecture and a Master's Degree in Urban Design. I have over 30 years' experience in landscape and townscape design and assessment.
- 2.2 I am the Managing Director of CSA, a multi-disciplinary environmental planning practice which I established in 1999. The practice acts for the public and private sector and has an in-house team of urban designers, ecologists, heritage consultants and landscape architects. We operate throughout the UK.
- 2.3 Prior to forming CSA I was responsible for landscape architecture and masterplanning at PRC Fewster Architects and before that I was employed in a similar role at Sargent and Potiriadis Architects. I have worked throughout the UK, Middle East and the United States on a broad range of landscape projects, townscape appraisals and environmental planning work.
- 2.4 My company is currently involved in projects that range from the masterplanning of new garden villages to redevelopment of inner city brownfield sites. We work throughout the UK, in both the rural and urban environment and act for both the public and private sector.
- 2.5 I have given landscape and urban design advice on numerous schemes. I have also given landscape and urban design evidence at Local Plan/LDF Inquiries, Section 77 and 78 Inquiries, and CPO Inquiries.
- 2.6 The evidence that I have prepared and provide for this appeal is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institute and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Background

- 3.1 The original outline planning application was submitted in 2020, for up to 245 dwellings (application reference: 20/00315/OUT). CSA were not involved in the original planning application and for the reasons set out in the planning proof of evidence, that application remains undetermined.
- 3.2 The Council did however receive comments on the original planning application from their Landscape Consultant. As a result of those comments, CSA were appointed by Gladman to undertake a new Landscape Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') and to use those findings, and the comments made by the Landscape Consultant, to inform the preparation of a new masterplan and accompanying DAS. The revised scheme was resubmitted to the Council in May 2022, with the total number of dwellings reduced from up to 245 to up to 215 dwellings. A further minor amendment was made to address the comments made by the Council's Open Space Advisor. It is the revised scheme that this statement addresses.
- 3.3 The planning application was appealed for non-determination. In response to this, the application was considered at the Planning Committee on the 5th July 2022. The Planning Development Manager ('PDM') recommend that, had the application not been appealed for non-determination, then it should be refused for a total of 8 reasons. The Planning Committee endorsed those recommendations.
- 3.4 Landscape was not one of the reasons for refusal. On the contrary, paragraph 4.3 of the PDM's report stated:
- Landscape Adviser** – In landscape impact terms the harm is considered to be minor when considered with the proposed level of mitigation. Overall it is considered that a scheme can come forward at the reserved matters stage which would be acceptable in terms of landscape impact subject to an appropriate level of mitigation.*
- 3.5 Although the appeal scheme provides a significant amount of open space: 6.72 ha, out of a total site area 12.22 ha, the fourth reason for refusal states that the scheme failed to provide adequate sports and play facilities. In light of these comments, the DFP was amended to include a kickabout area and a combined NEAP/MUGA. The need for off-site contributions is addressed in the planning proof of evidence.
- 3.6 This statement should be read alongside CSA's submitted LVIA. As the LVIA provides a comprehensive assessment of the anticipated landscape and

visual effects of the Appeal Scheme, it is not replicated here, rather the most pertinent points are summarised. A summary of the potential landscape and visual effects is contained in **Appendix G**.

Methodology

- 3.7 The LVIA was prepared in accordance with the guidance set out in the third edition of the Landscape Institute's Guidance for Landscape and Visual Effects (GLIVIA).

4.0 SITE CONTEXT AND LANDSCAPE STUDIES

Site Context

- 4.1 The Site consists of three irregular shaped fields which lie on the southern edge of Hempsted and the eastern edge of Gloucester. The Site location and its immediate context are illustrated on the Location Plan and Aerial Photograph in **Appendix A** and **B**.
- 4.2 The Site is bound to the north by Hempsted Lane and the properties which are served off it. At roughly the midpoint of the northern boundary there are nine detached dwellings which front onto the lane and back onto the Site. To the southeast of these properties, on the opposite side of Hempsted Lane, are a series of detached properties which have relatively large front gardens, and face onto the lane.
- 4.3 The north western section of the northern boundary follows Bridleway 148, to the north of which are the rear gardens of the houses served off High View.
- 4.4 To the north west of the Site, beyond Rea Lane, is a new residential development, which is in the final stages of being built out.
- 4.5 Rea Lane forms the western boundary of the Site. At approximately the midpoint of the western boundary, an uninhabited cottage, which appears to be fire damaged, is indented into the Site boundary. Further to the west are a series of irregular shaped fields that lie within the floodplain of the River Severn.
- 4.6 The two chalet bungalows of Lowlands and Coppins, which are accessed off Rea Lane, are indented into the Site's south western boundary.
- 4.7 To the south of the Site are a series of low lying, irregular shaped fields that are occupied by a mixture of pasture and scrub woodland. There is also the Barn Owl sanctuary/visitor centre at Netheridge Farm and further south a large sewage works.
- 4.8 The Site is bound to the east by Secunda Way (the A430), with commercial development and the Gloucester Rowing Club to the east of road. There is also a relatively large area of parking, which I understand is regularly used for car boot sales, within this area. Further to the east is the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Further to the northeast is residential development which occupies land between the eastern edge of Secunda Way and the canal.
- 4.9 The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ('AONB') lies approximately 4km south east of the Site, beyond the M5 motorway.

- 4.10 The Hempsted Conservation Area lies around 110m north of the Site, at its closest point, although it is separated from the Site by intervening development.

Landscape Character Assessment ('LCA')- Joint Core Strategy Landscape Characterisation Assessment and Sensitivity Analysis

- 4.11 The LCA formed part of the evidence base for the Joint Core Strategy and provided a landscape character and sensitivity analysis of the land around the urban centres of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. It included a landscape character assessment, followed by a sensitivity analysis which was undertaken in 2011.
- 4.12 The report identifies the Site as lying within the Settled Unwooded Vale Landscape Character Type ('LCT') which is subdivided into smaller Landscape Character Areas ('LCA').
- 4.13 The Site lies within LCA W – Hempsted, which comprises the land to the south and west of Hempsted. The description of LCA W notes that the village of Hempsted is located on an elongated hill to the west of Gloucester, and that it has undergone significant residential expansion. It notes that, while there are some historic buildings and features, the variety of 20th Century housing estates have led to a general loss of traditional small village character. It states that notable detractors include large industrial units which can be seen to the south east, beyond the A430.
- 4.14 In relation to the visual context, the study notes that although scrub and tree planting parallel to the A430 provides screening in the east, the City of Gloucester and industrial units can easily be viewed. Views from Gloucester towards Hempsted Hill are generally of an urban nature. Robins Wood Hill can be viewed beyond Gloucester. It notes that when Hempsted is viewed from the west, its western escarpment provides an important visual continuation of rural character that screens the rural Floodplain Farmland from views of urban encroachment. The study states that clear views of the southern agricultural slopes can be gained from the A430.

Sensitivity Analysis

- 4.15 The study also included a Sensitivity Analysis (see **Appendix E**).
- 4.16 This map shows that the Site lies within sensitivity area G37, which also includes the land to the south which leads up to Sims Lane. The Site and G37 were assessed within the study as being of Medium-Low sensitivity.
- 4.17 The study notes:

"This predominantly low-lying compartment has been fragmented by the A430 and is encroached upon by industrial buildings. Tranquillity is therefore lost. Despite urban and industrial associations some well managed landscape features such as the ponds, orchard and small woodland adjacent to the sewerage works endure (although woodland is not characteristic of a floodplain landscape). Remnant agricultural land on scarp to south of Hempsted [i.e. the Site] appears intensively managed as field size is large, boundaries have been lost, and remaining hedges are often low and degraded. Mature boundary trees are sparsely scattered across the zone, with tree and scrub cover increasing along Rea Lane and towards the sewerage works. Low lying topography, tree planting and built form provides visual containment and creates strong urban associations. However, the fields directly south of Hempsted occupy an elevated position and are subsequently highly visible and offer extensive views".

4.18 The Study then summarises the reasoning behind these judgements as:

- *Visually related to the City, not the rural hinterland.*
- *Some rural features are retained including hedges, ditches, ponds, and mature trees.*
- *Rural character is degraded by intensive agricultural use, Hempsted markets, elevated infrastructure and proximity to industrial units.'*

4.19 From my assessment of the Site and surroundings, I consider the above description of the area is reasonable.

Landscape Analysis of Potential Development Sites

4.20 In 2013 WSP were commissioned by Gloucester City Council to carry out a landscape analysis of seven sites around Gloucester City, and to consider their suitability for residential development in respect of potential landscape effects. The study considered the Site.

4.21 The study concluded that the opportunities for development were:

- *Any development on this site contained to the eastern side would not be detrimental in regard to landscape effect. This part of the site is in close proximity to other residential properties, the A430 trunk road and industrial units. Development here would be in keeping with the surrounding character.*
- *The different rural character in the western part of the site, its view from the flood plain and the rising topography means this area would be unsuitable for development. This area of the site would be highly*

visible, therefore creating a negative effect on the visual amenity and landscape character. It would encroach on the rural aspect of the village's surroundings.

- 4.22 Appendix b of the study includes a plan showing the constraints and opportunities of the Site. That plan (reproduced in **Appendix F**) shows the eastern part of the Site suitable for development.
- 4.23 It is evident from the above assessment, that the Council considered that there was potential for Hempsted to expand. in a southerly direction, onto part of the appeal site.

5.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

Site Description

- 5.1 The Site extends to 12.22 ha and comprises three arable fields on the southern edge of Hempsted.
- 5.2 The northeastern boundary of the easternmost field, which adjoins Hempsted Lane, is formed by a tall, native hedgerow, with intermittent tree cover. The south eastern boundary of this field is defined by a relatively tall hedgerow, with an embankment leading to the footway that runs alongside the A430. The southwestern boundary is formed by an established hedgerow, with a ditch beyond. The field boundary between the eastern and central field is formed by a 2m high hedgerow of relatively poor quality, with a large gap in the centre.
- 5.3 The northern boundary of the central field comprises a relatively tall hedgerow with intermittent tree cover. Where the boundary passes behind the properties served off Hempsted Lane, the tree cover is denser. The northern half of the boundary between the central and western fields is formed by a native, treeless, hedgerow. Within the southern part of the central field is a drainage basin. The southern boundary of the central and western fields is formed by a native hedgerow, around 2m high, with a drainage ditch immediately to the south.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.4 Public footpath 71 follows a north-south alignment along the eastern part of the Site, although this section of the footpath is not evident on the ground, with walkers using the footpath alongside the A430. The footpath also follows a north east to south west alignment, across the field to the immediately south west of the Site.
- 5.5 Bridleway 148 runs along the north western section of the Site boundary, linking Rea Lane to Hempsted Lane.
- 5.6 Public rights of way within the locality are shown on the OS map in **Appendix A**.

Topography

- 5.7 The Site occupies a south-facing slope with the northern part of the Site having a steeper gradient than the southern part. Further to the south, the land is relatively level whereas to the north it continues to rise to a broad plateau, with the properties that face onto Hempsted Lane and Bridleway 148 forming

a distinct feature on the skyline (see Photographs 14 and 15). Beyond these properties development extends in depth into Hempsted.

- 5.8 The land to the west and southwest of the Site slopes down towards the flood plain of the River Severn. To the east the land is relatively level and has the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal passing through it.
- 5.9 Beyond the low lying ground which the River Severn and Gloucester and Sharpness Canal flow through, the land rises to a series of hills, most notably Robins Wood Hill.

Designations

- 5.10 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character. Similarly, it does not carry any heritage designation or have any listed buildings on it or in the immediate vicinity. None of the trees within the Site are covered by TPOs. The Site is therefore not considered to be a Valued Landscape in respect of para 174a of the NPPF. The Council's Landscape Consultant reaches a similar conclusion.

Visibility

- 5.11 The LVIA that accompanied the planning application provided a detailed assessment of views of the Site and neighbouring area. The locations of the key representative viewpoints are shown on the Location Plan and Aerial Photograph contained in **Appendices A** and **B** and on the photographs in **Appendix C**. A summary of the nature of the views and predicted effects is contained in the assessment table in **Appendix G**.
- 5.12 As the LVIA contains a detailed assessment of views of the Site, I have not replicated that information; rather, I have summarised the main visual receptors.

Near and Middle Distance Views

- 5.13 Views from Hempsted Lane are largely prevented by the dense roadside hedgerow, although there is a field access in the eastern part of the Site, which allows views into the Site. The vegetation alongside the A430 and the road is also visible from this location, as is the vegetation within the fields to the south of the Site. There are occasional views of the employment buildings and associated infrastructure which lie to the east of the A430.
- 5.14 There are some opportunities for views of the Site from the houses which back onto it and from those on the opposite side of Hempsted Lane (photographs 14 and 15). Views from these properties are mainly from first floor windows and partially screened by intervening vegetation.

- 5.15 There are partial views across the central and western part of the Site, from the section of the bridleway which adjoins the north western boundary (photographs 4 and 5). In these views, the Site is partially visible, with longer distance views to the countryside to the south and development within Gloucester to the south east. The hills on the south eastern and south western edges of Gloucester are also visible.
- 5.16 Near distance views into the Site from Rea Lane are largely prevented by the roadside vegetation, although there are some opportunities for views where there is scrub vegetation and field accesses (photographs 1-3). There are also some opportunities for views into the Site from the rear gardens and windows of the properties which are indented into the south west corner of the Site.
- 5.17 As one progresses southwards along Rea Lane, there is the occasional glimpsed view of the Site and housing to the north of it (photographs 17 and 24).
- 5.18 In views from public footpath 64, which lies to the west of Rea Lane, there are partial views of the Site through gaps in the intervening vegetation (photographs 18,19 and 20). In these views, the Site is typically seen against the backdrop of housing within Hempsted.
- 5.19 In views from public footpath 64, where it forms part of the Severn Way, the western part of the Site is partially visible in middle distance views. From this footpath, housing on the higher ground in Hempsted is visible in the middle distance with Robins Wood Hill in the far distance (photographs 21,22 and 23).
- 5.20 There are open views of the Site from public footpath 71 which crosses the floodplain to the immediate south of the Site. In these views, the Site is seen against the backdrop of housing in Hempsted which occupies the higher ground (photographs 14, 15 and 16).
- 5.21 Middle to longer distance views from the south west are largely prevented by the intervening vegetation and areas of slightly higher ground.
- 5.22 When heading northwards on the A430, from the point at which the road crosses the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, up to the southern Site boundary, there are opportunities to see the Site and the housing in Hempsted which occupies the ridge of the hill (photographs 11 and 13).
- 5.23 There are very limited opportunities for views of the Site from the canal tow path (and National Cycle Route 41) which lies a short distance to the east. There are views from the area around the rowing club, with further limited, filtered and partial views available from the neighbouring car parking area (photograph 10).

Longer Distance Views

- 5.24 In long distance views from the west, from the eastern side of Minsterworth, views of the Site are prevented by the intervening vegetation, with development within Gloucester partially visible on the higher areas of ground.
- 5.25 From the south east, from the top of Robins Wood Hill, the Site is seen as a small component of far reaching views to the countryside beyond, with the northern part of the Site framed by housing in Hempsted, with the commercial and residential development in Gloucester leading up to the eastern boundary (photograph 34).
- 5.26 In long distance views (approximately 5 km) from the Cotswolds AONB, there are no meaningful views of the Site (photograph 35).

Landscape Quality, Value and Sensitivity

- 5.27 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality, nor for ecology or heritage conservation value. There are few trees of value within the body of the Site and a limited number of hedgerows.
- 5.28 The Site's character is influenced by the A430, which is a busy trunk road that has street lighting alongside it. The housing within Hempsted that overlooks the Site similarly has an influence upon it, as does the commercial development to the east of the A430. The more open agricultural landscape to the south and west also relates to the Site. The Site overall is therefore considered to be of medium landscape quality.
- 5.29 The housing to the north of the Site is no particular architectural merit and the Hempsted Conservation Area is separated from the Site by these properties. The land to the east of the Site is clearly urban in character, although the landscape to the south and west of the Site is more rural in character.

6.0 ABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The appeal scheme is in outline form only and is for up to 215 dwellings with generous areas of open space and infrastructure. Vehicular access is from Hempsted Lane.
- 6.2 The southern, easternmost and westernmost parts of the Site are proposed to be retained for open space, recreational activities, new landscaping and drainage basins.
- 6.3 The existing hedgerows and trees within the Site and along the boundaries are proposed to be retained wherever possible, with sections removed to facilitate access and movement. The DFP shows significant areas of new planting within the areas of open space, in order to mitigate the losses necessary to create the access, as well as filtering views of the new development from the surrounding area. The new area of publicly accessible open space will also include areas of wildflower meadow and an orchard.
- 6.4 A full description of the proposed development is contained in the submitted Design and Access Statement.

Landscape Features

- 6.5 The proposed access off Hempsted Lane, and the associated visibility splays, will require the removal of around 86m of hedgerow. A new native hedgerow and trees are proposed to be planted behind the visibility splays, to compensate for the loss. Further sections of internal hedgerows will require removal to facilitate access and movement within the development although the majority of structural vegetation on the Site boundaries and within it, is to be retained and enhanced.
- 6.6 The DFP shows how large areas of tree, thicket and woodland planting are proposed within the open space on the southern and western edges of the development. The planting will provide new habitats and filter views of the proposed development as well as contributing to a net gain in biodiversity.

Relationship to Settlement

- 6.7 The proposed development will form a natural extension to the southern edge of Hempsted. The proposed development will not be introducing a new or uncharacteristic element into the surrounding landscape or views.
- 6.8 The proposed open space and structural planting within the southern part of the Site will create a robust and clearly defined boundary to the village at this point.

Public Rights of Way

- 6.9 New recreational footways are proposed within the Site and the existing footpath which runs alongside the A430 will be reinstated.

Visibility

- 6.10 The key views of the appeal scheme are summarised below.

Near and Middle Distance Views

- 6.11 Views of the new homes from Hempsted Lane, will largely be screened by the intervening vegetation, although there will initially be open views from the new access and its accompanying visibility splays. Similar views will be available from the bridleway that runs along the north west boundary of the Site.
- 6.12 The properties that are indented into the northern part of the Site, and those on the opposite side of Hempsted Lane, will have some views of the proposed housing. At the detailed design stage, additional tree planting can be provided along this boundary, to further filter views.
- 6.13 Development will be partially visible from Rea Lane, and the two properties which are indented into the southwestern part of the Site. As the proposed planting matures, these views will become filtered.
- 6.14 In views from public footpath 64, to the west, there will be some opportunities for views of development. The proposed planting within the Site will filter views of the new homes and as such the new homes will not appear discordant in these views.
- 6.15 There will initially be relatively open views of the new development from public footpath 71 which runs a short distance south of the Site. The proposed open space within the southern part of the Site will accommodate new planting which will partially filter views of the new homes.
- 6.16 In views from the A430 and the land further to the south east, development within the eastern part of the Site will be partially visible, albeit seen against the backdrop of the existing housing to the north.

Longer Distance Views

- 6.17 The proposed development will be visible in long distance views from Robins Wood Hill, where it will be seen as a small component of a much wider view, and as such it will not appear at odds with the character of the area.

Landscape Effects

- 6.18 The Site will change from arable land to an area of new housing and associated open space. The vast majority of existing structural vegetation on the Site will be retained.
- 6.19 While the effect on the Site's character is assessed as being adverse, this is an inevitable consequence of developing green field land. However, extensive areas of open space are provided to allow for new planting.
- 6.20 Within the wider landscape, the new development will read as an extension to Hempsted and has the benefit of clearly identifiable and defensible boundaries which will be further strengthened with new planting. It will therefore not read as uncontrolled expansion into the open countryside.

Proposed development in relation to 'Landscape Analysis of Potential Development Sites (2013)'

- 6.21 The Landscape Analysis of Potential Development Sites identifies the eastern part of the Site as having the potential for development and states that development would 'not be detrimental in regard to landscape effects'.
- 6.22 The study notes that the visibility of the western part of the Site from the floodplain and the rising topography make this area unsuitable for built development. It should be noted that this analysis predates the recent development which lies to the west of Rea Lane.
- 6.23 Developing the Site in a comprehensive manner, such as that shown on the DFP, provides a far more logical extension to the village than the arbitrary parcel identified in the analysis. If only the eastern part of the land were to be developed, then the remaining parcel of land would have development along its northern and eastern boundary and part way along its western boundary. The remaining parcel of land would therefore not relate to the wider landscape in a such meaningful way.

7.0 RESPONSE TO THIRD PARTY COMMENTS

7.1 I have already referred to the fact that the Council's Landscape Consultant did not object to the scheme and that there is no landscape reason for refusal. The background studies the Council commissioned are also relevant as they identify the Site as being of low-medium sensitivity to development. The 2013 Analysis of Potential Development Sites also identifies the eastern part of the Site as being suitable for residential development.

7.2 There have however been a number of objections from local residents, which cover several aspects of the development. In respect of landscape matters, these are summarised in the RTC under four broad areas of concern, which I address below.

The site is very visible and provides a buffer between the rural and urban area

7.3 A comprehensive assessment of views of the Site is contained in the LVIA and summarised in this statement. This shows that the main open views are from public footpath 71 which lies immediately to the southwest of the Site. In such views, the Site is currently seen as open farmland with the ridge of the hill occupied by the housing that sits alongside Hempsted Lane. This housing undoubtedly has an influence on the character of the Site. There will also be opportunities to view the development from the A430.

7.4 In views from the neighbouring area, the existing boundary vegetation provides containment and frequently screens or filters views into the Site. There are however some views from gaps in the boundary vegetation and from neighbouring properties and public rights of way.

7.5 Whilst there will inevitably be some views of development on the Site, in formulating the masterplan, the strategy has been to strengthen the boundary vegetation and to provide generous areas of open space to allow additional planting. By adopting such an approach, the development will be partially screened and a robust and attractive southwestern boundary will be created between the Site and the open countryside beyond.

7.6 In terms of providing a buffer, any open countryside which adjoins a settlement, provides that function. One of the key objectives in formulating the masterplan was to create a robust and attractive southwestern boundary to the expanded village of Hempsted. This has been achieved by allowing the entirety of the southwestern boundary to be retained as open space. This boundary will therefore provide a robust and clearly defined boundary to the village.

The land forms a pleasant approach to Hempsted

- 7.7 The main approach to Hempsted, from the south, is on the A430. This road is a busy trunk road which has a footpath and street lighting alongside. On the opposite side of the road is commercial development which extends in depth into Gloucester. On any reasonable basis the road cannot be described as rural.
- 7.8 Whilst there are currently some opportunities for motorists and pedestrians to obtain views into the Site, such views are typically seen against the backdrop of housing within Hempsted which occupies the ridge. This housing does not fall within the Conservation Area and is mainly from the latter half of the 20th Century.
- 7.9 With development in place, the greater part of the Site will be occupied by housing and associated infrastructure and the open land, which leads up to the existing settlement edge, will largely be lost. To help mitigate this loss, the southwestern part of the Site has been retained as open land to allow for new planting which will partly screen the development and create an attractive boundary to the expanded settlement at this point.

Previous assessments raise concern with developing the land due to landscape impact

- 7.10 Paragraph 6.102 of the Planning Development Manager's RTC states that *'the site was previously included within a wider Landscape Conservation Area designation within the Revised Deposit Local Plan 2002. The accompanying policy sought to prevent development that would detract from the particular landscape qualities and character of the designated areas. However this designation and policy is now superseded'*.
- 7.11 I have already referred to the Landscape Assessment that was undertaken by WSP in 2013 which identified the eastern part of the Site as suitable for development and the Sensitivity Analysis of the area which identified the Site as Medium-Low sensitivity to development.
- 7.12 There are therefore no current landscape policies which identify special qualities of the Site that elevate it above ordinary countryside. On the contrary, the various independent studies the Council have commissioned have identified the Site as being of Medium to Low sensitivity, with the eastern part suitable for development.

Development would have a negative landscape impact and encroach upon the rural setting of Hempsted.

- 7.13 I have already explained that the proposed development would extend the current settlement boundary in a southerly direction and occupy what is presently arable farmland but that the development has been planned in such a way as to create an attractive and robust boundary to the extended settlement. It will therefore have only a limited impact on the setting of the settlement and would create a more attractive boundary than the housing on the southern edge of Hempsted currently provides.

Under matters of principle, residents have also expressed their concerns about the harmful impact on the Conservation Area

- 7.14 The impact of the appeal scheme on the significance of the Conservation Area is addressed in detail in the Historic Environment Statement that accompanied the planning application and within the Heritage Statement. In respect of its wider setting, I would make the following observations.
- 7.15 In terms of intervisibility between the appeal site and the Conservation Area, this is prevented by the intervening housing which is typically suburban in character and which extends in depth up to Hempsted Lane. This housing intervenes in views south from within the Conservation Area towards the appeal site.
- 7.16 Gloucester City Council's Conservation Area Appraisal No 12, covers Hempsted. The townscape appraisal map, which is contained in the document (see extract in **Appendix H**), identifies a series of 'important views' which contribute to its character. Outward views from the Conservation Area which offer an understanding of its elevated location and which reveal the rural surroundings, project in an east-west direction from its periphery and there are none which are directed towards the Site. This is unsurprising as the map shows that the suburban development, which lies to the south of the Conservation Area, extends in depth down to Hempsted Lane.
- 7.17 The appeal scheme would therefore not affect the key views out of the Conservation Area, towards its wider setting, which contribute to its special character.
- 7.18 The approach towards the Conservation Area on Rea Lane is not identified on the townscape appraisal map as being important to the character of the area. However, the landscape buffer which is proposed on the western boundary of the Site would assist in retaining the existing semi-rural approach into the Conservation Area from the south. After passing the northern tip of the Site, the lane then passes by the recent residential

development to the immediate west, and the suburban housing to the east, before entering the Conservation Area.

7.19 On the approach to Hempsted on the A430, the existing housing, which is served off Hempsted Lane, comes into view, as does the commercial development on the opposite side of the road. Given the content of the existing view and the fact that the A430 is a busy trunk road which has street lighting alongside, and the fact that the proposed housing on the appeal site is to be set back behind a generous area of open space, then the appeal scheme will not appear discordant with the character of the area.

7.20 Given these factors, which are explained in greater detail in the Heritage Statement, the appeal scheme will not harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as it does not constitute an element of the Conservation Area's setting which contributes towards an appreciation of its special character and appearance.



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