

# LAND EAST OF STANSTED

## Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment



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## REPORT

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 RPS Group PLC has been commissioned by MAG London Stansted Airport to carry out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the proposed ground mounted solar photovoltaic park and ancillary development on land to the east of Stansted Airport, Essex (see Figure 1). From here on in, referred to as the ‘Application Site’.
- 1.2 The Application Site falls within the administrative area of Uttlesford District Council (UDC). It is approximately 22.5 hectares. The solar park proposals for the Application Site, are referred to as the ‘proposed development’.
- 1.3 This report provides a consideration of the Application Site within the context of the surrounding rural landscape. It outlines the existing baseline conditions in terms of:
  - Topography;
  - Vegetation cover and land uses;
  - Published landscape character studies;
  - Landscape and other relevant designations; and
  - The current visibility of the Application Site.
- 1.4 The likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development are assessed against the existing baseline scenario.
- 1.5 Planning policy of relevance to the proposed development insofar as it relates to landscape and visual amenity matters are also considered in this document.

## Baseline

- 1.6 The Application Site is located on farmland to the east of London Stansted Airport and Parsonage Road and to the north of Takeley and the A120. It comprises parts of two arable fields, which are sub-divided by low-cut hedgerows, with occasional individual trees. It is bounded to the east (partly) by mixed woodland within Seven Acre Wood and, to the north-west, by a narrow, linear strip of deciduous woodland (formerly the site of Tam O’Shanter Cottage), which is now used for rearing game birds.

## Assessment Methodology

- 1.7 This assessment considers the likely effects of the proposed development on the existing or baseline conditions during its operational phase. The level of the landscape and visual effects are assessed through consideration of the sensitivity or susceptibility of the landscape and visual receptor and the magnitude of change. The following table outlines the approach adopted to assess the significance of effect. The detailed methodology used for this assessment is set out at Appendix A.

**Table 1: Level of Effect**

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity or Susceptibility	Magnitude of Change			
	Large	Medium	Small	Negligible
High	Major	Major or Moderate	Minor	Minor or Negligible
Medium	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Minor or Negligible	Negligible

<b>Low</b>	Minor	Minor or Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
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1.8 The effect of relevant aspects of the proposed development on the landscape has been described and evaluated against the following criteria:

- Major adverse: Where the proposed changes cannot be fully mitigated; would be uncharacteristic and would damage a valued aspect of the landscape.
- Moderate adverse: Where some elements of the proposed changes would be out of scale or uncharacteristic of an area.
- Minor adverse: Where the proposed changes would be at slight variance with the character of an area.
- Negligible adverse: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the landscape.
- Neutral: Where the proposals would be in keeping with the character of the area and/or would maintain the existing quality or where on balance the proposals would maintain quality (e.g. where on balance the adverse effects of the proposals are off-set by beneficial effects).
- Negligible beneficial: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the landscape.
- Minor beneficial: Where the proposed changes would reflect the existing character and would slightly improve the character and quality of the landscape.
- Moderate beneficial: Where the proposed changes would not only fit in well with the existing character of the surrounding landscape but would improve the quality of the resource through the removal of detracting features.
- Major beneficial: Where the proposed changes would substantially improve character and quality through the removal of large-scale damage and dereliction and provision of far reaching enhancements.

1.9 The effect of relevant aspects of the proposed development on views has been described and evaluated as follows:

- Major adverse: Where the proposed changes would form a major part of the view, or would be uncharacteristic, and would alter valued views.
- Moderate adverse: Where the proposed changes to views would be out of scale or uncharacteristic with the existing view.
- Minor adverse: Where the proposed changes to views would be at slight variance with the existing view.
- Negligible adverse: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the existing view.
- Neutral: Where the project would be imperceptible or would be in keeping with and would maintain the existing views or, where on balance, the proposals would maintain the quality of the views (which may include adverse effects of the proposals which are off-set by beneficial effects for the same receptor).
- Negligible beneficial: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the existing view.
- Minor beneficial: Where the proposed changes to the existing view would be in keeping with and would improve the quality of the existing view.

- Moderate beneficial: Where the proposed changes to the existing view would not only be in keeping with but would greatly improve the quality of the scene through the removal of visually detracting features.
- Major beneficial: Where the proposed changes to existing views would substantially improve the character and quality through the removal of large-scale damage and dereliction and provision of far reaching enhancements.

1.10 In the assessment, those levels of effect indicated as being 'Major' may be regarded as significant effects. An accumulation of individual 'Moderate' adverse visual effects, for instance experienced during a journey, may also be regarded as sequentially significant. If no change would occur or be experienced by a receptor, then this has been recorded as 'No Effect'.

### Relevant Guidance

1.11 As a matter of best practice, the assessment has been undertaken based on the relevant guidance on landscape and visual assessment. This includes:

- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition*' (GLVIA).
- The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) '*Landscape Character and Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland*' (LCA).
- Natural England (2014) '*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*'
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19, '*Visual Representation of Development Proposals*' (September 2019).
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21, '*Assessing landscape value outside national designations*' (May 2021).

### Study Area

1.12 The study area has been defined for the assessment based on a visual analysis undertaken during the site survey and the preparation of a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) for the proposed development. The ZTV is the area from which any part of the proposed development would be potentially visible (See Figure 2).

### Baseline Methodology and Consultation

1.13 A desk top review of published data, such as landscape character assessments, OS maps and aerial photography was carried out. This identified potential landscape and visual receptors that could be affected by the proposed development.

1.14 Field survey was undertaken during March 2021 to undertake viewpoint photography and analyse local landscape and visual receptors identified during the desktop survey.

1.15 Initial consultation has been sought with the UDC, through the submission of an initial screening report. This included the ZTV, together with a list of 9 representative viewpoints to be included in the LVIA. A response to the screening report was received during September 2021, which did not include a commentary on the proposed list of representative viewpoints. As such, and in the absence of further feedback from UDC, the list of viewpoints included in the screening report has been carried forward for inclusion in this LVIA.

## Assessment Criteria and Assignment of Significance

- 1.16 Landscape and visual effects have been determined, taking into account the receptor sensitivity and the predicted magnitude of the change arising from the proposed development. Appendix A sets out the indicative criteria used to guide the assessment of significance. It should be emphasised that, while the criteria are set out to ensure that the methodology is robust and transparent, professional judgement has been used to determine the significance of each effect. The assessment has been undertaken by and reviewed by members of a team with relevant qualifications and extensive experience in preparing LVIAs.
- 1.17 The assessment of visual effects is based on views from publicly accessible locations, and where effects on residential and other private views (e.g. commercial occupiers) is noted this has, necessarily, been estimated based on the nearest publicly available viewpoint and professional judgement.
- 1.18 The representative viewpoints identified in this assessment are illustrative of the likely significant effects experienced by a representative range of receptors, including users of public rights of way and occupiers of vehicles on the road network.

## 2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 This section summarises the national and local planning policies pertinent to landscape and visual issues, which are considered to be of relevance to the proposed development. The policy documents described below have been reviewed as part of the study. Landscape Planning related designations are shown on Figure 1.

### National Planning Policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021 (as amended). The document sets out broad aims to achieve sustainable development in Section 2, including an environmental objective *'to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment'* at paragraph 8.
- 2.3 Strategic policies regarding Plan-making at Section 3 include, at paragraph 20, the sufficient provision for *'conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure'*.
- 2.4 Section 11: Making effective use of land recognises the need to safeguard and improve the environment when meeting the needs for development. Paragraph 120 promotes new habitat creation or the improvement of public access to the countryside. Paragraph 124 recognises the *'desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting... or of promoting regeneration and change'* and *'the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places'*.
- 2.5 Section 12: Achieving well-designed places contains policies about achieving high quality design for all development (Paragraph 130). Developments should respond to the local character and history and reflect the identity of the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. The development should incorporate appropriate and effective landscaping.
- 2.6 Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. Paragraph 152 states that the planning system should *'support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure'*. Paragraph 155 supports the increase in the use of renewable energy *'while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts)'*.
- 2.7 Section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment. Paragraph 174 states that *'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by; protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality)'* and by *'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'* including the benefits of trees and woodland.
- 2.8 Paragraph 176 states that *'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.'*
- 2.9 Paragraph 185 requires that new development is appropriate to its location, ensuring relatively undisturbed areas retain tranquillity and amenity value, and that the impact of light pollution from artificial light is limited within intrinsically dark landscapes.



## Local Development Framework

- 2.10 The Application Site is within an area administered by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and, as such, UDC would be the determining authority. At the time of writing, UDC is in the process of updating its local plan. However, within the current local plan (adopted 2005), the Application Site is included within an area designated as a 'Countryside Protection Zone' (CPZ) by UDC. It should be noted that this is a local designation; the purpose of which is intended to maintain the openness of the area around Stansted Airport. The CPZ is not designated as a result of the landscape or scenic quality of the area. Relevant Landscape Planning designations are shown on Figure 1.

### Uttlesford Local Plan – Adopted January 2005

**Table 2 Uttlesford Local Plan Policies**

Plan Policy	Details (abridged)
<b>Policy ENV8 – Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation</b>	<p><i>Development which may adversely affect...Larger semi-natural or ancient woodlands will only be permitted if the following criteria apply:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>The need for the development outweighs the need to retain the elements for their importance to wild fauna and flora;</i></li> <li>b) <i>Mitigation measures are provided that would compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Appropriate management of these elements will be encouraged through the use of conditions and planning obligations.</i></p>
<b>Policy S7 – The Countryside</b>	<p><i>“The countryside to which this policy applies is defined as all those parts of the Plan area beyond the Green Belt that are not within the settlement or other site boundaries. In the countryside, which will be protected for its own sake, planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place there, or is appropriate to a rural area. This will include infilling in accordance with paragraph 6.13 of the Housing Chapter of the Plan. There will be strict control on new building. Development will only be permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there.”</i></p>
<b>Policy S8 – The Countryside Protection Zone</b>	<p><i>“The area and boundaries of the Countryside Protection Zone around Stansted Airport are defined on the Proposals Map. In the Countryside Protection Zone planning permission will only be granted for development that is required to be there, or is appropriate to a rural area. There will be strict control on new development. In particular development will not be permitted if either of the following apply:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <i>New buildings or uses would promote coalescence between the airport and existing development in the surrounding countryside;</i></li> <li>B. <i>It would adversely affect the open characteristics of the zone.”</i></li> </ul>

### **Uttlesford Countryside Protection Zone Study (LUC - 2018)**

- 2.11 Land Use Consultants (LUC) were commissioned by UDC to undertake a review of the CPZ as part of the evidence base for its emerging local plan (Uttlesford Countryside Protection Zone, June 2016). The Application Site formed part of land 'Parcel 6' within this study, for which it concluded that the level of 'Harm' to the CPZ if the total land parcel was to be removed from designation would be 'High'.

### **Summary of Planning Policy**

- 2.12 The NPPF sets out overarching aims to ensure development is appropriately located, well designed and sustainable. In summary, the policies set out to improve the overall quality of an area, establish a strong sense of place and create an attractive and comfortable location, responding to the local character. National policies seek to conserve, protect and enhance valued landscapes and provide protection of scenic areas within nationally designated areas such as AONBs.
- 2.13 The Uttlesford Local Plan incorporates strategies to respect and complement the important features, elements and characteristics of the countryside. In addition, the 'Countryside Protection Zone', within which the Application Site sits, adds a further policy designed to prevent coalescence between the airport and existing development and to maintain the 'openness' of the area.

## 3 BASELINE ENVIRONMENT

- 3.1 This chapter of the LVIA contains a description of the Application Site and the features that contribute to the landscape character of the study area. It also provides a summary of existing local landscape character assessments, and a description of the types of visual receptors at each of the representative viewpoints, together with further description of potential visual receptors within the study area.

### Application Site and Context

- 3.2 The Application Site is located on land immediately to the south-east of Stansted Airport. It is separated from the main operational parts of the airport by an area of mounding and planting, which is designated as a 'Landscaped Area' within the adopted local plan. Although screened within the immediate local landscape by existing vegetation, the airport and regular flight traffic, have some local characterising effects upon the Application Site and its immediate setting; due to the resultant noise and the availability of views to aircraft using the airport and buildings within it. Traffic on local roads, including the nearby A120, also impact upon any sense of tranquillity within the Application Site and the locally surrounding area, including that within the CPZ.
- 3.3 The Application Site comprises two fields under arable cultivation, divided by a hedgerow which is low clipped with occasional specimen trees. To the north and west is Parsonage Road (a single carriageway road). Much of the eastern side of Parsonage Road is open, without hedgerows, and with an open ditch forming part of the grassland strip alongside the road. In contrast, established hedgerows occur along other sections of Parsonage Road, albeit intermittently.
- 3.4 A linear strip of woodland is also within the area bordered by Parsonage Road but is outwith the boundary of the Application Site. Two separate woodland copses border the Application Site to the east. Further, large to medium agricultural fields abut the Application Site to the west and south. This area is bisected by the A120 dual carriageway which runs to the north of the B1256 and the settlement of Takeley. It is further interrupted by local roads. London Stansted Airport is to the north/north-west of the Application Site. Other notable landscape features within the study area include the settlements of Bishops Stortford, Birchangar and Stansted Mountfichet to the west and Hatfield Forest to the south.

### Landform and Drainage Features

- 3.5 London Stansted Airport sits on part of a broad plateau area within the western part of the study area, at or about 100mAOD (see Figure 3). This broadly rounded, but still relatively 'flat-topped' plateau, continues to follow a roughly north-south alignment through the centre/ eastern part of the study area, extending to the south of Takeley. Watercourses have cut through the plateau to form shallow valleys; most notably the River Roding, which flows from the settlement at Molehill Green within the north, broadly south and cutting through the more easterly parts of the study area.
- 3.6 Other watercourses have also cut through the plateau to form shallow valleys, including that which follows part of the southern boundary to the Application Site, eventually meeting Pincey Brook to the south-east. A ditch which divides the Application Site in two also flows into the watercourse along the southern Application Site boundary. Generally, landform elevation is no lower than 80mAOD within the study area at the base of the shallow valleys, which carry these watercourses.
- 3.7 The interplay of plateau and shallow valleys has established a gently undulating landscape, with gentle dips and rises.

## Land Use and Land Cover

- 3.8 London Stansted Airport, including its runway and supporting infrastructure, occupies much of the western half of the study area. Outwith the airport, the land use is predominantly arable agricultural, with a field pattern defined by hedgerows with trees and small woodlands, some of which are linear in form. The field pattern is also influenced by the many small watercourses which cut through the clay plateau covering much of the study area. The watercourse along the southern boundary of the Application Site being one such example, in the sense that it has established a field with a curved edge as opposed to the more characteristic straighter field margins. The rural landscape of the study area is interspersed with scattered hamlets and individual buildings as well as smaller villages, such as Bamber's Green and Molehill Green. The largest settlement being Takeley within the south of the study area and to the south of the A120 dual carriageway, which forms the major communication route. Hatfield Forest Country Park and National Nature Reserve occupies part of the south-western section of the study area.
- 3.9 Land use within the Application Site is also agricultural, comprising parts of two fields under arable cultivation and separated by a low-clipped hedgerow with trees. Small woodland blocks are also a local landscape characteristic.

## Public Rights of Way

- 3.10 There are no public rights of way within the Application Site itself. However, part of a long distance route (Harcamlow Way) runs to the south and east of the Application Site. There is also a public footpath which follows a loop to the west of Parsonage Road, dropping down to and following the course of Pincey Brook before returning to Stansted Courtyard adjacent Parsonage Road and the A120. A further public footpath runs to the north of the Application Site, linking Parsonage Road with a minor road to the north of 'The Grange'.

## Designations

- 3.11 There are no designated sites of international or national importance within the Application Site or study area. Warish Hall is a Scheduled Monument located in the south of the study area between the A120 and Takeley. A second scheduled monument is located to the north (site of Waltham Hall) and a third at The Grange (Grange Moated Site and Fishpond).
- 3.12 There are a number of grade II listed buildings within the study area including, Le Knell's Cottage to the west of the Application Site, adjacent Parsonage Road, 'The Grange' to the north-east and the farmhouse at Old House Farm to the south.
- 3.13 Both Seven Acre Wood, which adjoins the eastern boundary to the Application Site, and Little Newlands Wood to the north-east of the Application Site, whilst not Ancient Woodland, are shown as 'Important Woodland' in the UDC Local Plan 2005.

## Existing Landscape Character

- 3.14 This section includes a description of landscape character within the study area as described within relevant published landscape character documentation. Although the National and County level studies are described here for context, the District level study has been used as the baseline against which landscape change has been assessed. A site level landscape character description is also provided to inform the assessment.

## National Character Area Profile

- 3.15 The National Character Area (NCA) profile published by Natural England (Natural England 2013) has been reviewed to develop an appreciation of the wider landscape, landscape character and context of the study area, although due to its national context, is not relied upon as a basis to assess effects on landscape character within this assessment.
- 3.16 The Application Site and the study area fall within the ‘South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland’ (NCA 86). Both sit within the central southern section of the character area which extends from the Chilterns in the south-west in a north-easterly direction to Suffolk.
- 3.17 The Key Characteristics of NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, considered to be of relevance to this assessment, are as follows (abridged):
- *An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts.*
  - *Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.*
  - *South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards. Navigation locks are present on some rivers.*
  - *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
  - *The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.*
  - *Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources.*
  - *There is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around ‘tyes’ (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. The NCA features a concentration of isolated moated farmsteads and numerous well-preserved medieval towns and large villages.*
  - *Traditional timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes they have been refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks (‘Suffolk whites’). Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings.*
  - *Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. Transport infrastructure includes the A14, A12, M11 and Stansted Airport.*
  - *A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area’s archetypal lowland English countryside.*

## County Landscape Character Studies

- 3.18 At a County level, the Application Site is within Landscape Character Area B1: Central Essex Farmlands. The overall character of this area is described in the Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003) as follows:

*“The Central Essex Farmlands is an extensive area of gently undulating arable farmland bisected by the Chelmer Valley. Irregular fields are enclosed by thick but intermittent hedgerows, or just marked by grassy banks and ditches. In long views scattered small woods and copses, and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small isolated hamlets and farmsteads, often straggling along lanes, with a few widely separated towns and larger villages. Narrow strip greens and moated farmsteads are distinctive features of the area. Away from the A120, A130, A12, M11 road corridors/Stansted Airport and its flightpaths large parts of the area have a tranquil character, embracing tracts of fairly secluded countryside.”*

3.19 Its key characteristics are:

- *Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches.*
- *Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.*
- *Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and ponds. A concentration of isolated moated farmsteads.*
- *Network of narrow, winding lanes.*
- *Mostly tranquil character away from major roads and Stansted Airport.*

3.20 The condition of the hedgerows and woodlands overall is considered to be ‘moderate’. In some parts (as typified by the Application Site and local surrounds) hedges have been lost, or are very fragmented. The condition of the small settlements overall is considered to be ‘good’. However, some farmsteads have large visually intrusive modern sheds and/or conifer plantations, which are deemed to be out of character. The recently built outbuilding to the south-west of the Application Site adjacent Parsonage Road is considered to be an example of such a type of development.

## District Landscape Character Studies

3.21 A more detailed level of landscape characterisation is provided by the district level ‘Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments’ (CBA 2006), which places the Application Site within Landscape Character Area (LCA) B10: Broxted Farmland Plateau (see Appendix B). This LCA covers much of the CPZ to the north, east and south of the airport and a large portion of the study area. Its Key Characteristics are listed as follows:

- *Gently undulating farmland on glacial till plateau, dissected by River Roding.*
- *Large open landscape with tree cover appearing as blocks on the horizon or as scattered trees along field boundaries, with intermittent hedgerows.*
- *Higher ground where plateau broadens and flattens is expansive and full of big sky views.*
- *Dispersed settlements and few villages of any size.*
- *Some sunken lanes.*
- *Moats, halls and historic farmsteads scattered over the area.*

3.22 Further within the ‘Overall Character’ section for this LCA, the following is considered of relevance to this assessment (abridged);

*“This gently undulating arable farmland is in the southern reaches of the boulder clay; the farms are large and the landscape is open, with few trees except in blocks or near settlements. Hedgerows are intermittent and field pattern is delineated mainly by ditches or grass tracks, occasionally with trees or scrub.... Stansted Airport is a major influence on the character of the southwestern part of this area. Though screened by trees and shrubs, its buildings and tower can be seen in long views. The access roads and perimeter roads have brought an urban feel with*

*them. The sound of aircraft is almost constant. The A120 and the B1256 cut across the southern part of this area, and a small piece of the M11 crosses the northwest corner. Water towers, telegraph poles and telecommunications masts are sometimes seen on the horizon. In spite of the proximity of the airport and major roads in the south and west, there still remain only winding lanes and minor roads for access to the scattered farmsteads. Many of these lanes are sunken, with verges of varying widths, sometimes tree-lined, and often quite peaceful. Many footpaths including the Harcamlow Way cross the area. The texture of the landscape is influenced by the topography and the contrasts with trees, fields and local building materials. Away from the Stansted flight path tranquillity is moderate to strong.”*

Further, its ‘Visual Characteristics’ are described as below;

- *“Churches set on hills are visible in long views.*
- *Telecommunications masts occasionally visible.*
- *Stansted Airport and tower visible in long views from many locations within the character area.*
- *From several locations in the north and east of the character area, panoramic views across the Chelmer Valley slopes and views to Great Dunmow.*
- *Commercial premises growing around airport.”*

- 3.23 One of the stated ‘Suggested Landscape Planning’ guidelines for the LCA is to, *“Conserve the rural character of the area”* and one of the suggested ‘Land Management Guidelines’ is to, *“Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.”*

### **Application Site Level Landscape Character**

- 3.24 The landscape character of the Application Site is considered to be consistent with those of the Broxted Farmland Plateau described above. The area consists of a gently undulating and intensively managed agricultural landscape, comprising fields enclosed by low-clipped hedgerows with scattered mature hedgerow trees and blocks of woodland. The shallow valleys are drained by watercourses which have cut through the clay plateau upon which the Application Site is located. As noted in the Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003), there has also been some hedgerow clearance which has impacted upon the field pattern both within the Application Site and along other field boundaries, including those along Parsonage Road. This has reduced the landscape quality of the Application Site and its local surrounds.
- 3.25 Further, the landscape character of this local area of the B10: Broxted Farmland Plateau is more heavily influenced by the neighbouring Airport than other locations within this LCA. As such, the landscape character of the Application Site is less tranquil, with readily available views to airport infrastructure and aircraft take-off and landing. These characteristics do affect the susceptibility of this landscape to accept change of the type proposed in comparison to other locations within the wider LCA, which have a stronger sense of tranquillity. Further, the contained nature of the Application Site, due to the hedgerows with trees and areas of woodland, means this section of the LCA could be considered less ‘open’ and more enclosed than other parts of the LCA.
- 3.26 The Stansted Airport Control Tower is the most noticeable feature within the airport and is visible within views from the local surrounds to the Application Site. Other buildings within the airport sit at or above the top of the treelines adjacent the Application Site and which border the airport itself. These built features within the airport are generally a feature within the backdrop to views looking across the study area. Whilst present and noticeable, they are not the dominant features within these views. The over-riding characteristic of the Application Site and the local surrounds are that of a rural, farmed landscape with some sense and awareness of a nearby urban area due to the availability of views to buildings within Stansted Airport and Takeley to the south. A further, but relatively subtle feature of the local road network is the frequency of signage declaring a ‘no

stopping area' due to the close proximity of the area to Stansted airport and field gates or barriers more common place in an urban area, i.e. those off Parsonage Road to the west of the Application Site. The signage also adds some sense of awareness of the adjacent urban area albeit that the majority of the study area outwith Stansted Airport, retains its rural character and exhibits a dispersed settlement pattern.

### Landscape Value

- 3.27 As part of the baseline description of the study area, the value of the landscape that would be affected has been established. The NPPF states at paragraph 174 states that '*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by; protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.*'
- 3.28 GLVIA3 defines value as '*the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons. A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point to understanding landscape value, but the value attached to undesignated landscapes also needs to be carefully considered and individual elements of the landscape and individual elements of the landscape may also have value*'.
- 3.29 GLVIA3 includes a list of eight factors within Box 5.1. The Landscape Institute's '*Technical Guidance Note 02-21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations*' also includes these factors and additionally includes '*functionality*'. These factors are used in the following section of the assessment to establish value.

### Landscape Quality/Condition

- 3.30 Landscape quality, or condition, measures the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.
- 3.31 Most of the Application Site itself is Grade 3a quality agricultural land currently in arable production with some Grade 3b adjacent to its eastern boundary and some Grade 2 mainly adjacent to the proposed access track from Parsonage Road. Vegetation within the Application Site includes hedgerows with individual hedgerow trees, together with a tree and shrub lined watercourse running along its southern boundary. This latter landscape feature is gappy in places and is lined with a 'conservation grassland' strip on its northern side. The field pattern within and adjacent the Application Site is incomplete and gappy in places. Along Parsonage Road, most of the former hedges have been removed and only relict vegetation remains.
- 3.32 Following review of the published landscape character guidance and field survey and based on the methodology within Appendix A, it is considered that the condition of that part of the B10: Broxted Farmland Plateau within which the Application Site is located is 'Ordinary', as there is a distinguishable landscape structure, which is commonplace with some features worthy of conservation but also with some detracting features. The incomplete hedgerow network, together with field gates more commonly associated with urban areas, modern agricultural outbuildings and signage deterring car parking on the local roads, being detracting features.

### Scenic Quality

- 3.33 This measures the degree to which the landscape appeals primarily to the visual senses. The visual baseline is analysed in more detail below.
- 3.34 It is considered that there is some positive scenic quality to this landscape due to its rolling landform and field pattern provided by its network of hedges and ditches, watercourses and woodlands. However, this scenic quality is limited. Stansted Control Tower and other buildings



within the airport, whilst not dominant features are visible within the backdrop to views across this landscape. Whilst the control tower is not an unattractive building, it and other buildings/ structures within the airport do not contribute to the scenic quality of this landscape.

### Rarity and Representativeness

- 3.35 Rarity is concerned with the presence of rare features and elements in the landscape or the presence of a rare character type and representativeness analyses the features or elements within the Application Site and its surroundings which are considered particularly important examples, which are worthy of retention.
- 3.36 Landscape features and elements within the Application Site, such as its arable farmland, hedgerows and ditches are not rare features within the wider landscape of the Broxted Farmland Plateau and are consistent, regularly occurring features within this wider and gently undulating rural landscape. Whilst these features are certainly worthy of retention, they are not especially important examples of these generally widespread landscape features and elements.

### Conservation Interests

- 3.37 This considers the presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest, which can add value to a landscape.
- 3.38 The Application Site itself is not within any formal landscape designation. Le Knells Cottage is listed and it could be considered that part of its immediate landscape forms the setting to the listed building although this is outwith the Application Site. Ecological conservation interests are detailed within the RPS ecology reports, but the hedgerows, trees, field margins, ditches and watercourse are worthy of conservation and enhancement for ecological and amenity purposes. However, the intensively farmed arable land which comprises the majority of the Application Site has relatively low biodiversity value.

### Recreational Value

- 3.39 This considers any evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.
- 3.40 There are some Public Rights of Way within the study area and several near to the Application Site itself, but none actually cross it. The Application Site does form a part of the landscape context to views and contributes to the visual amenity experienced by walkers using these routes.

### Perceptual Aspects

- 3.41 A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity.
- 3.42 The landscape of the Application Site and surrounding farmland cannot be considered wild but is rural in character with a scattered settlement pattern. There is also some sense or awareness of the nearby urban area given the close proximity to Stansted Airport and Takeley. The intensively managed arable land and hedgerows do not have any real sense of wildness; this is a farmed and settled landscape. Any sense of tranquillity is reduced by the presence of Stanstead Airport, buildings and its frequent aircraft take off and landings together with traffic on the A120 and Parsonage Road, including vehicles using the airport.

### Associations

- 3.43 There are no known specific cultural or artistic associations with the Application Site and its local surrounds. The following is taken from the district level landscape character assessment for the Broxted Farmland Plateau:

*Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, interspersed with linear greens and a number of former common fields. Historic settlement is largely dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farms, many moated sites and small hamlets, often along linear greens. The main historic landscape features include:*

- *A significant proportion of ancient woodland, and many hedgerows which are also of considerable antiquity.*
- *Intricate, twisting and sunken roads, of ancient origins.*

### Functionality

- 3.44 This considers elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape or a strong physical or functional link with an adjacent designated landscape or its appreciation.
- 3.45 The Application Site is not located adjacent to or within the vicinity of a designated landscape and therefore does not contribute to the function of a more highly valued landscape. The arable farmland within the Application Site is similar in character and forms part of the wider agricultural landscape within the Broxted Farmland Plateau. The hedgerows, trees and ditches within the Application Site would be retained and enhanced to function as characteristic landscape and farmland features, whilst also providing habitat for wildlife. The function of the surrounding arable farmland is not reliant on the current arable land use of the Application Site.

### Summary of Landscape Value

- 3.46 In accordance with our methodology, we consider the value of the landscape of the Application Site and immediate surroundings to be 'Medium'. It is considered to be an intensively farmed arable landscape with a fragmented field pattern, with other evidence of degradation, i.e. field gates, signage, large agricultural outbuildings. It is typical of similar landscapes and is commonplace. It is unusual in the sense that it provides a rural setting to Stansted Airport, essentially right up to the airport boundaries, hence its designation as forming part of a wider 'Countryside Protection Zone'. However, we consider its landscape features and elements to be substitutable.
- 3.47 The Application Site has no formal recreational value although is partly visible from nearby public rights of way, creating some visual amenity value. The surrounding landscape incorporates several public rights of way which connect the local villages and enable walkers to gain views into parts of the Application Site.
- 3.48 The Application Site and immediate surroundings are not part of a wild landscape due to its intensively farmed nature. There is little sense of tranquillity given the presence of Stansted Airport and the A120, together with regular traffic movements along Parsonage Road. Whilst the Application Site has some positive landscape elements and some wildlife interest, these are not considered sufficient to elevate this area of farmland to one that is highly valued in accordance with paragraph 174 of the NPPF.
- 3.49 The NPPF requires landscapes that are not statutorily designated to have attributes of a sufficiently high quality to ensure consideration as a valued landscape. The landscape of the Application Site does not have any particular demonstrably special qualities and is not connected to or relied upon to contribute to a neighbouring or nearby landscape of value.

## Visual Baseline

- 3.50 A visual assessment has been conducted to verify the desk study findings and confirm the extent of visual influence of the proposed development. A site visit was undertaken during March 2021 in order to undertake photography with existing vegetation out of leaf.
- 3.51 Principal viewpoints, sensitive visual receptors and the approximate visibility of the land within the Application Site have been recorded from representative publicly accessible viewpoints. Photographs have been taken using a digital camera from the 9 representative viewpoints as a record of the view and have been taken with a fixed 50 mm lens on a 35 mm digital camera in landscape format at eye level, approximately 1.5 m above ground level from public viewpoints. No access to private properties was obtained, and where impact to residential and other private views is noted, this has necessarily been estimated by using the nearest possible publicly accessible location.

## Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 3.52 The ZTV produced to inform this assessment shows the area from which the proposed development would be theoretically visible (see Figure 2). It was prepared using a view height of 1.5 m and six origin points to represent the full parameters of the proposed development at a maximum height of 3.2m above existing ground levels.
- 3.53 The ZTV has been developed based on visual barriers for significant blocks of woodland and settlement. As the ZTV does not account for garden vegetation or hedgerows or individual trees, the potential inter-visibility with the proposed development would in reality be lower.
- 3.54 The colour scale on the ZTV indicates how many origin points would potentially be discernible. As such, the higher the number of origin points visible, the darker the colour shown on the ZTV. Given the size of the Application Site, this allows judgements to be made regarding the extent of the proposed development that would potentially be discernible and has informed the selection of representative viewpoints for the study.
- 3.55 Overall, the ZTV indicates that views to the proposed development (solar panels) would be well contained by existing vegetation and landform on the south-eastern boundary of Stansted Airport, and by existing woodlands adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Application Site. As such, potential inter-visibility with the proposed development would mostly be restricted to the immediate vicinity. Due to the screening provided by the woodlands, there would be more limited views from between 1-1.5km from the Application Site boundary to the east as far as the public right of way on Cobbs Lane (part of the Harcamlow Way). There would be a more open area of potential inter-visibility with the proposed development to the south. However, in reality there would be further restriction to views provided by existing hedgerows.

## View Ranges

- 3.56 For the purposes of this assessment, views have been classified according to three distance 'ranges' as set out in Table 3.

**Table 3 : View Ranges**

Range	Distance Threshold	Reasoning Description
Near	Less than 500m	At near range the proposed development could appear as a 'prominent' or 'dominant' feature and visual receptors could experience large to medium/small magnitude of change when compared to existing views.

<b>Middle</b>	Between 500m and 2.5 km	In middle distance views, the proposed development could appear as 'present' or 'recognisable' features and visual receptors could experience medium/small to negligible magnitude of change compared to the existing situation.
<b>Long</b>	More than 2.5 km	In long range views, the proposed development could appear as 'barely discernible' and would read as part of the landscape and visual receptors would tend to experience a low to negligible magnitude of change compared to the existing situation.

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## Overview of Visual Receptors

- 3.57 Visual receptors include local residents, people travelling along roads, people using public rights of way, people involved with other recreational activities, people at their place of work, people using commercial and public facilities. These groups are deemed to have different sensitivities to changes to views.
- 3.58 For this study, 9 publicly accessible viewpoints have been identified as locations which represent the majority of visual receptors within the study area. Photography has been undertaken at these locations. In addition to the representative viewpoints, additional descriptions of views from local residential properties with views to the Application Site have been provided to further inform the assessment upon visual amenity.

## Representative Viewpoint Descriptions

- 3.59 The representative viewpoints are all in public locations where the proposed development would be potentially visible and are considered to be representative of the receptors within the study area. See Figure 2 for locations and photographs at Figure 4a-4p. The baseline view from each of these representative viewpoints is described in Table 4 below. The sensitivity of the receptor is also stated below for each view in accordance with the methodology within Table 3 of Appendix A.

**Table 4 - Representative Viewpoints**

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	OS Ref (as derived from GPS reading)	Approx. Distance to solar panels at closest point	Detailed Baseline View Descriptions (Figure 4a – 4p)
<p>VP1: Parsonage Road</p> <p><i>See Figure 4a/ 4b</i></p>	<p><b>Low</b></p> <p>Users whose attention may be focused on the road (Parsonage Road)</p>	555904, 222141	395m  (Near)	<p>This near distance view is representative of the view for users of Parsonage Road just after crossing the A120. From this location a panoramic view is presented to road users looking over a gently sloping valley containing fields under arable cultivation with clipped hedgerows and woodland being the dominant characteristics. An agricultural building is prominent within the foreground to the view, with buildings within Stansted Airport visible above woodland on the skyline to the view. The westerly field within the Application Site is the most noticeable within the view as it gently slopes south to a watercourse which adjoins the existing linear strip of vegetation within the middle distance to the view. The more easterly field within the proposed development is considerably less visible nestled against the backdrop of Seven Acre Wood within the far right of the view. The character of the view is rural, with limited views of built elements.</p>
<p>VP 2: Roadside Footpath on Parsonage Road</p> <p><i>See Figure 4c/ 4d</i></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p> <p>Users of a Roadside Footpath (Parsonage Road) whose attention may be focussed on the landscape</p>	555757, 222356 (estimated)	290m  (Near)	<p>Near distance view looking broadly east over open arable land to the Application Site, with the viewer presented with an open view of part of the more westerly of the two fields. The northern part of this field is screened by an existing low clipped hedgerow defining part of the western Application Site boundary. The easterly field within the Application Site is partly concealed by a second low-clipped hedgerow which divides the Application Site in two. The watercourse and its associated vegetation adopts a gently curving alignment within the right of the view (also forming the southern boundary to the Application Site). A grassland strip/ margin adjacent to this landscape element is also discernible within the right foreground to the view. Woodland within Newlands Wood and Seven Acre Wood provide the backdrop to the view. The character of the view is rural.</p>
<p>VP 3: Roadside Footpath on Parsonage Road</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p> <p>Users of a Roadside Footpath (Parsonage</p>	555628, 222808	280m  (Near)	<p>This is a near view gained by users of the roadside footpath on Parsonage Road travelling south towards Takeley. The Application Site is partially visible within the backdrop to the view as landform elevation falls away towards the watercourse on the southern boundary of the Application Site. This is</p>

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See Figure 4e	Road) whose attention may be focussed on the landscape			<p>an open view looking towards a generally wooded skyline, with large skies. It is inherently rural in character.</p> <p>Note: The field within the foreground to the view is outwith the Application Site.</p>
<p>VP 4: - Coopers End Roundabout/ Parsonage Road Junction</p> <p>See Figure 4f</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p> <p>Users whose attention may be focused on the road (Junction with Parsonage Road)</p>	555599, 223170	240m (Near)	<p>This is a near view from the roundabout which provides access and egress to the local road network adjacent Stansted Airport; namely Thremhall Avenue, Coopers End Road and Terminal Road North and South. At the point users of the roundabout join Parsonage Road, an open view south is presented to its users over an open arable field, looking towards a wooded skyline, with the mixed linear woodland on the former site of Tam O'Shanter Cottage being the densest and the most noticeable. The northern parts of the Application Site are concealed by this woodland whilst other intervening hedgerows and the gentle fall of the land away from the viewpoint also adds to the natural screening of the Application Site within the view.</p> <p>Note: The field within the foreground to the view is outwith the Application Site.</p>
<p>VP 5: Parsonage Road</p> <p>See Figure 4g/ 4h</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p> <p>Users whose attention may be focused on the road (Parsonage Road)</p>	556115, 223523	330m approx. (Near)	<p>This is a near view looking in a south-easterly direction for users of the road travelling south. The view extends over parts of two arable fields, albeit it is partly foreshortened by an existing hedgerow within the foreground to the view. The northern part of the Application Site is visible within the field beyond this existing foreground hedgerow. The view is framed by woodland within the left of the view and trees bordering Parsonage Road within the right of the view. Parts of existing hedgerows within the Application Site are also visible within the middle distance to the view which extends to rising ground and to the northern edge of Takeley.</p>
<p>VP 6: PRoW linking Parsonage Road in the west with a minor road to the north-east of the Application Site</p> <p>See Figure 4i/ 4j</p>	<p><b>High</b></p> <p>View from Public Right of Way</p>	556595, 223480	565m (Middle)	<p>Open view over arable farmland looking towards the western edge of the Application Site which is partly visible through a gap in the woodland between Seven Acre Wood and Little Newlands Wood. Further, the mixed woodland within the southern part of Little Newlands Wood is predominantly trees and lacks a dense understorey. This permits views through and below the canopy to parts of the Application Site beyond during winter. These existing woodlands combine to foreshorten the view, which is rural, with few buildings visible.</p>

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<p>VP 7: Minor Road North-west of Smiths Green</p> <p><i>See Figure 4k/ 4l</i></p>	<p><b>Low</b></p> <p>Users whose attention may be focused on the road.</p>	<p>557200, 223258</p>	<p>1km approx.  (Middle)</p>	<p>Open view over arable fields enclosed by low-clipped hedgerows looking towards the western edge of the Application Site, which is partly screened by Seven Acre Wood. Whilst visible, buildings within Stansted Airport, including the Control Tower, do not dominate the view. Rather, they form elements within the backdrop to the view, which are largely screened by existing vegetation within both the rural landscape outwith the airport and the screen planting around its periphery. The dominant character of the view remains rural.</p>
<p>VP 8: Users of Smiths Green (Also part of Harcamlow Way long distance route)</p> <p><i>See Figure 4m/ 4n</i></p>	<p><b>High</b></p> <p>Users of a long distance route.</p>	<p>423729, 310164</p>	<p>850m approx  (Middle)</p>	<p>This view is available to users of the Harcamlow Way as they descend the overbridge after crossing the A120. As such, it is slightly elevated above the level of the surrounding agricultural landscape. The view looks north-west towards the Application Site. Buildings within Stansted Airport (most notably the Control Tower) form visible elements within the backdrop to the view and are partly visible above intervening vegetation. Again, they form visible elements within the view but do not dominate the view, which is rural in character. Parts of the Application Site are visible, namely the gently falling southern slopes which rise from the watercourse on its southern boundary, albeit views are filtered by intervening vegetation.</p> <p><i>Users of the long distance trail are assessed as High sensitivity visual receptors. The assessment thus assumes a worst-case scenario. However, it could be considered that the expectations of users of this section of the trail may be less as their attention would also need to be directed at oncoming traffic since this part of the route runs along a local road. Their attention may thus not be fully focused upon the appreciation of landscape.</i></p>
<p>VP 9: PRoW (South of A120 looking north) also part of Harcamlow long distance route</p> <p><i>See Figure 4o/ 4p</i></p>	<p><b>High</b></p> <p>View from Public Right of Way</p>	<p>556420, 222228</p>	<p>450m approx  (Middle)</p>	<p>There are intermittent views from this public footpath looking north over a foreground dominated by the dual carriageway A120. Elsewhere, along the footpath, existing vegetation adjacent the footpath obstructs views towards the Application Site. Views are also through the existing mesh deer fencing along the southern side of the A120. From this location, views north are available over a gently undulating landscape which dips towards the watercourse running along the southern boundary of the Application Site. The gently falling south-facing slopes within the Application Site are visible within the view, interrupted by the existing hedgerow which divides the Application Site in two. Some buildings within Stansted Airport appear taller</p>

				<p>within this representative view, albeit they remain elements within the backdrop to the view and are not the dominant features. The overall character of the view remains rural.</p> <p><i>As with representative viewpoint 8, users of the long distance trail are assessed as High sensitivity visual receptors. The assessment thus assumes a worst-case scenario. However, it could be considered that the expectations of users of this section of the trail may be less as their appreciation of landscape is likely to be affected by the close proximity of this section of the trail to the A120.</i></p>
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### Residential and Commercial Receptors

- 3.60 Cooper’s Villas (comprising x3 semi-detached, 2 storey properties) lie just to the west of the Application Site, opposite a single 2 storey residential (thatched) property (Le Knell’s Cottage). This property fronts to the south-east. It sits within a triangular shaped parcel of land, outwardly forming the garden to the property, which is well treed.
- 3.61 Further, to the north of the Application Site is a small light industrial series of buildings and a 2-storey nursery building (High House Nursery). A further three buildings are located on the opposite side of Parsonage Road, these include two semi-detached properties (Nos. 1 & 2 Willow Cottages) and a detached building, which sits within a wooded setting and is largely screened within views from Parsonage Road.
- 3.62 There are a small group of buildings to the west of Parsonage Road and towards the southern end of the Application Site which appear to be part of the Stansted Guest House. They comprise a mix of both two and single storey buildings. Whilst some are likely to be occupied by guests using the facility, users of these buildings are assessed as visual receptors of High sensitivity given that at least one of the buildings is likely to be someone’s personal residence. Views from this property vary; from some buildings they are due east, whilst others are orientated to face in a more southerly direction.

### Users of Parsonage Road and Other Local Roads

- 3.63 Users of Parsonage Road travelling north after crossing the A120 overbridge to the west of the Application Site are presented with a panoramic view looking north (see representative viewpoint 1, Figure 4a/ 4b). Part of the Application Site is visible within this view, sat within a wider farmed arable landscape with hedgerows, woodlands and occasional settlement, beyond which buildings within Stansted Airport are partly visible above the intervening treeline. Travelling north along Parsonage Road there are generally open views looking east, as the road verges are open. Views being obstructed in places by buildings, small woodlands (such as that adjacent Le Knells Cottage) and remnant sections of hedgerow.
- 3.64 After passing the Coopers End Roundabout junction, travelling east, views looking south, perpendicular to the direction of travel, are restricted due to intervening woodland, buildings and scattered trees and shrubs. Occasional views south over an intensively farmed arable landscape, looking towards the ridgeline upon which Takeley is located, are available to users of the route.
- 3.65 Parts of the Application Site are also visible within views from a minor road to the north-east of the Application Site (representative viewpoint 7, Figure 4k/ 4l) and from the road on approach to the settlement at Smiths Green (representative viewpoint 8, Figure 4m/ 4n).



## 4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### Scheme Description

- 4.1 The proposed development would comprise the installation of free-standing, static solar photovoltaic ('PV') panels for the purposes of generating electricity solely for the use of the airport. As such, on-site battery units would retain surplus energy for use outside of the peak production hours, including at night. The proposed development would include the following elements:
- Solar panels;
  - Inverter substation(s) (with approximate dimensions of 6m x 3.2m x 3.4m) connecting the PV panels;
  - Electricity substation building (centrally located with approximate dimensions 7m x 2.5m x 3m);
  - Battery storage units; and
  - A circular trackway to access the infrastructure, together with security fencing, landscape planting and seeding, CCTV and motion-activated security lighting.
- 4.2 Over most of the proposed development, the solar panels would be arranged in a series of east to west rows, with rows spaced approximately 4 metres apart. The panels would be up to 3.2 metres high and tilted to the south (towards the sun). However, several rows within the north of the proposed development would have an east-west orientation (and would face to the east) for reasons of glint and glare. The panels would be positioned at a typical angle of 25 degrees from the horizontal.
- 4.3 The solar panels would be attached to a metal framework which would be supported either by pile driven or screw foundations, or pre-moulded concrete blocks (shoes). The facility is likely to employ Polycrystalline Silicon PV panels as these are widely considered to be the most suitable technology for applications of this nature. The size and configuration of the solar panels will be chosen based on the most appropriate technology available at the time. However, the maximum height of the panels will be 3.2m and they will be configured to provide access for cleaning and maintenance.
- 4.4 The panels will generate electricity every day for the duration of the project. However, at the end of its lifespan, the proposed development would be fully reversible so that any impacts associated with it would be temporary, although long term in nature. The land would be returned to its former agricultural use following relatively minor decommissioning works.
- 4.5 The preferred point of connection is at 'Substation 100'; a 33 / 11kV primary substation within the boundary of Stansted Airport. The connection would be achieved through a single radial circuit from Substation 100 to the Solar Farm; this would be a private cable installed within the verge adjacent to the existing highway and then entering the proposed development at its north-east corner.
- 4.6 The solar park would be enclosed by 2-3m high deer fencing comprising timber post and wire mesh.

### Phasing

- 4.7 The Application Site would be developed as a single phase to provide the 14.3MW ceiling capacity Stansted Airport anticipates. This, however, means that during the initial 5 – 7 years of operation the proposed development would produce some surplus power to likely airport demand. The initial surplus supply will be supplied via a "sleeving-in" arrangement to other airports in the Manchester

Airports Group. Following this initial period batteries will be provided to ensure that the output from the installation is retained solely for Stansted's use.

## Assets, Opportunities and Mitigation

### Assets

- The location of the Application Site within a gently undulating landscape would limit extensive views of the solar park from locations within the surrounding area. Due to landform and the extant field pattern, views to the solar farm would be limited, therefore reducing its perceived scale;
- Hedgerows with occasional trees and ditches define the field pattern within the Application Site and local landscape. These form positive landscape features which enclose and partly screen the Application Site;
- Mature woodland at Seven Acre Woodland, Little Newlands Wood and elsewhere bordering the Application Site form prominent landscape features and provide screening elements adjacent to the Application Site;
- Woodland, trees and hedgerows are attractive and ecologically diverse assets within the landscape and are a focus for wildlife;
- The PRoW network adjoining and around the Application Site allows access between land parcels for walkers and equestrians within the local community;
- The existing mature green infrastructure, gently undulating landform and the local PRoW network are positive amenity, landscape character and biodiversity assets. The proposed development has taken into consideration these assets to minimise impacts on landscape and views. It is anticipated that;
  - All trees would be retained and protected as part of the proposed development;
  - There would be only minor alterations to landform to accommodate the access track, substation and battery storage units.

4.8 These existing conditions and constraints have informed the preparation of the following opportunities and mitigation measures for the proposed development:

### Opportunities and Mitigation

- The proposed development provides appropriate landscape treatments in keeping with the field pattern of the Application Site and surrounding rural character of the landscape, which helps to minimise any adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity;
- It is proposed that the mature hedgerows would be gapped up with supplementary native planting, where appropriate, and trees better managed, to retain their important boundary functions and cultural landscape structure characteristics. Mitigation measures would enhance the green infrastructure contribution to the quality of the Application Site, the wider rural character of the landscape and increase the valuable screening function they provide;
- Existing hedgerows within the Application Site would be retained and allowed to grow on to provide additional screening. It is anticipated that they would have attained a height of between 4-6m by Year 15 of the assessment (potentially much earlier). Solar panels and boundary fences would be located at an appropriate distance from existing hedgerows and copses to ensure their ongoing management and maintenance;
- Hedgerows form the primary boundary treatment and provide a structural and ecological link with the surrounding rural landscape. Any gaps or thinner parts of these existing hedgerows

would be infilled and bolstered to provide greater levels of screening and improve nature corridors for wildlife;

- The proposed hedgerow, tree and shrub planting would incorporate appropriate native species to reflect and enhance existing vegetation and contribute positively to the landscape character of the Broxted Farmland Plateau. It is anticipated that newly planted native species hedgerows would be between 4-6m height by Year 15 of the assessment;
- Grassland incorporating a mix of native grass and flora species will be established between and beneath the solar panels to enhance the biodiversity of the currently arable fields, provide an attractive habitat and provide a dual function for grazing sheep; and
- New random native tree and shrub planting would be implemented adjacent to the existing watercourse along the southern boundary of the Application Site, partly within the existing conservation grasslands along this edge. This would assist with visual screening and provide a positive contribution to biodiversity within the Application Site and enhanced wildlife corridors.

4.9 In combination, this rich landscape tapestry would enhance both the aesthetics of the Application Site as well as providing a diverse habitat for small birds, reptiles, invertebrates and other flora and fauna in accordance with the airport's own Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

### Monitoring

4.10 The assessment of landscape and visual effects at summer Year 15 in this LVIA takes into consideration the opportunities and mitigation proposals listed above, which would form part of the proposed development. The proposals would be implemented, managed and monitored to achieve their design function. As a result of the improved management of the existing vegetation and new planting proposed, adverse effects of the proposed development would be partially offset.

4.11 Due to climate change and biosecurity measures, ongoing monitoring of the existing landscape features and new planting would continue to ensure mitigation measures remain effective. A varied native pallet of trees and hedgerow planting and grassland seed mixes would be used to ensure landscape and ecological proposals are achieved.

## 5 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

- 5.1 The potential effects of the proposed development upon views and visual amenity and landscape character during the operational period at winter Year 1 and summer Year 15, have been assessed using the methodology described in Appendix A.

### Assessment of Operational Effects

#### Potential Landscape Effects

##### Landscape Sensitivity

- 5.2 The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is a combination of “*judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape*” (GLVIA, para 5.39). It varies according to the nature of the existing landscape resource and the nature of the proposed change. Within the baseline section of this assessment, the landscape character has been described and judgements made as to the value, condition and quality of the landscape of the Application Site and immediate surroundings. To enable a judgement to be made about the relative sensitivity of a landscape to a particular type of development, considerations of landscape value, integrity and capacity are relevant and inform the susceptibility of the landscape to the change proposed.
- 5.3 For the purpose of this assessment, the proposed development consists of a solar park, which requires minimal vegetation removal or major earth modelling and is reversible in nature. the Application Site, as part of the Broxton Farmland Plateau, is assessed to be of Ordinary condition with a recognisable structure and some detracting features, and of Medium value (see Baseline section for more details). The landscape is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to the proposed solar park whereby landscape value is recognised or designated locally; the landscape is relatively intact, with a distinctive character and few detractors and is reasonably tolerant of change.

##### Land Use and Development Context

- 5.4 The proposed development would be accommodated within parts of two intensively farmed arable fields. Most of the area within the red line boundary would be occupied by the rows of solar panels with a wildflower grassland established beneath.

##### Trees and other Vegetation

- 5.5 The proposed development would not result in the loss of any existing trees. Some small sections of hedgerow may need to be removed to accommodate access tracks and the cable route. However, subject to detail design, it would appear practical to accommodate these features of the proposed development whilst avoiding removal of existing vegetation. As such, it is assumed that all boundary and internal hedgerows would be retained. The arable farmland would be seeded with an appropriate wildflower grassland mix to be managed by low density sheep grazing.

##### Topography

- 5.6 There would be very little change to the topography of the Application Site due to the proposed development, which would include some new access tracks and areas of hardstanding within the solar park, which would result in minimal changes to the topography. Effectively, the gently undulating landscape within the Application Site would be unchanged.

### Landscape Character

#### District Level

- 5.7 The 'Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments' (CBA 2006), defines the area in which the Application Site is located as part of the Broxted Plateau Farmland. The proposed development of two arable fields into a solar farm within the southern part of the character area near to Stansted Airport would change the character of a relatively small area of farmland as a proportion of the character area as a whole.
- 5.8 The enclosure pattern and gently undulating landform of the farmland into which the proposed development would be introduced would be retained. No existing hedgerow or trees would require removal in order to accommodate the proposed development and the two existing arable fields, through planting new hedgerows (with trees) would be sub-divided into 3 smaller fields. By summer Year 15, these new hedgerows and the supplementary tree planting adjacent to the existing hedges and the watercourse on the southern boundary of the Application Site, would reinforce the existing field pattern and hedgerow structure. The low-level nature of the proposed development would enable the existing landscape structure of an established and organised field pattern to be retained. The rows of solar panels would closely follow the gently undulating landform within the Application Site as it falls to an existing watercourse. This would complement the topography of the landscape.
- 5.9 The proposed development would introduce a new type of land use and development into this rural landscape character area, which would therefore be uncharacteristic. However, this is a settled landscape, near to Stansted Airport, a characteristic of which is the availability of views to buildings within the airport, agricultural outbuildings and parts of Takeley to the south within the backdrop to views across the landscape. The solar farm, although relatively low key in nature (and height), would further diminish the scenic quality and what perception of tranquillity there is through the introduction of energy infrastructure.
- 5.10 The proposed development would not result in significant harm to the value of the landscape of the Broxted Farmland Plateau landscape character area as there would be no loss of important landscape features, elements and characteristics. Its effects would essentially also be solely confined to this landscape character area as the ZTV shows that the solar panels would not be visible within views from any other landscapes, other than from areas within the Broxted Farmland Plateau.
- 5.11 The additional hedgerows planted to create new field boundaries would add a positive landscape element. Generally, the Application Site is well contained and the solar panels would not be readily visible within views from publicly accessible locations within it. This would naturally reduce the awareness of its presence for users of the locally surrounding area within the Broxted Farmland Plateau. It is also of a relatively small-scale which would fit well within the existing landscape pattern and grain. The non-reflective surface treatment of the panels would similarly minimise the perception of this new energy infrastructure in the wider landscape and ensure the solar farm forms a relatively discrete addition to the countryside. The establishment of wildflower grassland beneath the panels would add to the biodiversity value of the Application Site in comparison to its existing arable landuse and introduce a locally less common landscape characteristic, i.e. that of pastureland within a wider arable landscape. Effects would be relatively localised in a rural location, which is reasonably well-contained by hedgerows and landform and where screening by existing hedgerows would be improved through a change in management practices, i.e. allowing them to grow on to between 4-6m height by removing annual trimming.
- 5.12 Due to the proposed development of a solar farm in a rural, agricultural landscape and the change in character of the Application Site from farmland to energy infrastructure, the magnitude of change would be Medium on a character area of Medium sensitivity to the proposed change, i.e. the introduction of a solar farm. The direct effect on the Application Site itself would be **Moderate**

**adverse**, which would not be significant. The low-level nature of the solar farm, within a landscape structure provided by hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland, supplemented by new hedgerow and tree planting, would limit the effects to a relatively small part of the wider Broxted Farmland Plateau to **Minor adverse** as a result of a Low magnitude of change, which is not significant.

### Potential Visual Effects

- 5.13 Each of the representative viewpoints reveal a similar landscape character; gently undulating arable farmland with hedgerows, woodland and occasional properties. Within several of the views, buildings within Stansted Airport (most notably the control tower) are visible above the treeline. These buildings do not dominant these views, rather they are elements within the backdrop to them. Nonetheless, the ability to see these elements within views do provide users of the area with some sense or awareness of the nearby urban area/ major transport infrastructure and development. However, whilst there are other landscape features which detract from the rural character of the landscape, i.e. large agricultural outbuildings and metal swing-gates at field entrances, the overall character of these views still conveys the overall impression of a rural landscape to its users.

### Representative Viewpoints

- 5.14 An assessment of the likely effect on views gained by groups of different receptors at the representative viewpoint locations are described below.

#### Representative Viewpoint 1: Parsonage Road

- 5.15 Occupiers of vehicles would briefly gain a largely unobstructed view to the proposed development, which would be partly visible on the gently sloping south facing slopes within the centre right of the view. The solar panels would be mainly orientated south, so users of the road would mostly be presented with the dark blue reflective front faces of the panels as they descend the shallow valley sides to the watercourse running along the southern boundary of the Application Site. Those solar panels within the western field would be the most visible; those within the eastern field, considerably less so. The sides to the solar panels running along the western Application Site boundary would also be visible. Sections of new deer fencing would also be visible, along with parts of the access track, inverter substations and the primary substation, as would CCTV cameras/columns. The angle of view to the solar panels would be slightly oblique.
- 5.16 At winter Year 1, the proposed development would form a prominent, and have an important, but not dominating, impact upon the view, which would remain rural in character. None of the features within the proposed development would break the skyline and, more effectively, by summer Year 15, new hedgerow planting and the natural concealment provided by existing hedgerows within the proposed development, which would be allowed to 'grow-on' and not regularly clipped as they are at present, would further contain the proposed development and reduce its absolute visibility within the view. For users of this part of Parsonage Road (visual receptors of Low sensitivity), there would be a Medium magnitude of change and a **Minor adverse** significance of effect at winter Year 1. Whilst, by summer Year 15, these likely effects would be slightly reduced due to the additional screening afforded to the proposed development by both new and existing hedgerows, most notably the inverter stations and substation, the elevation of the viewpoint relative to the proposed development would mean that solar panels would remain a noticeable feature within this near distance view. There would remain a Medium magnitude of change and a **Minor adverse** significance of effect.

### Representative Viewpoint 2: Roadside Footpath on Parsonage Road

- 5.17 Walkers using the roadside footpath travelling south would be presented with an open view to the southern half of the proposed development; parts of the Application Site being slightly elevated above the level of the viewpoint. Whilst an existing hedgerow would screen much of the northern section of the proposed development, including the substation and several inverter substations, the sides to solar panels within the southern part of the proposed development and some of the blue, reflective solar panel faces, would also be partly visible within this oblique view. Other elements within the southern part of the proposed development would also be visible, including the deer fencing along the west boundary, the west facing façade of two inverter substations and CCTV cameras/ columns.
- 5.18 At winter Year 1, the proposed development would have an important, but not defining effect upon the view. It would sit comfortably within the view and is unlikely to break the skyline. For users of the roadside footpath (Medium sensitivity), there would be a Medium magnitude of change to the view and a **Moderate adverse** significance of effect. However, by summer Year 15, new hedgerow planting and the change in management of existing hedgerows within the Application Site (which would be allowed to grow on) would screen much of the proposed development within this near distance view. There would be a Low magnitude of change and a residual **Minor adverse** significance of effect upon the view.

### Representative Viewpoint 3: Roadside Footpath on Parsonage Road

- 5.19 For users of the roadside footpath traveling south, the tops of the solar panels would be partly visible above the intervening hedgerow, more or less perpendicular to the direction of travel. These would be partly visible side-on and over the top of the intervening low-clipped hedgerow which marks the boundary to part of the western side of the Application Site. As landform elevation falls away within the southern part of the Application Site, those solar panels within this part of the proposed development would be hidden or screened within the view by the intervening hedgerows. At winter Year 1, the change to the view would be essentially limited to that within the left of the view.
- 5.20 The upper sections of two of the inverter stations would also be visible above the hedgerows along with CCTV cameras/ columns and the deer fence. These elements would be visible, but not prominent within the view and would form a minor component of it. There would be no marked effect upon the view. The magnitude of change would be Low and the significance of effect at winter Year 1 would be **Minor adverse**.
- 5.21 At summer Year 15, and once existing hedgerows have been allowed to grow-on to between 4-6m height and, in association with the fully established new hedgerow planting, the proposed development would have very little effect upon the view, almost approaching a 'no change' situation. As such, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and, for Medium sensitivity visual receptors using the route, the residual significance of effect would be **Negligible adverse**.

### Representative Viewpoint 4: Coopers End Roundabout/ Parsonage Road Junction

- 5.22 Within this view for road users joining Parsonage Road, the existing linear woodland which occupies much of the land associated with the former Tam O'Shanter's Cottage, would screen much of the northern parts of the proposed development within the view. At winter Year 1, there would be very limited views to the uppermost parts of some solar panels, substation, inverter stations and deer fencing within part of the proposed development. Further south, and as landform elevation falls away within the Application Site, an existing hedgerow would provide a natural screen to the proposed development from this viewpoint.
- 5.23 At winter Year 1, there would be very little effect upon the view and the proposed development would be barely perceptible within the view. For Low sensitivity receptors using the route, there

would be a Negligible magnitude of change to the view and a **Negligible adverse** significance of effect. At summer Year 15, this would be reduced to a magnitude of change and a significance of effect on **'No Change'** as the proposed development would be entirely screened by existing intervening woodland, hedgerows and new hedgerow planting. Both of which would be between 4-6m height at this time.

### **Representative Viewpoint 5: Parsonage Road**

- 5.24 Whilst an existing hedgeline within the foreground to the view would partly screen and/or filter views, the backs of solar panels along the northern boundary of the proposed development would be visible. This boundary to the Application Site is currently open. Deer fencing and CCTV cameras/ columns, along with the solar panels, would also be visible. The upper section of at least one inverter substation would also just be visible through an existing gap in the hedge lines. However, the substation would be screened. These visible parts of the proposed development would form a visible, but not prominent element within the view. At winter Year 1, there would be a Low magnitude of change and a **Minor adverse** significance of effect for Low sensitivity users of Parsonage Road travelling south.
- 5.25 At summer, Year 15, new native species hedgerow planting (with trees) along the northern boundary to the proposed development, at between 4-6m height, would more or less screen the proposed development within the view. It is anticipated that the magnitude of change would be Negligible and that the significance of effect upon the view would be **Negligible adverse** approaching **Neutral**.

### **Representative Viewpoint 6: PRow linking Parsonage Road in the west with a minor road to the north-east of the Application Site**

- 5.26 Users of the public footpath would see part of the northern section of the proposed development, mainly through a gap between Little Newlands Wood and Seven Acre Wood, albeit, at winter Year 1, limited views would also be available to parts of the proposed development beneath existing trees within Little Newlands Wood given the lack of understorey growth within the wood. The fronts and sides of the solar panels would be visible, along with deer fencing and some CCTV cameras/ columns. The upper section of the substation and one of the inverter substations would also be partly visible. These elements within the proposed development would be visible, but not prominent. They would represent a minor component of the view and would not have a marked effect upon it. There would be a Low magnitude of change to the view and a **Minor adverse** significance of effect at winter Year 1.
- 5.27 New native species hedgerow planting (with trees) along part of the northern boundary of the proposed development would be fully established by summer Year 15 and would be between 4-6m in height. This would screen most of the proposed development within the view. At best, it is anticipated that there would be a Negligible magnitude of change to the view and a **Negligible adverse (approaching Neutral)** significance of effect.

### **Representative Viewpoint 7: Minor Road North-west of Smiths Green**

- 5.28 Users of this minor road travelling broadly north and south would have a view which would be perpendicular to their direction of travel over open arable fields to parts of the proposed development, which would be visible either side of Seven Acre Wood. To the right of Seven Acre Wood (within the gap between Seven Acre Wood and Little Newlands Wood), the fronts of the solar panels within the far north of the proposed development would face the view, whilst to the left of Seven Acre Wood, the sides of the panels within the southern section of the proposed development would be visible. Woodland within Seven Acre Wood would also filter views to the solar panels during winter, rather than provide a complete screen. In addition, where the panels



are visible, deer fencing and CCTV cameras/ columns would also be visible, however, views to the inverter substation(s) would be limited.

- 5.29 This would be a middle distance view (with the nearest parts of the proposed development approximately 1km away). At this distance, the absolute visibility and impact of the proposed development upon the view would naturally be reduced. Parts of the proposed development would be visible within what would be a transient view for users of the road. Whilst visible, the proposed development would not be prominent and would represent a minor component of the wider view, set against a backdrop of existing buildings within Stansted Airport. There would be a Low magnitude of change upon a view for a visual receptor of Low sensitivity to the change. At winter Year 1, the overall significance of effect would be **Negligible adverse**.
- 5.30 New native species hedgerow planting with trees along parts of the northern boundary to the Application Site would be between 4-6m height at summer Year 15. It would screen solar panels within the north of the proposed development as well as deer fencing and the CCTV cameras/ columns. However, views to parts of the solar park within the south of the proposed development would remain visible, albeit set against new native species hedgerow planting with trees along the western boundary of the proposed development. As such, there would remain a **Negligible adverse** significance of effect upon the view, but the effect would be approaching **Neutral**.

### **Representative Viewpoint 8: Users of Smiths Green (Also part of Harcamlow Way long distance route)**

- 5.31 From this elevated position on the long distance route, much of the southern part of the proposed development would be visible within the view, partially filtered by existing vegetation within intervening hedgerows and the scrub vegetation which lines the watercourse along the southern boundary to the Application Site. The northern part of the proposed development would be screened by Seven Acre Wood. The rows of solar panels would be visible partly side-on, but the blue, reflective faces of most would be partly visible as landform elevation within the Application Site drops towards the watercourse rendering more of the panels visible. Within the view for users of the long distance trail (High sensitivity), the proposed development would be visible, but not prominent. At approximately 1km from the proposed development, there would be a Low magnitude of change to the view and a **Minor adverse** significance of effect at winter Year 1.
- 5.32 The proposed new native species hedgerow planting would not screen solar panels within the view. However, they would be partly visible set against new hedgerow planting along the west boundary to the Application Site. At summer Year 15, and during the intervening years, existing vegetation within an existing hedgerow and alongside the watercourse would provide some screening of the solar panels (and other parts of the proposed development) within its southern section. This would also be supplemented with further random scrub planting alongside the watercourse, albeit this would not form a dense visual screen. At summer Year 15, the magnitude of change would be reduced to Negligible and the significance of effect to **Negligible adverse**.

### **Representative Viewpoint 9: PRow (South of A120 looking north) also part of Harcamlow long distance route**

- 5.33 Walkers using the public footpath would gain views across the A120 and through a deer fence, which runs perpendicular to the route to much of the solar farm and the south facing elevations of the individual panels within both fields within the Application Site. The proposed development would not break the skyline within the view but, in association with the solar panels, deer fencing, four inverter substations and the substation, along with CCTV Cameras/ columns, would also be at least partly visible. For High sensitivity visual receptors using the route, there would be a Medium magnitude of change to the view at winter Year 1 and a **Moderate adverse** significance of effect. The proposed change would be uncharacteristic with the view and would form a prominent feature within it.

- 5.34 Whilst new hedgerow planting with trees within the proposed development would sub-divide the western field within the Application Site in two, solar panels within the north of the proposed development, along with the substation and at least part of one inverter substation would remain visible above. Solar panels within much of the southern section of the proposed development would also be visible albeit part of the hedgerow along the eastern boundary within the Application Site would provide some screening to these elements within the view at summer Year 15. Despite the partial screening effects of these new and existing landscape elements, the proposed development would remain prominent in the view. There would remain a Medium magnitude of change and a **Moderate adverse** significance of effect at summer Year 15.

### Residential and Commercial Properties

- 5.35 Views towards the proposed development from the front elevation windows for occupiers of Cooper's Villas (comprising three semi-detached, two storey properties) would be screened during summer by existing woodland within the garden to the adjacent residential property Le Knell's Cottage. There would be No Change to views during summer. At winter Year 1, views east towards the proposed development would be heavily filtered by intervening vegetation. There would be no more than a Negligible magnitude of change to these views and a **Negligible adverse** significance of effect.
- 5.36 Representative Viewpoint 3 provides something like the view from the south-east facing windows and front garden of Le Knells Cottage, albeit views to the proposed development would be slightly oblique. From up to 10 windows on the building, views to the sides of the solar panels, mainly within the southern parts of the proposed development (as landform elevation falls away to a watercourse) would be visible, along with parts of the inverter substations and deer fencing. The very occasional vehicles using the access track from Parsonage Road would also form a very occasional transient element within views. At winter Year 1, the proposed development would be prominent but would not form the defining influence on the view. There would be a Medium magnitude of change and a **Moderate adverse** significance of effect. However, this would be reduced at summer Year 15 by the screening effects of new hedgerow planting with trees and existing hedgerows which have been left to grow-on to between 4-6m height. At this time the magnitude of change would be reduced to Low and the significance of effect to **Minor adverse**.
- 5.37 To the north of the Application Site there is a line of buildings with broadly similar views south from the building curtilages and, in the case of occupiers of High House Nursery, views from windows on its south facing, rear elevation. Albeit, in each case views are restricted by intervening vegetation within the garden to High House Nursery along with intervening hedge lines and, in the case of the light industrial units, an earthen bund. For users of each of these properties (Low sensitivity visual receptors whose activity would be focused on their work activity) there would be a Medium magnitude of change and **Minor adverse** significance of effect at winter Year 1 as the sides (and backs) of solar panels would be partly visible within near distance views, along with deer fencing and CCTV cameras/ columns. However, new hedgerow planting and existing hedgerows/ vegetation in full leaf would further screen views from these properties. At summer Year 15, effects would be reduced to a Negligible magnitude of change and a **Negligible adverse** significance of effect.
- 5.38 Other residential properties to the north of the Application Site are set slightly further back from the Application Site in comparison to High House Nursery and the adjacent light industrial buildings. The view from Representative Viewpoint 5 being broadly akin to the view from two semi-detached properties (Nos. 1 & 2 Willow Cottages) with relatively open views looking south. In contrast, the views from a neighbouring 2 storey property looking south towards the proposed development are considerably more restricted due to the density of existing mature trees and other vegetation within the garden to the property. For occupiers of both properties, the proposed development is likely to be prominent within views at winter Year 1. There would thus be a Medium magnitude of change for these receptors of High sensitivity to change. Overall, effects would be **Moderate adverse**

significance of effect. However, at summer Year 15, these effects would be reduced to a Low and Negligible magnitude of change respectively and the significance of effect to **Minor adverse** with respect to views from Nos. 1 & 2 Willow Cottages and a **Negligible adverse approaching Neutral** significance of effect for occupiers of the adjacent 2 storey detached property.

- 5.39 The view from representative viewpoint 2 provides an impression of the view from Stansted Guest House, albeit the viewpoint is further south adjacent the watercourse on the southern boundary of the Application Site. Occupiers of Stansted Guest House would have an open view east, and would see the sides of the solar panels as they descend towards the watercourse on the Application Site boundary. Deer fencing, parts of the inverter substations and CCTV cameras/ columns would also be noticeable. The proposed development would be prominent but not the defining feature to the view. There would be a Medium magnitude of change and a **Moderate adverse** significance of effect at winter Year 1. However, with the screening effects of both new and existing hedgerows, these effects would be reduced to Low and a **Minor adverse** significance of effect at summer Year 15.

## Sequential Effects

### Harcamlow Way

- 5.40 Representative viewpoints 8 and 9 are from locations on this long distance trail. Within the view from viewpoint 9, most of the proposed development would be visible, with the solar panels facing the viewpoint, i.e. to the south. Other elements would also be visible, i.e. deer fencing, inverter substations and CCTV cameras/ columns. There would be a Medium magnitude of change and a **Moderate adverse** significance of effect upon this view at both winter Year 1 and summer Year 15. However, the proposed development would be visible over a foreground containing the A120 in cutting with traffic. These effects upon views from the footpath are thus not considered to be significant.
- 5.41 Effects upon the view from representative viewpoint 8 would be **Minor adverse** at winter Year 1 and **Negligible adverse** at summer Year 15. Neither of which would be significant. No significant adverse sequential effects upon views have been assessed for users of this long distance trail.

### PROW to north-east of the Application Site

- 5.42 The ZTV suggests that there would be very little inter-visibility between the route and the proposed development. Representative viewpoint 6 is from a point on the footpath. Views to the proposed development would be partly screened by existing woodland within Seven Acre Wood and Little Newlands Wood, with only part of it visible within the extant gap between these woodlands. New hedgerow planting along part of the northern Application Site boundary would also partly screen views to the solar panels. A **Minor adverse** significance of effect at winter Year 1 and a **Negligible adverse** significance of effect has been identified at summer Year 15, neither of which would be significant. No significant adverse sequential effects have been assessed upon views from this footpath.

### Parsonage Road

- 5.43 Representative viewpoints 1 to 5 are from either Parsonage Road itself, or the roadside footpath. Within these views, the proposed development would be at least partially visible, mainly at winter Year 1 and within views which are either oblique or perpendicular to the direction of travel. Within none of these views or any others from the road would solar panels be positioned immediately adjacent to the road. Only within the view from representative viewpoint 1 is a relatively open and expansive panorama presented to road users looking towards the proposed development and this is from an elevated position on the road, just after it crosses the A120 on an overbridge. Effects

upon this view are assessed as Medium magnitude of change and **Minor adverse** significance of effect at both winter Year 1 and summer Year 15.

- 5.44 Within each of the views from representative viewpoints 2 to 5, a magnitude of change of no greater than Medium has been assessed at winter Year 1. As such, for users of Parsonage Road (Low sensitivity visual receptors), the significance of effect upon views would be no greater than **Minor adverse** (not significant). Arable farmland (to varying widths) would remain between Parsonage Road and the proposed development which, in addition to retained hedgerows and new hedgerow planting, would mitigate effects upon views for users of the road. There would be no significant sequential effects upon views for users of Parsonage Road.

### Other Roads

- 5.45 Representative viewpoints 7 and 8 are from a minor road to the north-west of the Application Site and the road on approach to the settlement at Smiths Green respectively. Effects upon neither of these views are assessed as significant. Little of the proposed development would be visible within the view from representative viewpoint 7 (**Negligible adverse** significance of effect at winter Year 1, reducing to **Negligible approach Neutral** at summer Year 15) and, for Low sensitivity users of the road on approach to Smiths Green just after crossing the A120, effects would be no greater than a **Negligible adverse** significance of effect. These are transient views into which the proposed development would represent a relatively modest intrusion and, whilst visible, would have no marked effect upon sequential views from the road.

## Cumulative Effects

- 5.46 This section of the assessment considers the likely in-combination effects of the proposed development in association with an outline planning application for residential development on land to the east of Parsonage Road, north of Takeley and to the immediate south of the A120. This is described in the LVIA accompanying the planning application for the development (as submitted to UDC in July 2021) as follows:

*“The proposed development is described as: Outline planning application with all matters reserved, except for access, for up to 88 dwellings (including affordable housing and self/custom-build plots), as well as public open space, children’s play area, landscape infrastructure including a buffer to Prior’s Wood Ancient Woodland and all other associated infrastructure.*

*From a landscape and visual point of view the proposals comprise the construction of up to 88 dwellings, vehicular and pedestrian access, new roundabout, open space, and small land area west of Parsonage Road to deliver surface water drainage infrastructure. In terms of height the proposed dwellings would be generally up to 2.5 storey in height, within the central part of the developable area, with 2 storey built form on its northern and western edge. Appropriate buffer of 15m width would be maintained to protect Prior’s Wood. Public Footpath 48-21 and the Harcamlow Way would be retained with public access across the area enhanced with additional footpaths crossing the proposed public open space. The proposed surface water drainage infrastructure, proposed to the west of Parsonage Road, is envisaged to take the form of either small scale shallow swales or underground pipeline, with potential for an attenuation feature.*

*The built form would be concentrated in the central and southern part of the site, near the existing settlement edge, with the northern part retained as open space and amenity areas. The public open space would include elements of SuDS collocated with ecology enhancements, groups of trees, and tree planting. Groups of trees would be planted along the site’s northern boundary to provide further physical and visual buffer to the adjacent A120 and to filter views of the proposed built form. It is envisaged that a large proportion of the open space would be managed as grassland: wildflower meadows and long grassland with the central area maintained as amenity grassland. Buffer structural planting, including trees and shrubs would help reinforce the screening*

*provided by the existing vegetation along the eastern edge of the site and help filter and soften views of the adjacent built form (including the approved care home development)."*

- 5.47 This proposed residential development is hereinafter referred to as the 'cumulative scheme'.

### Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 5.48 Both the proposed development and the cumulative scheme would be sited within the district level landscape character area Broxted Plateau Farmland. The proposed development is assessed as having a Moderate adverse significance of effect upon the landscape of the Application Site itself and a Minor adverse significance of effect upon the Broxted Farmland Plateau landscape character area. Neither of these effects are considered to be significant.
- 5.49 With respect to the cumulative scheme, the accompanying LVIA concluded that this development proposal would have the following effects upon the Broxted Farmland Plateau:
- "the magnitude of change is considered to be low with the proposals having some limited influence over certain aspects of the local landscape. On that basis the proposed development would bring about minor adverse effects upon the landscape, and indeed the host B10 'Broxted Farmland Plateau' LCA."*
- 5.50 The in-combination effects of the proposed development and the cumulative scheme are therefore assessed as a Minor adverse significance of cumulative effect upon the Broxted Farmland Plateau landscape character area. Both the proposed development and the cumulative scheme are in different parts of the Broxted Farmland Plateau landscape character area which are physically separated from each other by the A120. The site of the cumulative scheme is more closely associated with, and its character is more strongly influenced by, the settlement edge of Takeley, whilst that of the proposed development is more closely associated with, and its character is more strongly influenced by, its close proximity to Stansted Airport. As such, both are assessed as contributing to a likely **Minor adverse** significance of cumulative effect upon the Broxted Farmland Plateau landscape character area in broadly equal measure.

### Cumulative Visual Effects

- 5.51 Representative Viewpoints 3, 6, 8 and 9 within this LVIA are broadly the same as Viewpoints 2, 3, 4 and 7 within the LVIA accompanying the cumulative scheme.
- 5.52 There would be a potential cumulative effect upon views from part of the roadside footpath on Parsonage Road for its users travelling south, as there would for occupants of Le Knells Cottage. For users of Representative viewpoint 3 (and Viewpoint 2 for the cumulative scheme) the in-combination effects would likely result in a **Moderate adverse** significance of effect upon the view at winter Year 1, reducing to **Minor adverse** at summer Year 15, with the greater contribution to that cumulative effect being proposed by the proposed development given its closer proximity to the representative viewpoint.
- 5.53 For users of the PRow linking Parsonage Road in the west with a minor road to the north-east of the Application Site (Representative Viewpoint 6), the in-combination effects of the proposed development and the cumulative scheme are likely to be **Minor adverse** significance of cumulative effect at winter Year 1, with the greater contribution to that effect being provided by the proposed development. However, at summer Year 15, these effects would be reduced to **Negligible adverse**, with the slightly greater contribution to this effect being provided by the proposed development, given its closer proximity to the representative viewpoint. This would be broadly within the same cone of view from the representative viewpoint.
- 5.54 For users of Representative Viewpoint 8 (Smiths Green, part of the Harcamlow Way), there would be a potential **Minor adverse** significance of cumulative effect at winter Year 1, with the greater contribution to that effect provided by the proposed development. However, at summer Year 15,

this effect would be reduced to a **Negligible adverse** significance of cumulative effect given the screening effects of intervening vegetation. At this time, the proposed development and the cumulative scheme would likely contribute to this cumulative effect in broadly equal measure.

- 5.55 At winter Year 1 and summer Year 15, the in-combination effects upon the view from Representative Viewpoint 9 [PRoW (South of A120 looking north) also part of Harcamlow long distance route] would be **Moderate adverse** significance of cumulative effect, with the greater contribution to that effect provided by the cumulative scheme, given its closer proximity to the Representative Viewpoint. However, the user of the representative viewpoint would need to turn their head through some 90 degrees in order to experience the cumulative effect.
- 5.56 There would be a potential **Major adverse** significance of cumulative effect upon the view from Viewpoint 8 (as defined within the LVIA for the cumulative scheme), with the considerably greater contribution to that effect provided by the cumulative scheme. Indeed this potential cumulative effect would most likely be confined to the winter months, given the screening effects of existing vegetation adjoining the footpath during the summer months when existing broadleaved vegetation would be in full leaf. This footpath is also part of the Harcamlow Way. This is likely to be a potentially significant adverse cumulative effect, albeit it would most likely be confined to winter and the greater contributor to the adverse effect would be provided by the cumulative scheme. The users of Viewpoint 8 would also need to turn their head through some 90 degrees in order to experience the cumulative effect.

## 6 CONCLUSION

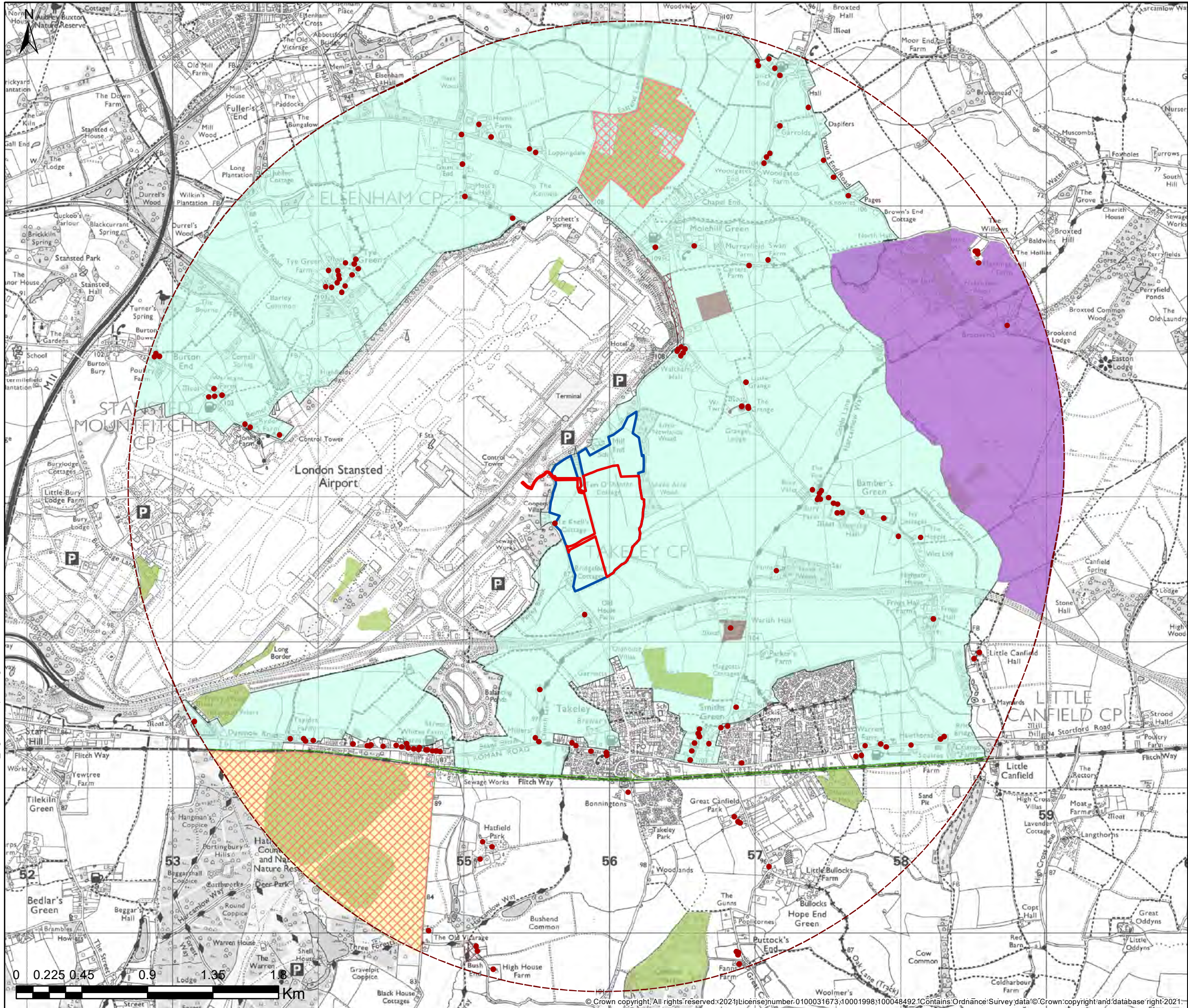
- 6.1 The proposed development would comprise solar panels and associated energy infrastructure set within a rural landscape, and against a backdrop of buildings within Stansted Airport, the A120 and Takeley to the south. Although the solar farm would change the character of two fields under arable cultivation within the Application Site, the low level and relatively low-key nature of the proposed development would reduce effects upon landscape character, features and elements within the Application Site and this part of the Broxted Farmland Plateau. Whilst the landscape of the Application Site would be changed to that of a solar farm, the retention of the existing field boundary hedgerows, with trees, together with new native species hedgerow planting would limit the change to views looking towards the proposed development from the locally surrounding area. As shown on the ZTV (Figure 2), intervisibility between the solar panels and the surrounding landscape is severely limited by existing vegetation, its gently undulating landform and buildings. Indeed, the proposed development has been designed to avoid impact upon existing landscape features within the Application Site including hedgerows, trees and ditches and to add new vegetation to this existing landscape fabric where it is possible and practical to do so. Retained hedgerows within the Application Site would be allowed to grow-on to between 4-6m height. This change in management of these existing features, together with new hedgerow planting which, after some 10-15 years growth would also be between 4-6m overall height, would make an important contribution to the concealment of the solar panels and ancillary energy infrastructure in this farmed landscape. These features would also reinforce the field pattern and provide some enhancement to its landscape character.
- 6.2 The solar farm would not result in significant adverse effects upon either the landscape of the Application Site itself or that of the Broxted Farmland Plateau within which it would be located. At the site based level, the proposed development would establish a solar farm landscape over two arable fields; the characterising effects of which would be reduced by new hedgerow planting with trees and the seeding of wildflower grassland beneath the panels. There would be a Moderate adverse significance of effect upon the landscape of the Application Site itself, which would not be significant. The low-level nature of the solar farm, within a wider landscape structure provided by hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland, supplemented by new hedgerow and tree planting, would limit the effects on a relatively small part of the wider Broxted Farmland Plateau to Minor adverse as a result of a Low magnitude of change, which is not significant.
- 6.3 No significant adverse effects upon views from any of the 9 representative viewpoints or other visual receptors included in the assessment, i.e. occupiers of residential properties or users of the local public right of way network have been assessed. None of the representative viewpoints or visual receptors would directly abut the proposed development and the landscape buffer between them and the proposed development, in association with the screening effects of both existing and proposed vegetation and the gently undulating landform, would mitigate potential adverse effects upon views during both the short and longer term. Potential effects of no greater than a Moderate adverse significance of effect have been assessed at either winter Year 1 or summer Year 15 for each of the visual receptors included in the assessment, i.e. users of Parsonage Road, including its roadside footpath, occupiers of Le Knells Cottage and users of the public right of way network, including the public footpath to the north-east of the Application Site and the Harcamlow Way.
- 6.4 A potential significant adverse cumulative effect has been assessed upon views for users of part of the Harcamlow Way to the south of the A120 (Viewpoint 8 within the LVIA for the cumulative scheme). Within this view, during winter only, the in-combination effects of the proposed development in association with the cumulative scheme are likely to be a Major adverse significance of cumulative effect. However, users of the viewpoint would need to turn their head through some 90 degrees in order to experience the effect and the greater contributor to that cumulative effect would be provided by the cumulative scheme rather than the proposed development. No other significant cumulative or in-combination effects have been assessed.

- 6.5 It is considered that the landscape has the capacity to accommodate the proposed solar farm whilst avoiding significant adverse effects upon its landscape character, features and elements and views or visual amenity, both following its construction and in the longer term once the effects of new planting and seeding (and the change to the management of existing hedgerows) has taken effect.





**FIGURES**



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- ### Legend
- Study Area (3km)
  - Land Ownership Boundary
  - Application Site Boundary
  - Listed Buildings
  - Application Site Boundary
  - Land Ownership Boundary
  - SSSI
  - Scheduled Monument
  - Registered Parks and Gardens
  - CRoW Access
  - Country Parks
  - Ancient Woodland
  - National Nature Reserves
  - National Parks
- Uttlesford Pre-Submission Local Plan 2018**
- Easton Park Garden Community (Allocation for Development)
  - Countryside Protective Zone (CPZ)

A	Updated Application Site Boundary	GL	PH	17/08/21
Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



Lakesbury House, Hiltlingbury Road, Chandlers Ford, Hampshire SO53 5SS  
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**Client** MAG London Stansted Airport  
**Project** Land East of Stansted Airport  
**Title** Landscape Planning Designations

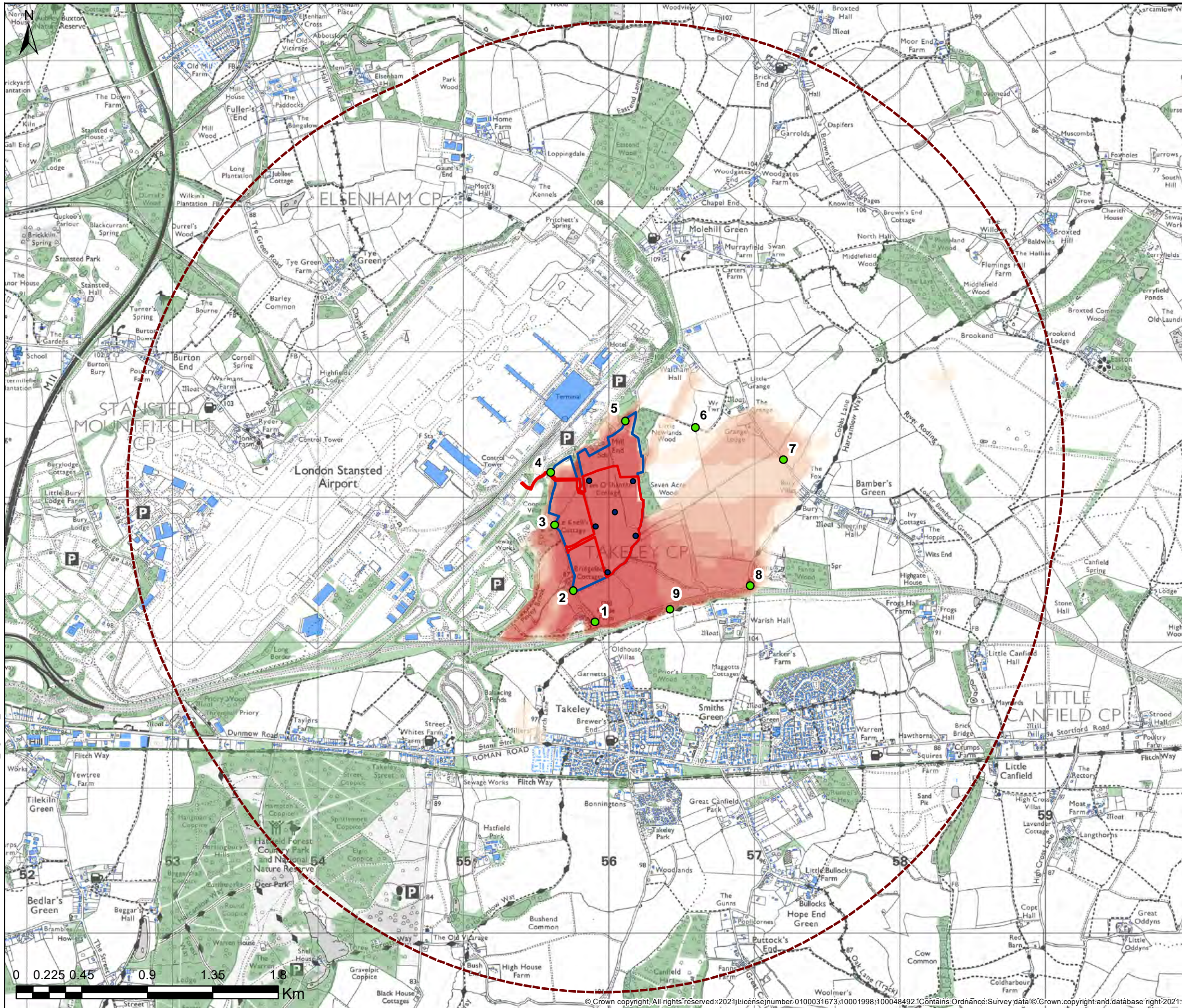
**Status** DRAFT  
**Project Number** JSL3353  
**Figure Number** 1

**Drawn By** SH  
**Scale @ A3** 1:25,000

**PM/Checked By** PH  
**Date Created** AUG 2021  
**Rev** A

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P:\13300 Series\JSL3353 - Land east of Stansted\Tech\GIS\JSL3353\_Fig1 Landscape DesignationsA.mxd



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- Legend**
- Candidate Viewpoints
  - ▭ Application Site Boundary
  - ▭ Land Ownership Boundary
  - Study Area (3km radius)
  - Settlements
  - Vegetation
  - ZTV Origin Points

**ZTV (Indicative extent of surrounding landscape from where the proposed solar farm may be visible)**

- Low Visibility (up to 1 origin point)
- (Lighter Orange)
- (Medium Orange)
- (Dark Orange)
- High Visibility (up to 6 origin points)

Note:  
 ZTV compiled assuming observer height as 1.5m at eye level, and takes into account screening effects of local settlements at 9m and existing vegetation / woodland at a height of 12m.

6 origin points, from within the Application Site, have been used to illustrate the full parameters of the proposed development, set at 3.2m above EGL, within the centre of each of the fields of the application site containing solar panels.

OS Terrain 5 data has been used for generating the ground model.

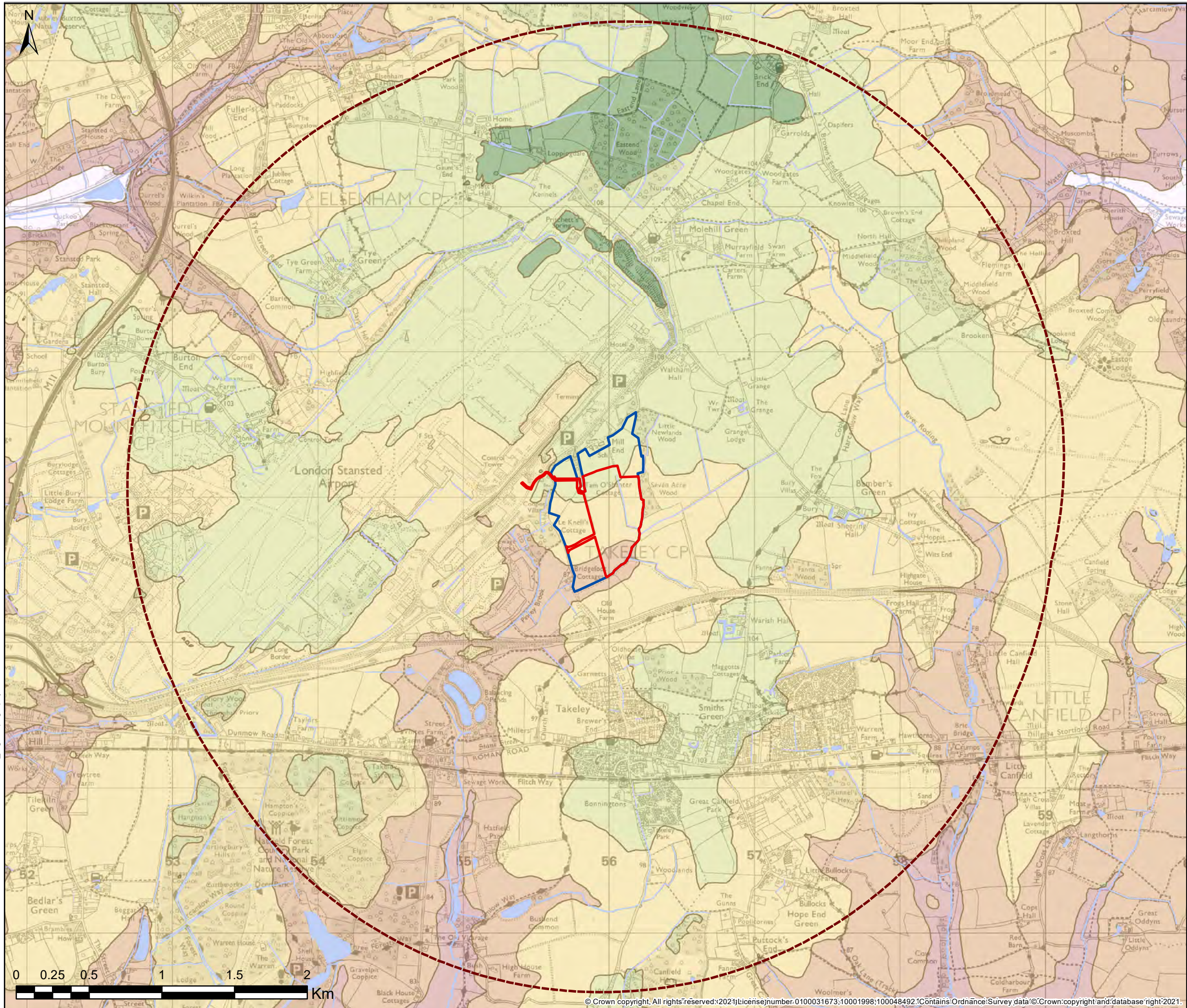
Rev	Description	By	CB	Date
C	Updated Application Site and ZTV rerun	GL	PH	17/08/21
B	ZTV rerun at 3.2m EGL	GL	PH	11/05/21
A	Candidate Viewpoints added	GL	PH	26/04/21

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Client **MAG London Stansted Airport**  
 Project **Land East of Stansted Airport**  
 Title **Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**

Status **DRAFT** Drawn By **SH** PM/Checked By **PH**  
 Project Number **JSL3353** Scale @ **A3** Date Created **AUG 2021**  
 Figure Number **2** Rev **C**

P:\13300 Series\JSL3353 - Land east of Stansted\Tech\GIS\JSL3353\_Fig2 ZTV\_RevC.mxd



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 2. If received electronically it is the recipient's responsibility to print to correct scale. Only written dimensions should be used.

- Legend**
- Application Site Boundary
  - Land Ownership Boundary
  - Study Area (3km radius)
- Topography**
- 60-70m
  - 70-80m
  - 80-90m
  - 90-100m
  - 100-110m
  - 110-120m
  - 10m Contour lines
  - Watercourse

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Client **MAG London Stansted Airport**  
 Project **Land East of Stansted Airport**  
 Title **Topography and Watercourses**

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
DRAFT	SH	PH
Project Number	Scale @ A3	Date Created
JSL3353	1:25,000	SEP 2021
Figure Number		Rev
<b>3</b>		-

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Approximate Extent of Application Site within View  
(Excluding Access Track)

Buildings within Stansted Airport

Light Industrial Buildings/ High House  
Nursery

Seven Acre Wood



Viewpoint 1: Parsonage Road

Land East of Stansted Airport  
JSL3353

Date of photograph: 26 03 2021  
Lens type: 50mm

Distance to site: 400m  
OS reference: 555904, 222141

Direction to site: North  
Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL

Horizontal field of view: 39.6°  
Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3

Figure: 4a



Approximate Extent of Application Site within View  
(Excluding Access Track)

Buildings within Stansted Airport

Light Industrial Buildings/ High House  
Nursery

Seven Acre Wood

Note: For context only

Note: Application Site occupies full width of view



**Viewpoint 2: Roadside Footpath on Parsonage Road**

Land East of Stansted Airport  
JSL3353

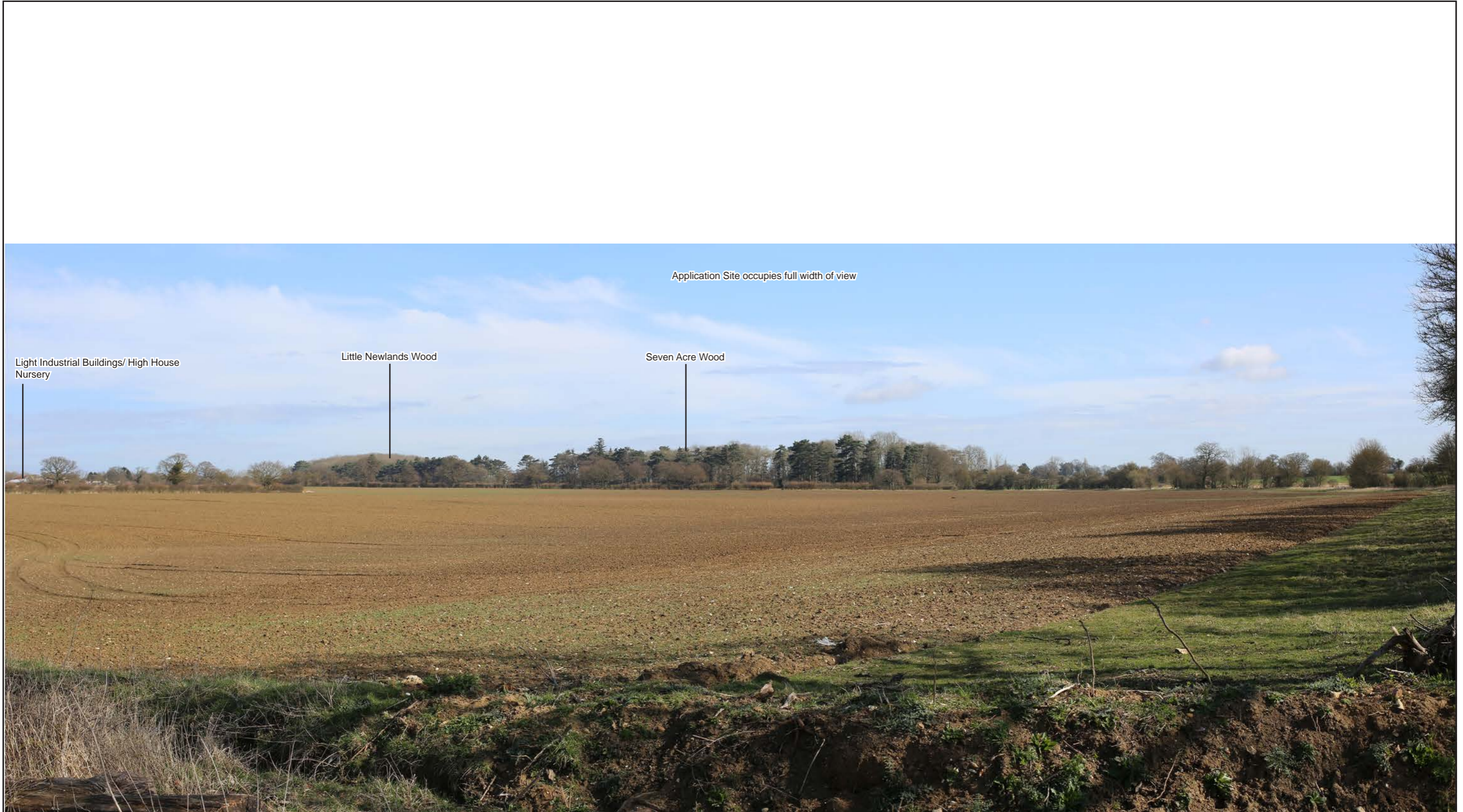
Date of photograph: 26 03 2021  
Lens type: 50mm

Distance to site: 250m  
OS reference: 555757, 222356

Direction to site: North-east  
Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL

Horizontal field of view: 39.6°  
Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3

Figure: 4c



Light Industrial Buildings/ High House Nursery

Little Newlands Wood

Seven Acre Wood

Application Site occupies full width of view



Indicative Extents of Application Site within View

Hedgerow Boundary to Le Knells Cottage

Parsonage Road



Approximate Extent of Application Site within View  
(Excluding Access Track)

Linear Woodland at 'Tam O'Shanter Cottage'



Approximate Extent of Application Site within View  
(Excluding Access Track)

Seven Acre Wood

Weston Homes Group Buildings (North Takeley)

Stansted Courtyard

New agricultural outbuilding adjacent Parsonage Road



**Viewpoint 5: Parsonage Road**

Land East of Stansted Airport  
JSL3353

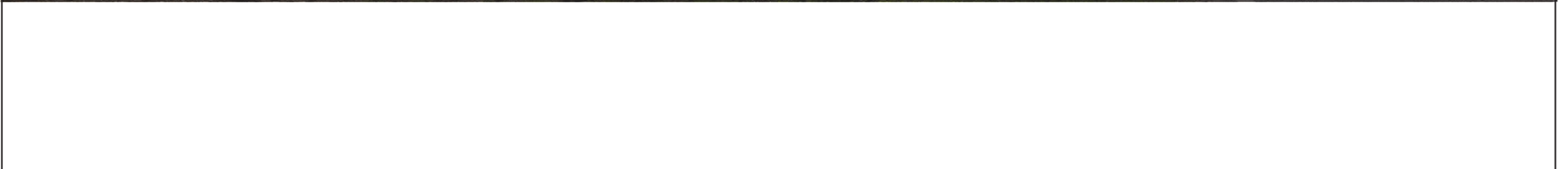
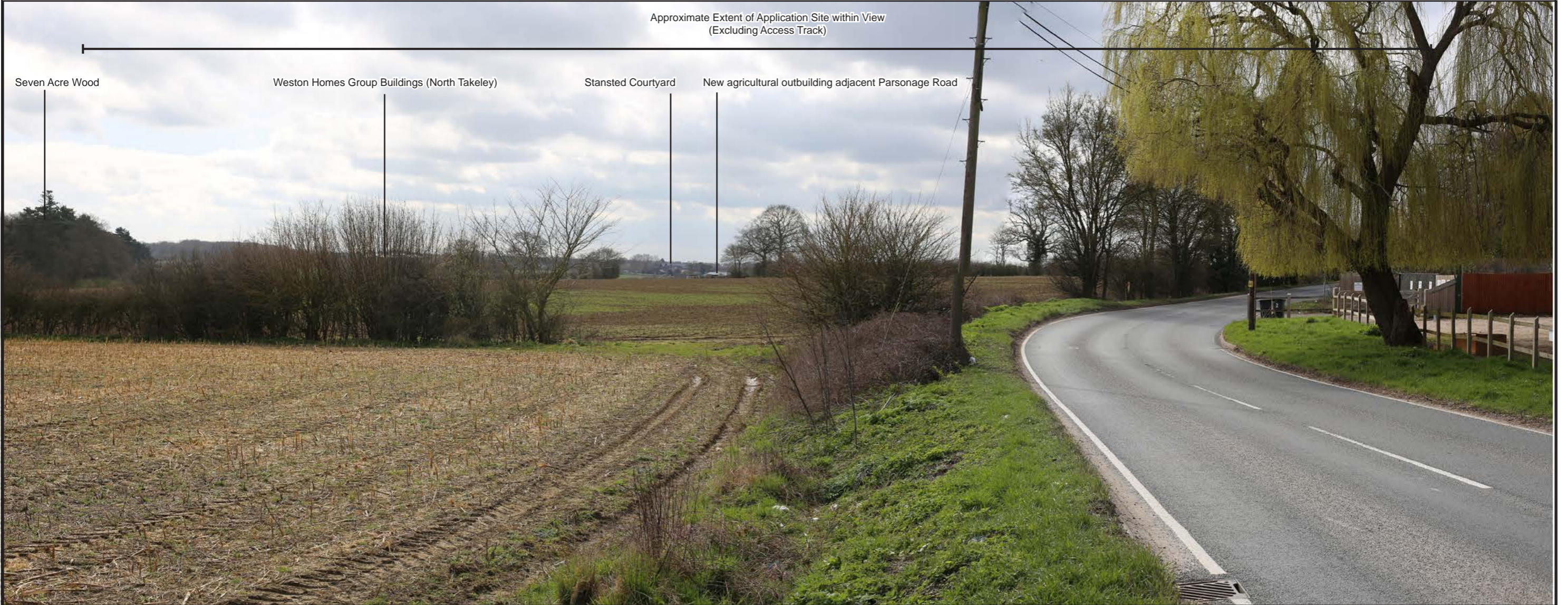
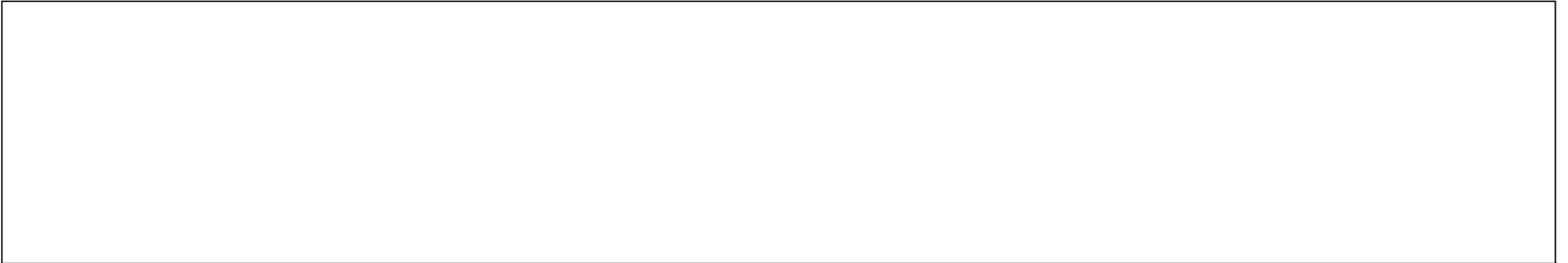
Date of photograph: 26 03 2021  
Lens type: 50mm

Distance to site: 320m  
OS reference: 556115, 223523

Direction to site: North-west  
Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL

Horizontal field of view: 39.6°  
Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3

**Figure: 4g**



	<b>Viewpoint 5: Parsonage Road</b>	Land East of Stansted Airport JSL3353	Date of photograph: 26 03 2021 Lens type: 50mm	Distance to site: 320m OS reference: 556115, 223523	Direction to site: North-west Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL	Horizontal field of view: approx.60° Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3	<b>Figure: 4h</b>
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**Viewpoint 6: Public Right of Way to the North-East of the Application Site**

Land East of Stansted Airport  
JSL3353

Date of photograph: 26 03 2021  
Lens type: 50mm

Distance to site: 600m  
OS reference: 556595, 223480

Direction to site: North-west  
Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL

Horizontal field of view: 39.6°  
Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3



Approximate Extent of Application Site within View  
(Excluding Access Track)

Seven Acre Wood

Little Newlands Wood



Approximate Extent of Application Site within View  
(Excluding Access Track)

Buildings adjacent Stansted Airport

Seven Acre Wood

Stansted Airport Control Tower

Structures within Stansted Airport



**Viewpoint 7: Minor Road North-west of Smiths Green**

Land East of Stansted Airport  
JSL3353

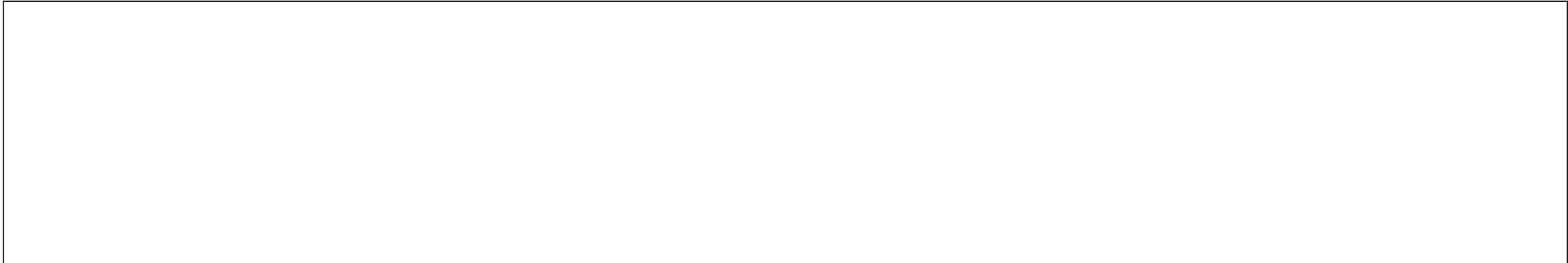
Date of photograph: 26 03 2021  
Lens type: 50mm

Distance to site: approx.1km  
OS reference: 557200, 223258

Direction to site: West  
Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL

Horizontal field of view: 39.6°  
Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3

**Figure: 4k**



	<b>Viewpoint 7: Minor Road North-west of Smiths Green</b>	Land East of Stansted Airport JSL3353	Date of photograph: 26 03 2021 Lens type: 50mm	Distance to site: approx.1km OS reference: 557200, 223258	Direction to site: West Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL	Horizontal field of view: approx.60° Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3	<b>Figure: 41</b>
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Note: Application Site occupies full width of view



**Viewpoint 8: Cobbs Lane  
(Part of Harcamlow Way)**

**Land East of Stansted Airport**  
JSL3353

Date of photograph: 26 03 2021  
Lens type: 50mm

Distance to site: approx.1km  
OS reference: 423729, 310164

Direction to site: North-west  
Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL

Horizontal field of view: 39.6°  
Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3

**Figure: 4m**



Approximate Extent of Application Site within View  
(Excluding Access Track)

Agricultural Building to South of Application Site

Le Knells Cottage

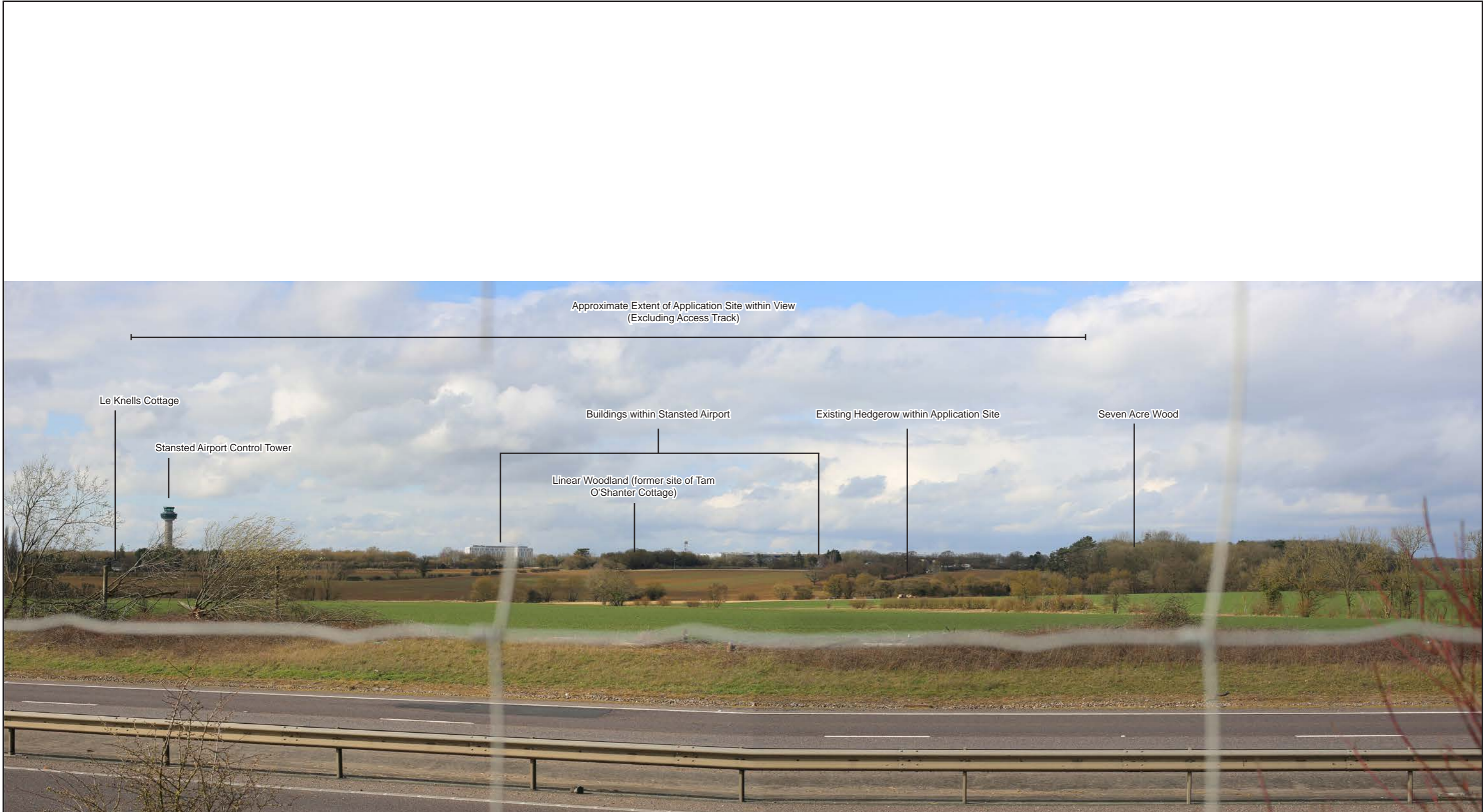
Stansted Airport Control Tower

Seven Acre Wood

Buildings within Stansted Airport



	<b>Viewpoint 9: Public Right of Way (South of A120 looking north)</b>	<b>Land East of Stansted Airport</b> JSL3353	Date of photograph: 26 03 2021 Lens type: 50mm	Distance to site: 600m OS reference: 556420, 222228	Direction to site: North-west Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL	Horizontal field of view: 39.6° Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3	<b>Figure: 4o</b>
--	---	---	---	--	---	---	-------------------



	<b>Viewpoint 9: Public Right of Way (South of A120 looking north)</b>	<b>Land East of Stansted Airport</b> JSL3353	Date of photograph: 26 03 2021 Lens type: 50mm	Distance to site: 600m OS reference: 556420, 222228	Direction to site: North-west Viewpoint height: 1.5m AGL	Horizontal field of view: approx.60° Viewing distance: 408mm @ A3	<b>Figure: 4p</b>
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**APPENDICES**

## Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

### Assessment Methodology

- A1.1 The Landscape and visual assessment considers the potential effects of the development upon:
- Individual landscape features and elements
  - Landscape character; and
  - Visual amenity and the people who view the landscape or townscape.

### Distinction between Landscape and Visual Effects

- A1.2 In accordance with the '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition*' 2013 by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, landscape and visual effects have been assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each of these is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between landscape and visual effects as described below:
- Landscape effects relate to the effects of the project on the physical and other characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality
  - Visual effects relate to the effects on views experienced by visual receptors (e.g. residents, footpath users, tourists etc.) and on the visual amenity experienced by those people

### Duration of Landscape and Visual Effects

- A1.3 The assessment evaluates the long-term effects relating to the operational phase of the proposed development.
- A1.4 Consideration has been given to the likely seasonal variations in the visibility of the development in a context including deciduous vegetation.
- A1.5 Consideration has been given to changes in the level of effects likely to take place as new planting, proposed as part of the project, and existing planting matures.

### Landscape and Visual Assessment Process

- A1.6 The assessment of the landscape effects of the project has followed a recognised process set out below:
- Identify the baseline landscape resource (e.g. individual elements and character) and its value
  - Identify forces for change in the landscape of the surrounding area;
  - Evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape resource and its susceptibility to change as a result of the type of development proposed;
  - Identify potential landscape effects of the project through review of initial plans;

- Develop measures to avoid, reduce and ameliorate adverse effects and to maximise the positive benefits of the project;
- Identify scale or magnitude of likely impact of the project;
- Assess the level of effects of the project on the landscape, taking into account the designed in mitigation measures proposed; and
- Report the findings of the assessment.

A1.7 The assessment of visual effects follows a similar recognised process set out below:

- Identify potential visual receptors of the project (i.e. people who will have views of the development);
- Select an appropriate number of representative or sensitive viewpoints to be illustrated through photography and to reflect the full range of different views towards the project;
- Describe the nature of the baseline views towards the project for each representative viewpoint;
- Identify forces for change in the visual amenity of the surrounding area;
- Evaluate the sensitivity of the visual receptors and their susceptibility to change as a result of the project represented by the viewpoints;
- Identify potential visual effects of the project through review of initial plans;
- Develop measures to avoid, reduce and ameliorate adverse effects and to maximise the positive benefits of the project;
- Identify the scale or magnitude of the likely impact of the project;
- Assess the level of effects on the receptors from representative viewpoints, taking into account the visual context of the development and the mitigation measures proposed;
- Assess the level of effects on overall visual amenity; and
- Report the findings of the assessment.

A1.8 The assessment of effects upon representative viewpoints has been supplemented by further assessment of likely effects upon views for other visual receptors within the study area for which the ZTV indicates that views to the proposed development may be available. These include occupants of residential properties and users of the local public right of way network.

### Assessment Criteria

A1.9 The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the magnitude of change to landscape and visual resources to enable the likely key effects of the project to be identified.

A1.10 Published guidance states that the level of effects is ascertained by professional judgement based on consideration of the intrinsic sensitivity of the baseline landscape, townscape or visual receptor, the receptors susceptibility to the development and the magnitude of change as a result of the project.

### Value

A1.11 Landscape value is defined in the glossary of the GLVIA (2013) at paragraph 5.44 as the *“the value of the Landscape Character Type or Areas that may be affected, based on*

*review of any designations at both national and local levels, and, where there are no designations, judgements based on criteria that can be used to establish landscape value” and “the value of individual contributors to landscape character, especially the key characteristics, which may include elements of the landscape, particular landscape features, notable aesthetic, perceptual or experiential qualities, and combinations of these contributors.”*

- A1.12 The value of certain landscapes has been recognised, e.g. the national designations of National Park (NP). Some landscapes are locally designated, e.g. Special Landscape Area (SLA). The aspects/special qualities of the landscape that led to the designations have been noted, as has the degree to which that aspect is present in the particular area under consideration.
- A1.13 Other landscapes are undesignated but, valued locally for specific reasons or specific elements / features. The value of an area of landscape is expressed both through designation and also other criteria, such as tranquillity, remoteness, wildness, scenic beauty, cultural associations and conservation interests. These aspects have been summarised in the main assessment.
- A1.14 How that value might be affected by a development is classified on a four point scale (low, medium, high and very high) as set out in Table 1 below. The table can only illustrate general categories, as the effects on an area or element of landscape is specific to the development proposed and that particular aspect affected.

**Table 1: Landscape Value (primarily expressed through designation)**

Value	Designation	Example
Very High	International/ National	Exceptional scenic quality (and/or special qualities), no or limited potential for substitution. E.g., World Heritage Site, National Park, AONB or key elements features within them well known to the wider public.
High	National/Regional/ Local	Very attractive or attractive scenic quality, high or good landscape quality, limited potential for substitution. E.g., National Park, AONB, SLA or key elements within them.
Medium	Regional/Local	Typical and commonplace or in part unusual scenic quality, ordinary landscape quality, potential for substitution, E.g., Locally designated (SLA) or undesignated, but value expressed through literature and cultural associations or through demonstrable use.
Low	Local	Dull, degraded or damaged scenic quality, poor landscape quality, can be readily substituted. E.g., Undesignated. Certain individual landscape elements or features may be worthy of conservation or landscape identified would benefit from restoration or enhancement.

### Condition

- A1.15 The evaluation of condition is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape resource. It reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements, as indicated by the categories within Table 2 below, or can be applied to the intactness of the resource as a whole outlined by the corresponding descriptions:



**Table 2: Landscape Condition**

Condition	Example
Very Good	Strong structure; very attractive with distinct features worthy of conservation; strong sense of place; no detracting features.
Good	Recognisable structure; attractive with many features worthy of conservation; occasional detracting features.
Ordinary	Distinguishable structure; common place with limited distinctiveness and features worthy of conservation; some detracting features.
Poor	Weak structure; evidence of degradation; lacks distinctiveness and sense of place; frequent detracting features.
Very Poor	Damaged structure; evidence of severe disturbance or dereliction; no distinctiveness; detracting features dominate.

## Sensitivity of Receptor

### Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

A1.16 The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is a combination of “*judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape*” (GLVIA, para 5.39). For the purpose of this assessment, susceptibility and value of landscape receptors are defined as follows:

- Landscape susceptibility: “*the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed change without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies*” (GLVIA, para 5.40).
- Value of the landscape receptor: “*The value of the Landscape Character Types or Areas that may be affected, based on review of designations at both national and local levels, and, where there are no designations, judgements based on criteria that can be used to establish landscape value; and, the value of individual contributors to landscape character, especially the key characteristics, which may include individual elements of the landscape, particularly landscape features, notable aesthetic, perceptual or experiential qualities, and combinations of these contributors*” (GLVIA, para 5.44).

### Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

A1.17 Visual receptors are always people. The sensitivity of each visual receptor (the particular person or group of people likely to be affected at a specific viewpoint) “should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change and in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views” (GLVIA, para 6.31). For the purpose of this assessment, susceptibility and value of visual receptors are defined as follows:

- Visual susceptibility: *“The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of: The occupation or activity of people experiencing views at the particular locations; and the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations”* (GLVIA, para 6.32).
- Value of views: Judgements made about the value of views should take account of: *“recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations; and, indicators of value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment (such as parking places, sign boards or interpretive material) and references to them in literature or art...”* (GLVIA, para 6.37).

A1.18 Sensitivity is not readily graded in bands. However, in order to provide both consistency and transparency to the assessment process, Table 3 defines the criteria which have guided the judgement as to the sensitivity of the receptor and the susceptibility to change.

**Table 3: Sensitivity of Receptor**

	Landscape Receptor	Visual Receptor
Low	Landscape value is low, with no designations; landscape/townscape integrity is low, with a poor condition and a degraded character with the presence of detractors such as dereliction; and the landscape has the capacity to potentially accommodate significant change.	May include people at their place of work, or engaged in similar activities, whose attention may be focused on their work or activity and who may therefore be potentially less susceptible to changes in view. Occupiers of vehicles whose attention may be focused on the road.
Medium	Landscape value is recognised or designated locally; the landscape is relatively intact, with a distinctive character and few detractors; and is reasonably tolerant of change.	Viewers' attention may be focused on landscape, such as users of secondary or urban footpaths, and people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation. e.g., horse riding or golf. Occupiers of vehicles in scenic areas or on recognised tourist routes.
High	Landscape value recognised by national designation. Sense of tranquility or remoteness specifically noted in Landscape Character Assessment. High sensitivity to disturbance specifically noted in Landscape Character Assessment.  The qualities for which the landscape is valued are in a good condition, with a clearly apparent distinctive character and absence of detractors. This distinctive character is susceptible to relatively small changes.	Large number or high sensitivity of viewers assumed. Viewers' attention very likely to be focused on landscape.  E.g., Residents experiencing views from dwellings; users of strategic recreational footpaths, rural footpaths and cycleways; people experiencing views from important landscape features of physical, cultural or historic interest, beauty spots and picnic areas.

## Magnitude of Change

A1.19 The magnitude of change affecting landscape or visual receptors depends on the nature, scale and duration of the particular change within the landscape/townscape, the location of it and the overall effect on a particular view. This may be very small if the development is at some distance. In a landscape, the magnitude of change will depend on the loss or change in any important feature or characteristic or a change in backdrop to, or outlook from, a landscape that affects its character. The angle of view, duration of view, distance from the development, degree of contrast with the existing characteristics of the view, prominence of the development and the extent of visibility can all influence the magnitude of the change in view. In addition, the general visibility and combination of effects of elevation and topography on openness and degree of obstruction by trees and buildings affect the magnitude of change.

**Table 4: Magnitude of Change**

	Landscape Impacts	Visual Impacts
Negligible	The effect of change on the perception of the landscape, its physical features or its character is barely noticeable.	There is either a very limited view of the proposed development or the character of the view will not be altered by it. The proposed development is at such a distance as to be barely perceptible and may only be visible in clear conditions. May go unnoticed.
Low	Changes to the physical landscape, its character and the perception of the landscape are slight.  Long distance to affected landscape with views toward the character area/type the key characteristic.	Visible, but not prominent. Minor component and no marked effect on view.
Medium	The proposed development forms a visible and recognisable feature in the landscape.  Proposed development is within or adjacent to affected character area/type.  Scale of development fits with existing features.	Prominent.  Has an important, but not defining influence on view; is a key element in the view.

	Landscape Impacts	Visual Impacts
Large	<p>Where there are substantial changes affecting the character of the landscape, or important elements through loss of existing features.</p> <p>Proposed development within or close to affected landscape.</p> <p>Scale, mass and form of development out of character with existing elements.</p>	<p>Dominant.</p> <p>Has a defining influence on the view.</p>

A1.20 The following considerations are relevant when evaluating the magnitude of visual change:

- Distance: the distance between the receptor and the development. Generally, the greater the distance, the lower the magnitude of change;
- Extent: the extent of the proposal which is visible;
- Proportion: the arc of view occupied by the development in proportion to the overall field of view. A panoramic view, where the development takes up a small part of it, will generally be of lower magnitude than a narrow, focussed view, even if the arc of view occupied by the proposal is similar;
- Duration: the duration of the effect. An effect experienced in a single location over an extended period of time is likely to result in a higher magnitude of change than an effect which is of a short duration, such as a view from a road;
- Orientation: the angle of the view in relation to the main receptor orientation, where there is a dominant direction to the vista; and,
- Context: the elements, which in combination provide the setting and context to the proposal.

### Level of Effect

A1.21 The level of the landscape and visual effects are assessed through consideration of the sensitivity or susceptibility of the receptor and the magnitude of change. The following table outlines the broad approach adopted to assess the level of effect, together with professional judgement. This may lead some effects falling between two categories.

**Table 5 – Level of Effect**

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity or Susceptibility	Magnitude of Change			
	Large	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Major	Major or Moderate	Minor	Minor or Negligible
Medium	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Minor or Negligible	Negligible
Low	Minor	Minor or Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

A1.22 The effect of relevant aspects of the project on the landscape and townscape has been described and evaluated against the following criteria, defined as:

- Major adverse: Where the proposed changes cannot be fully mitigated; would be uncharacteristic and would damage a valued aspect of the landscape.
- Moderate adverse: Where some elements of the proposed changes would be out of scale or uncharacteristic of an area.
- Minor adverse: Where the proposed changes would be at slight variance with the character of an area.
- Negligible adverse: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the landscape.
- Neutral: Where the proposals would be in keeping with the character of the area and/or would maintain landscape quality and value (e.g. where on balance the adverse effects of the proposals are off-set by beneficial effects for the same receptor).
- Negligible beneficial: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the landscape.
- Minor beneficial: Where the proposed changes would reflect the existing character and would slightly improve the character and quality of the landscape.
- Moderate beneficial: Where the proposed changes would not only fit in well with the existing character of the surrounding landscape, but would improve the quality of the resource through the removal of detracting features.
- Major beneficial: Where the proposed changes would substantially improve character and quality through the removal of large-scale damage and dereliction and provision of far reaching enhancements.

A1.23 The effect of relevant aspects of the project on views has been described and evaluated as follows:

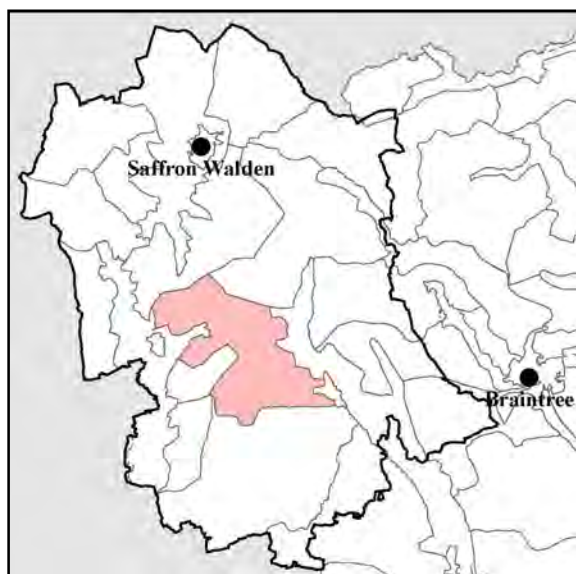
- Major adverse: Where the proposed changes would form a major part of the view, or would be uncharacteristic, and would alter valued views.
- Moderate adverse: Where the proposed changes to views would be out of scale or uncharacteristic with the existing view.
- Minor adverse: Where the proposed changes to views would be at slight variance with the existing view.
- Negligible adverse: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the existing view.
- Neutral: Where the proposed development would be imperceptible or would be in keeping with and would maintain the amenity value and quality of the existing view or where (on balance) adverse effects of the proposals which are offset by beneficial effects for the same receptor.
- Negligible beneficial: Where the proposed changes would be barely discernible within the existing view.
- Minor beneficial: Where the proposed changes to the existing view would be in keeping with and would improve the quality of the existing view.
- Moderate beneficial: Where the proposed changes to the existing view would not only be in keeping with but would greatly improve the quality of the scene through the removal of visually detracting features.

- Major beneficial: Where the proposed changes to existing views would substantially improve the character and quality through the removal of large scale damage and dereliction and provision of far reaching enhancements.
- A1.24 The level of effects is described as major, moderate, minor or negligible. Where negligible adverse and beneficial effects occur within the same view or same landscape/townscape, the effect can be described as neutral on balance. The level of effects varies according to individual circumstances and the baseline situation, for example the presence of landscape designations and/or visual detractors.
- A1.25 A conclusion regarding the significance of each effect on a landscape or visual receptor needs to combine separate judgements about the sensitivity of receptors and magnitude of change as a result of the proposed development. The GLVIA (2013) states at paragraph 5.55 that a sequential approach can be taken to assessment of significance; *“susceptibility to change and value can be combined into an assessment of sensitivity for each receptor, and size/scale, geographical extent and duration and reversibility can be combined into an assessment of magnitude for each effect. Magnitude and sensitivity can then be combined to assess overall significance”*.
- A1.26 In the assessment those levels of effect indicated as being ‘major’ may be regarded as significant effects. An accumulation of individual ‘moderate’ effects, for instance experienced as a sequence during a journey, may also be regarded as significant.

**Appendix B**

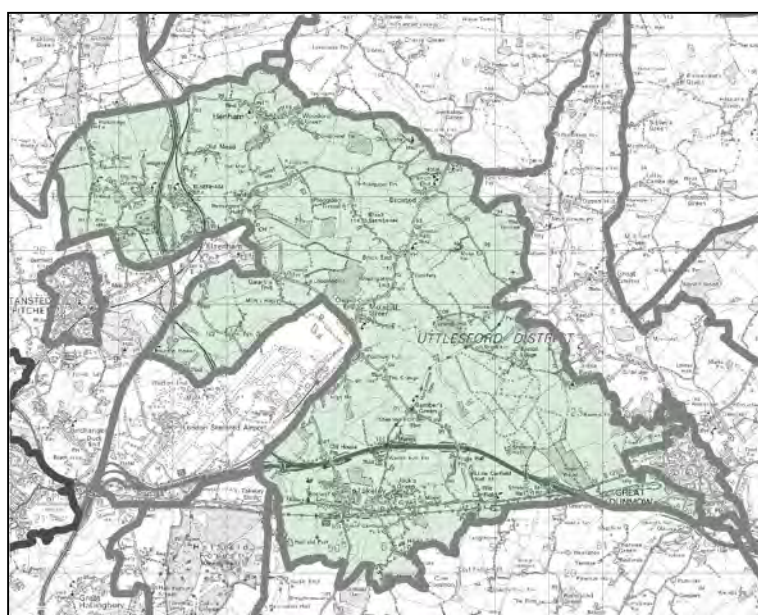
**Landscape Character Data**

## B10 BROXTED FARMLAND PLATEAU



### Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating farmland on glacial till plateau, dissected by River Roding.
- Large open landscape with tree cover appearing as blocks on the horizon or as scattered trees along field boundaries, with intermittent hedgerows.
- Higher ground where plateau broadens and flattens is expansive and full of big sky views.
- Dispersed settlements and few villages of any size.
- Some sunken lanes.
- Moats, halls and historic farmsteads scattered over the area.



### Overall Character

This character area is in the glacial till plateau farmland, bisected by the river Roding. It lies between the upper Chelmer and upper Stort river valleys, and stretches from Henham and Ugley Greens eastwards to Molehill Green and the rural fringe to the west of Great Dunmow. Stansted Airport juts into the area at the southwest, and the southern limits reach Puttock's End, below Takeley. This gently undulating arable farmland is in the southern reaches of the boulder clay; the farms are large and the landscape is open, with few trees except in blocks or near settlements. Hedgerows are intermittent and field pattern is delineated mainly by ditches or grass tracks, occasionally with trees or scrub. Rough grassland and pasture for horses can be seen near settlements, bounded by post-and-rail fencing. Tree cover appears in blocks of mixed deciduous types and is often seen as a distant framework on the horizon, or appears to link into a continuous backdrop. The river Roding winds its way southwards from Molehill Green in the centre of the area. Settlement pattern is varied; the village of Henham is a



nucleated settlement while Takeley and Broxted are linear. Most settlements are hamlets or farmsteads scattered over the plateau or along the lanes. The ancient market town of Great Dunmow, to the east of this character area, is the largest in the vicinity. Vernacular buildings are pale colour-washed plaster, many with pargetting, and thatched roofs. Farm buildings are sometimes red brick with black-stained weatherboarding. The historic past is also visible in the many moats, halls and ancient woodland spread over this countryside. New residential development outside Henham is more suburban; with little link to local building materials or vernacular style. This is also apparent in the villages around Takeley. Stansted Airport is a major influence on the character of the southwestern part of this area. Though screened by trees and shrubs, its buildings and tower can be seen in long views. The access roads and perimeter roads have brought an urban feel with them. The sound of aircraft is almost constant. The A120 and the B1256 cut across the southern part of this area, and a small piece of the M11 crosses the northwest corner. Water towers, telegraph poles and telecommunications masts are sometimes seen on the horizon. In spite of the proximity of the airport and major roads in the south and west, there still remain only winding lanes and minor roads for access to the scattered farmsteads. Many of these lanes are sunken, with verges of varying widths, sometimes tree-lined, and often quite peaceful. Many footpaths including the Harcamlow Way cross the area. The texture of the landscape is influenced by the topography and the contrasts with trees, fields and local building materials. Away from the Stansted flight path tranquillity is moderate to strong.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- Churches set on hills are visible in long views.
- Telecommunications masts occasionally visible.
- Stansted Airport and tower visible in long views from many locations within the character area.
- From several locations in the north and east of the character area, panoramic views across the Chelmer Valley slopes and views to Great Dunmow.
- Commercial premises growing around airport.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, interspersed with linear greens and a number of former common fields. Historic settlement is largely dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farms, many moated sites and small hamlets, often along linear greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- A significant proportion of ancient woodland, and many hedgerows which are also of considerable antiquity.
- Intricate, twisting and sunken roads, of ancient origins.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. However, the area does contain 17 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Elsenham Woods SSSI and part of High Wood SSSI comprising ancient woodland habitats.
- Halls Quarry SSSI comprising a variety of grassland and scrub habitats.
- Five CWSs with a variety of ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Harland Wood, Lady Wood, Middlefield Wood, Prior's Wood and Hoglands Wood.
- Nine CWSs with a variety of grassland, woodland and wetland habitats including: Palegate Meadow, Broxted, Pledgdon Green, Elsenham Hall Fields, part of Wilkinson's Plantation, Turners Spring, Molehill Green Meadow, Stansted Sewage Works and Fen and Little Easton Airfield.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character
- Pressure from visually intrusive expansion due to Stansted Airport.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive
- Pressure to use quick screening ability of conifer plantings which are out of character with this landscape.
- Pressure for new development from Stansted Airport second runway.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include blocks of mixed deciduous woodland (visible on the horizon) and scattered trees within field boundaries (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open nature of the skyline of higher areas of plateau is visually sensitive, with new development potentially visible within expansive views across the plateau. Sunken, often tree-lined lanes are also sensitive to new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and several visible moats and halls (the pattern of which is sensitive to change or new development). There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 14 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, grassland and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate to- high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

*Conserve* - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Conserve the rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that use of materials, and especially colour, is appropriate to the local landscape character; such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as deciduous tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings; avoid coniferous screen planting.
- New farm buildings such as sheds should be sensitively located within the landscape to respect local character and avoid the skyline.
- Small-scale development should be carefully sited in relation to existing farm buildings.
- Encourage sensitive conversion of barns which respects traditional materials, built fabric and landscape character.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Conserve and manage ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.

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