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Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for
erection of 15 residential units at Canfield Moat House,
High Cross Lane West, Little Canfield, Dunmow, Essex,
CM6 1TD

On behalf of: Mr Andrew Smith

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Date: 06 June 2022

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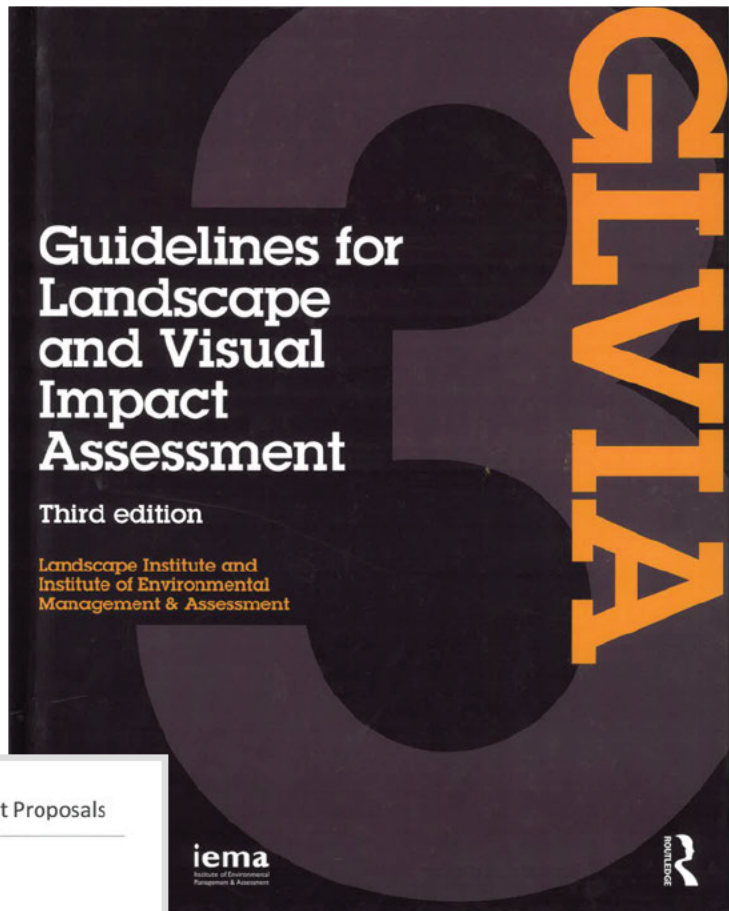
Introduction

Planning Direct has been appointed to prepare this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment on behalf of the applicant. This LVIA accompanies a full planning application for erection of 15 residential units at Canfield Moat, High Cross Lane West, Little Canfield, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1TD.

This report has been prepared to support the aforementioned planning application.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was carried out and prepared by Andrew Cann, Director of Planning Direct, in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management Assessment.

In preparing the LVIA note has also been taken of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals'.



Aim and Scope of the Assessment

The aim of this report is to assess the qualities and value of the existing landscape resources and the visual amenity of the site and its surrounding area; describing the proposed development in context of the landscape and then predicting and evaluating the landscape and visual effects arising from this proposed development.

Landscape and Visual impacts are interrelated issues, however they are considered independent. A LVIA comprises of two interrelated parts:

- **A landscape impact assessment;** which aims to determine the effects of the proposed development on the physical landscape and its potential in changing its character; and
- **A visual impact assessment;** which aims to determine potential changes in the visual context from the proposed development, including general setting and views for receptors such as local residents, walkers, vehicular traffic.

Assessment Methodology

This assessment was undertaken in accordance with the principles of good practice set out in the aforementioned guidance, produced by relevant professional organisations concerned with the production of LVIAs, in order to seek consensus and minimise subjectivity in the assessment of the existing landscape.

Baseline Study

Baseline studies for assessing landscape effects require a mix of desk study and field work to identify and record the character of the landscape and the elements, features and aesthetic and perceptual factors which contribute to it. They should deal with the value attached to the landscape, the methods used should be appropriate to the context in which the development proposal will be introduced and in line with the current guidance and terminology.¹

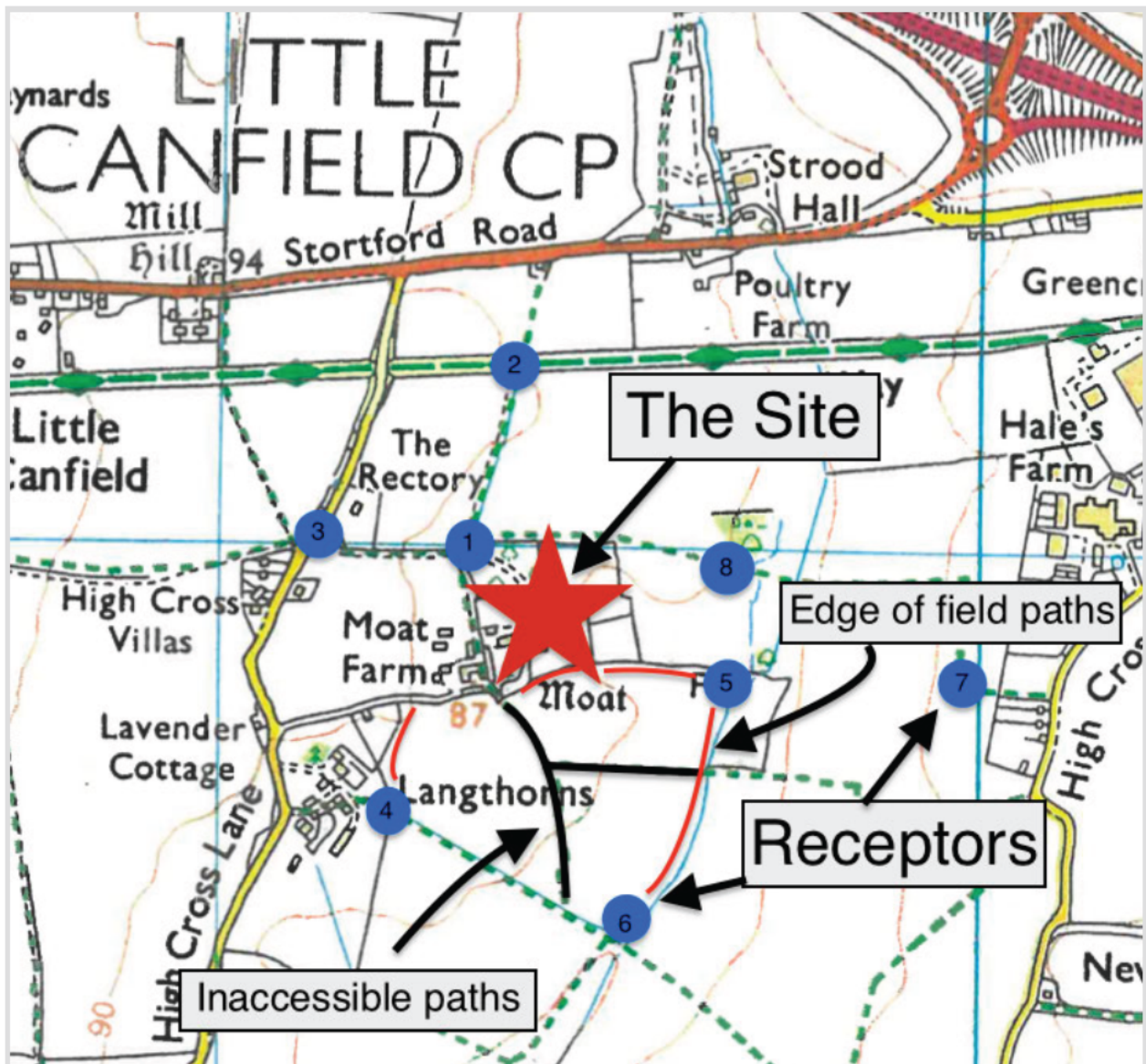
Baseline studies were undertaken to determine the significance of the development site in the wider landscape, and provide a benchmark for which any potential changes could be measured against.

The proposed site covers 3.8 hectares. (See plan overleaf). The site is relatively flat and is at a height of 86m. It is located in a gently undulating landscape with higher ground at 90-95m to the west and 90m to the east. To the south the land rises towards Great Oddyns. To the north of the site we find 'Fitch Way' a major bridleway, Stortford Road and then the A120.

In order to capture a comprehensive description of the baseline position, information was collated using a desk study. The desk study identified potential landscape resources by reference to an OS maps and the existing landscape character studies. This enabled the identification of 8 potential visual receptors all being locations that potentially overlook the site, are in close proximity to the site, are close to existing residential areas and are accessible to the public. The distances of these receptors range from 0.5km away (no. 2) to as close as the boundary (receptor no. 1).

¹ Extract from 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition' pg. 70.

Field surveys were also carried out to verify and expand upon information gathered in the desk study. These were undertaken on 13 April 2022. As part of this field assessment, a photographic survey was carried out to record representative views of the site from all 8 select receptors (See plan). These photographs were taken with a Canon EOS 100D camera using a 18-55mm Lens. All photographs were taken at 1.57m height. A number of character photographs were also taken using the same equipment and these have been used to inform the LVIA.²



² It should be noted that 2 paths crossing a field were inaccessible due to crops however it was clear that local people used the common 'edge of field' walking route (see plan).

Location and Site Description

The application site is located outside a designated settlement boundary in accordance with the existing Local Plan and is therefore within the countryside. The site comprises a residential dwelling known as Canfield Moat (the host dwelling and referred to as Unit 9 on the accompanying site plans) which is a restored rectory and approximately 3.8 hectares of curtilage which includes garden land, numerous outbuildings and a small woodland copse. The full extent of the application site is located within the red line boundary of the Site Location Plan (A1 26). In terms of topography the site is relatively level and comprises various trees and hedgerows as identified within an accompanying Tree Survey produced by Arbtech Consulting Limited.



Existing Block plan

The host dwelling is not identified as a heritage asset nationally or locally in accordance with the Historic England database or the Uttlesford Local Heritage List (April 2021), and the site is not within a designated Conservation Area.

The ground floor of the house comprises a reception hall, drawing room, dining room, study/office, kitchen/breakfast room, utility room, two cloakrooms, gymnasium, cinema room, video library, dance floor with a stage and two cellars. The first floor comprises seven double bedrooms, five bathrooms (including four en-suites).

The most prominent outbuildings include a dance studio and 'The Coach House' cottage, which provides residential accommodation with two bedrooms identified as Unit 8 on the submitted site plans. In addition there are several other outbuildings and development within the site, to include storage areas, workshops and garaging, a flood lit tennis court, swimming pool and pool house.

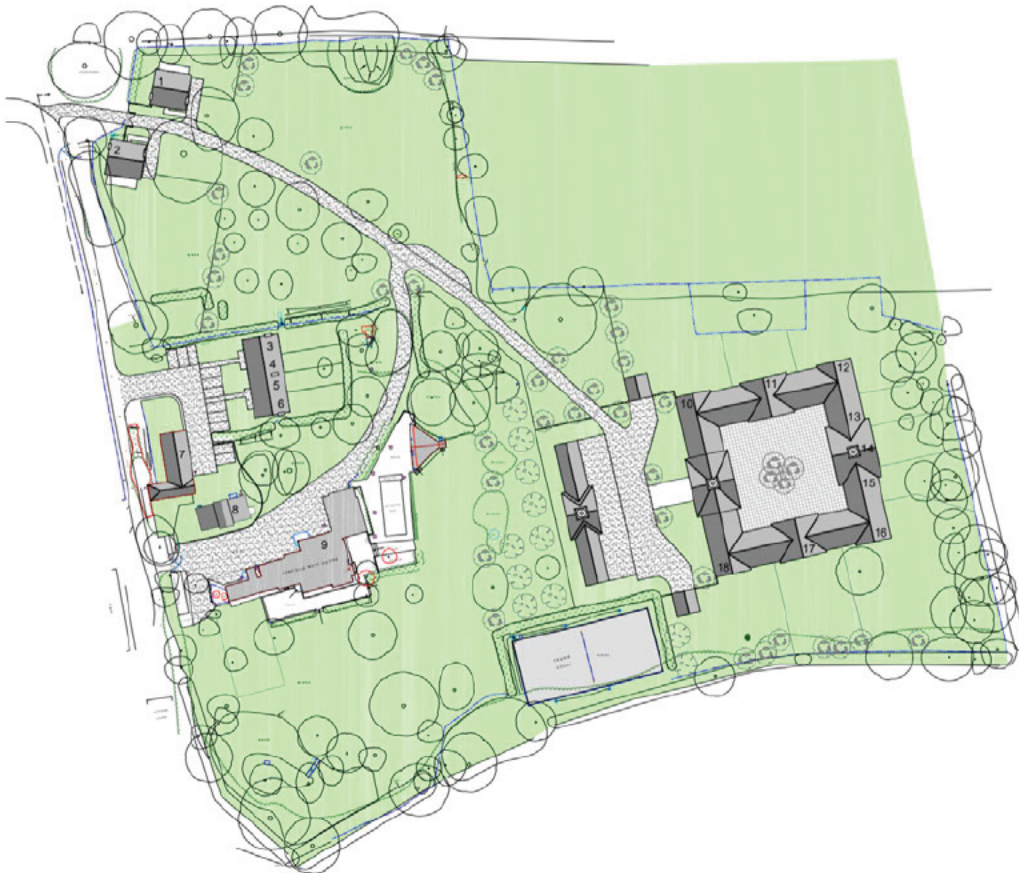
The host dwelling is served by a private access road which adjoins High Cross Lane West to the west and is lined by trees and leads to a large parking area between Canfield Moat, the dance studio and The Coach House.

Although in a rural location the site is clearly well related to local transport connections and large settlements with a wide range of services and facilities. The site is positioned within 2 miles of Great Dunmow, 6 miles from Bishops Stortford and 5 miles from Stansted Airport to the west. Furthermore the city centres of Cambridge and London are both within 30 miles of the site and easily accessible via rail, and via the M11 which is within 5 miles. The A120 is located approximately 1.5 miles to the north of the site and is within each reach. The Key Rural Settlement of Takeley and adjoining Little Canfield is located just over 1 mile from the site, and is within a 2 minute drive.

The site is not located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, nor within any other protected areas as identified within the NPPF. Furthermore the site is not positioned within the Countryside Protection Zone which surrounds Stansted Airport, within which there are strict controls on new development. In terms of topography the site is relatively level.

Proposed Development

The applicant is proposing to erect a total of 15 new dwellings on the site in accordance with the indicative Proposed Site Plan, which would deliver additional housing at a location unencumbered by site constraints such as Green Belt designation.

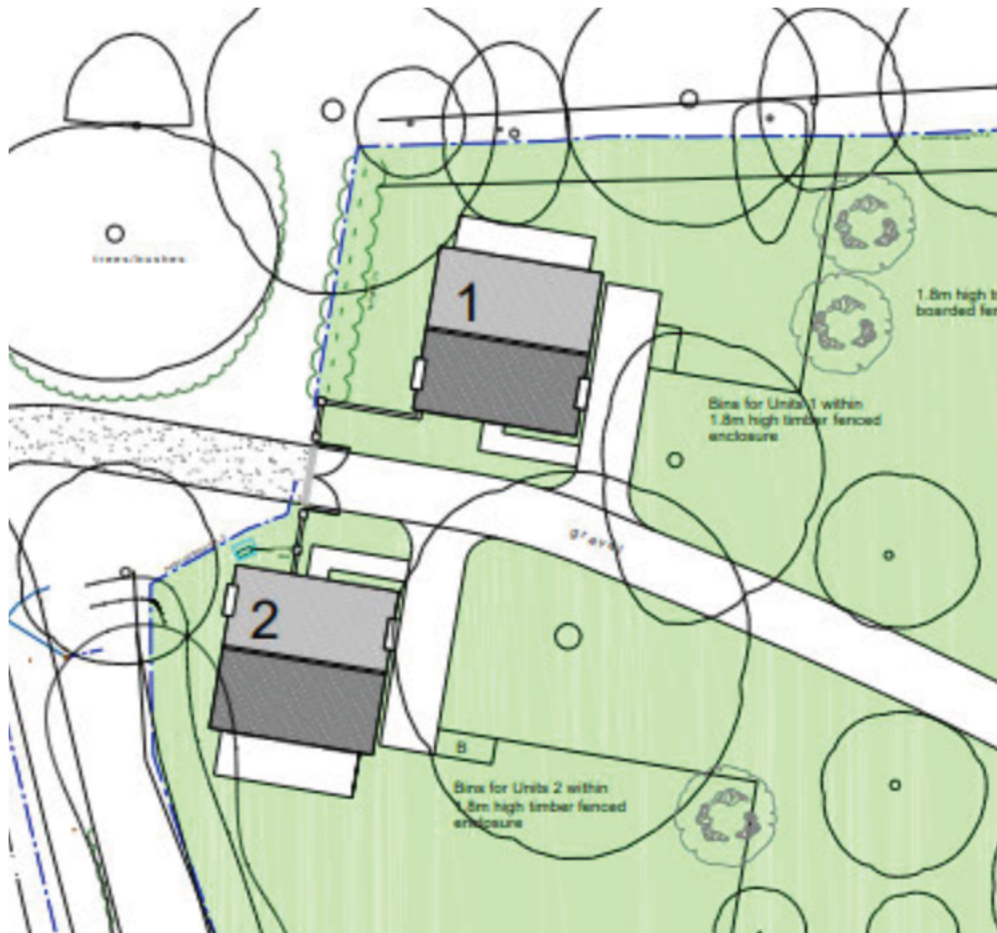


Proposed Block plan

The innovative design of the proposed development has been created in order to respond positively to the rural surroundings and in particular its location within the extensive curtilage of the main house, Canfield Moat. The proposed development has been sub-divided into four parts for ease of reference.

Part 1 - Gatehouse

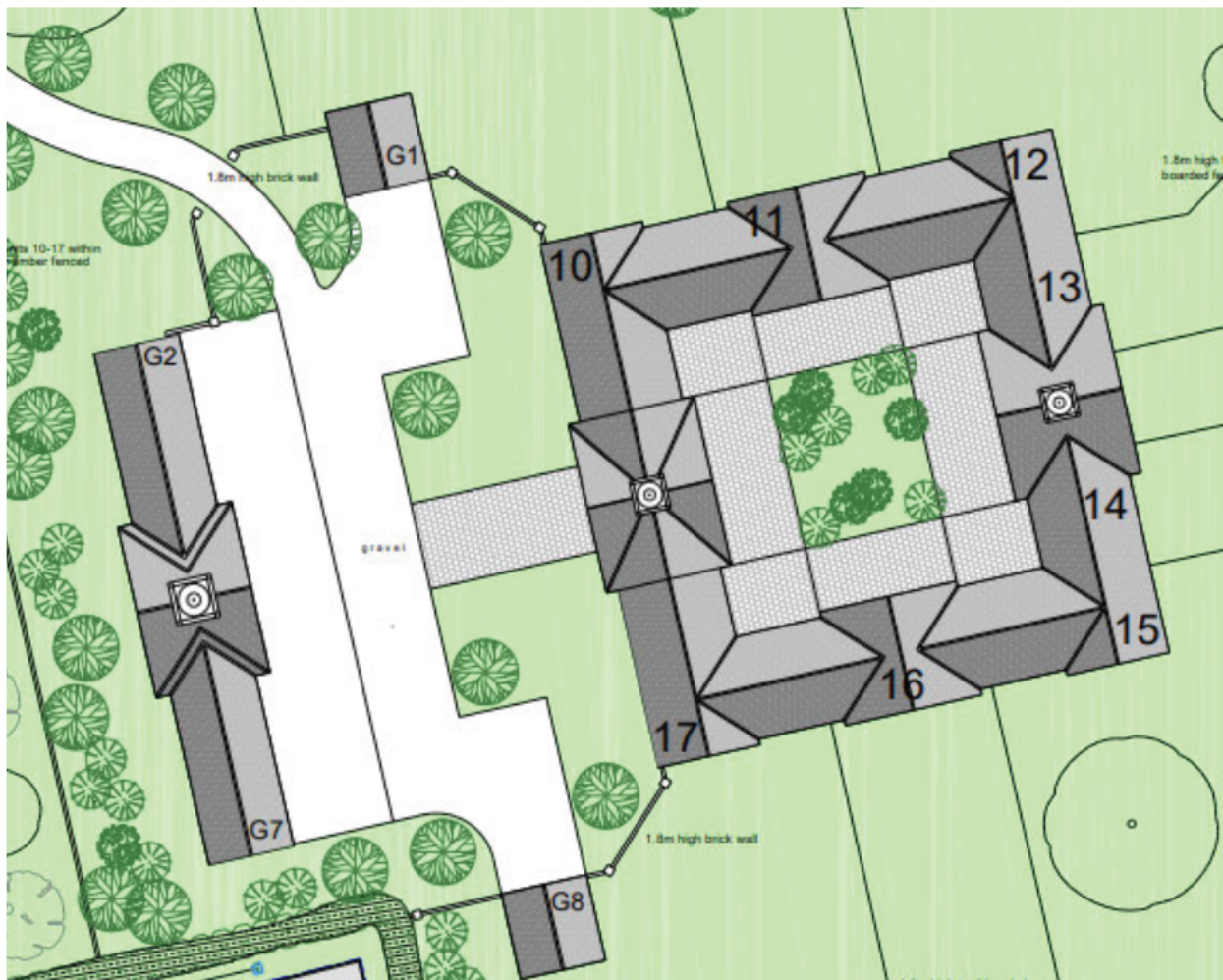
A pair of gatehouse dwellings (Units 1-2) would be constructed with one either side of the existing entrance into the site, to form a formal gated entrance to Canfield Moat House. The gated entrance is considered to be typical of historical estate developments. The relevant floor plans and elevations plans are included at Appendices 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the Planning Statement.



Proposed Gatehouse dwellings

Part 2 - Stable block/courtyard

Units 10-17 would form a stable block around a courtyard, within the central eastern section of the site to the rear of the consistent with historic country house type developments. A stable block is also considered to be typical within a large rural estate. The stable block would be served by eight garages, six of which would be adjoined within a large block and two separate detached garages. The relevant floor plans and elevations plans are included at Appendices 18 and 25 of the Planning Statement.



Proposed Stable Block

Part 3 - Worker Cottages (Secret Garden)

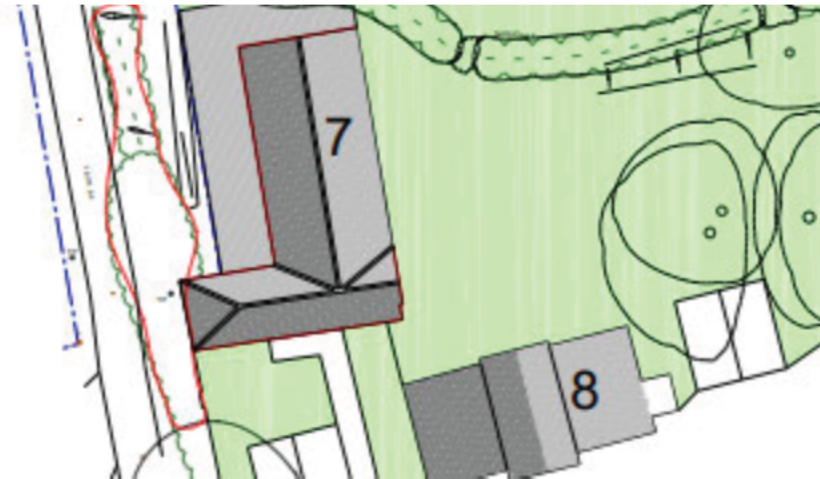
Units 3-6 would comprise a terrace of four cottage style dwellings which would be served via an internal driveway to be created within the site. The design has been crafted in such a way to create the impression that the terrace comprise four cottages for workers on the estate. A dedicated parking area would be created to serve the terrace of dwellings, and the development as a whole would form an enclosed 'secret garden' within the site. The relevant floor plans and elevations plans are included at Appendices 11 and 12 of the Planning Statement.



Proposed Workers Cottages

Part 4 - Dance Studio

It is proposed that the existing dance studio (Unit 7) will be converted to form a single storey residential dwelling in relative close proximity to the worker cottages and existing dwellings Unit 8 (The Coach House) and Unit 9 (Canfield Moat). The relevant floor plans and elevations plans are included at Appendices 13 to 17.



Proposed dance studio

Policy Justification

This section provides a summary of the planning policy that is potentially relevant to the landscape and visual issues and establishes whether, in landscape and visual impact terms, the development is justified in principle.

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 11 - Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

- a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change.

Paragraph 15 - The planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.

Paragraph 54 - Local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition.

Paragraph 59 - To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

Paragraph 77 - In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs. Local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, and consider whether

allowing some market housing on these sites would help to facilitate this.

Paragraph 78 - To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

Paragraph 79 - Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential dwelling
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
 - i. is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas
 - ii. would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

Paragraph 84 - Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by

improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Paragraph 117 - Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land.

Paragraph 170 - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services — including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans

-
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Paragraph 172 - 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. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

Paragraph 173 - Within areas defined as Heritage Coast (and that do not already fall within one of the designated areas mentioned in paragraph 172), planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

Paragraph 175 - When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely

impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Paragraph 189 - In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Local

Essex Landscape Character Assessment 2003

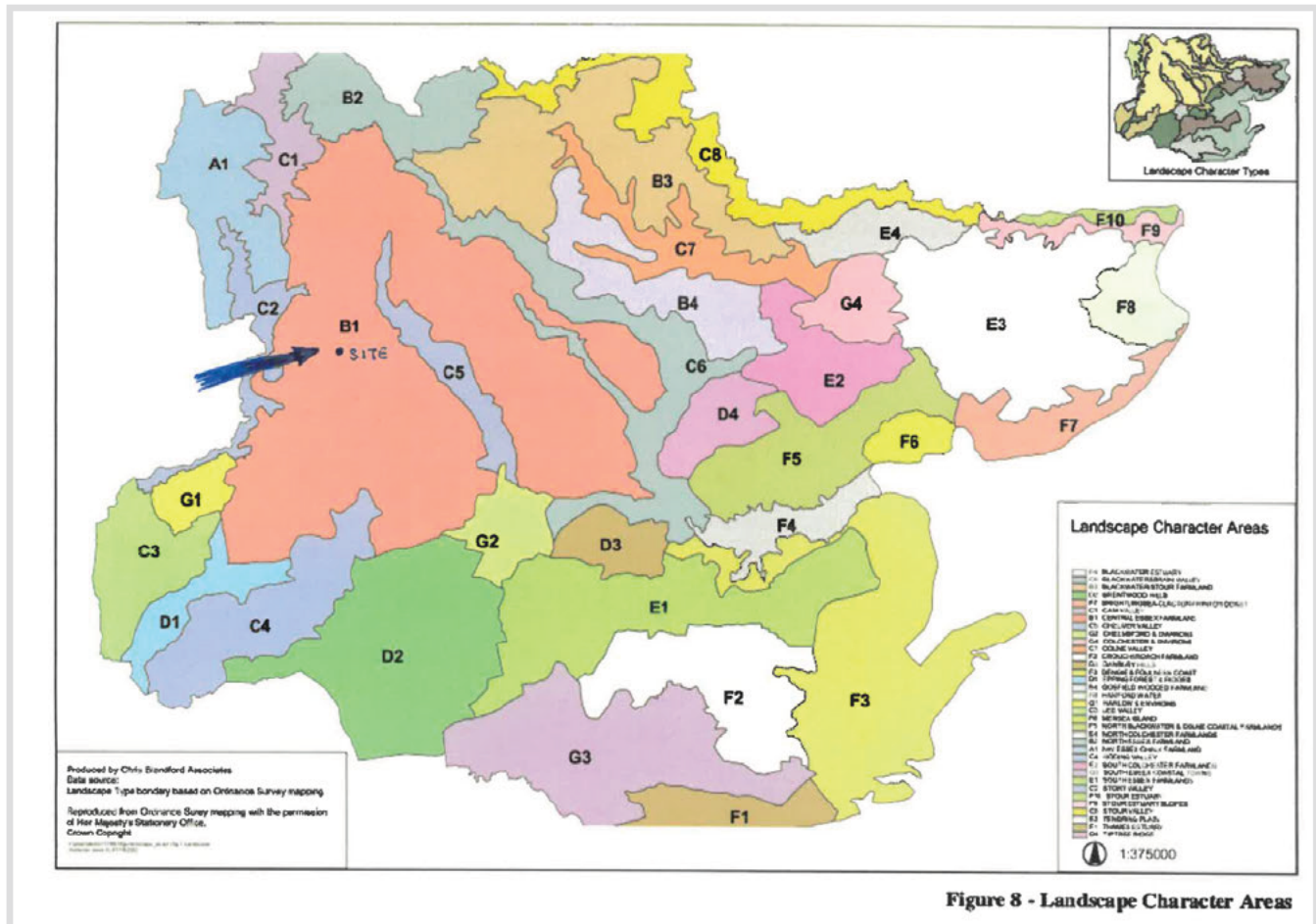


“Based on the Countryside Agency’s guidance, the Landscape Character Assessment focussed on establishing a ‘baseline’ of the existing character of the Essex landscape. The assessment involved a broad review of the landscape based on written sources, existing local assessments and an extensive survey in the field. The study identified thirty-five ‘Landscape Character Areas’ - geographical areas with a recognisable pattern of landscape characteristics, both physical and experiential, that combine to create a distinct sense of place (e.g. the Brentwood Hills). Following the identification of distinctive Landscape Character Areas, an evaluation of the relative sensitivity of these areas to change was undertaken to inform strategic planning decisions.”

The area of the site is characterised as being in B1 - Central Essex Farmlands (see

map below and photograph on preceding page)

B1 - Central Essex Farmlands



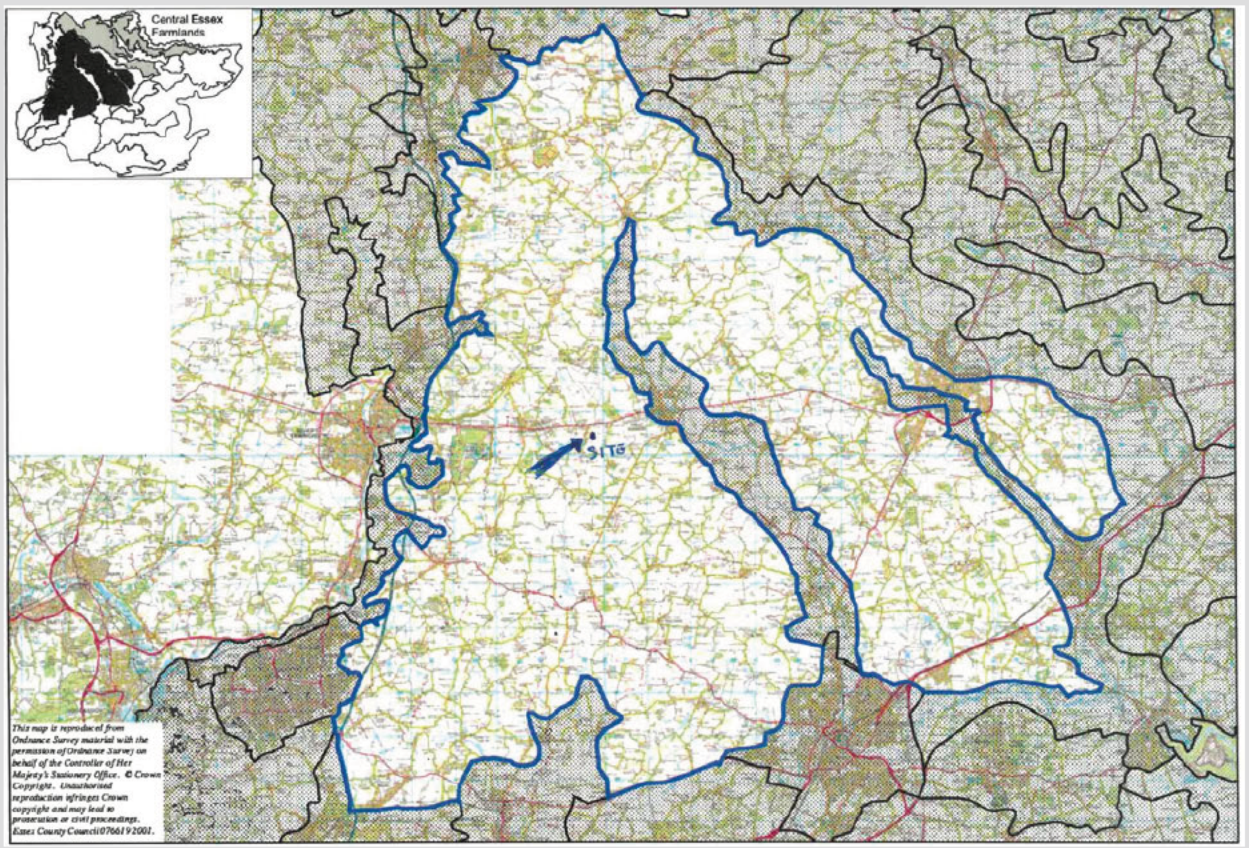
Key Characteristics

- 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.*

Overall Character

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.



Character Profile

Geology

- *Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay).*

Soils

- *Slowly permeable calcareous clay soils. Some deep well drained calcareous clay and fine loamy soils.*

Landform

- *Gently undulating plateau 30-90 m in height.*
- *Locally more rolling, where dissected by small shallow valleys of streams and brooks.*
- *Some areas to the south almost flat, e.g. around Boreham.*

Semi-natural vegetation

- *Ancient ash-maple woodland with hazel coppice, also oak-hornbeam woodland.*
- *Pockets of calcareous/neutral meadows and marsh.*
- *Alder-carr in some river/stream valleys.*

Pattern of field enclosure

- *Irregular field pattern. Predominantly medium size fields, but small fields occur around settlements. Localised areas with large fields where hedgerows have been removed.*
- *Fields bounded by thick hedgerows or solely by banks and ditches.*

Farming pattern

- *Mainly arable, small areas of pasture, associated with settlements.*

Woodland/tree cover

- *Scatter of small-medium size woodlands and small copses with irregular indented outlines.*
- *Occasional poplar tree belts and small mixed plantations of regular shape.*
- *Some areas where woodland cover is more sparse.*
- *Hatfield Forest is a large important area of ancient coppice and wood pasture with pollarded trees.*
- *Intermittent hedgerow trees of oak, ash, hornbeam. Localised areas with more frequent*

hedgerow trees, e.g. around Terling/Fairstead, and the northern Roding villages.

Settlement pattern and built form

- *Frequent hamlets (ends, greens, tyes) and farmsteads with only a few villages and towns.*
- *Rich historic architectural detail in market towns such as Thaxted, as well as in many of the smaller settlements.*
- *Typical historic vernacular of half timber, colour wash plaster, thatch and pegtile roofs, some decorative pargetting.*
- *Some villages near A12 corridor have more modern suburban development.*

Communications

- *Many small, narrow winding lanes, sometimes taking dramatic right angled turns. Variable width grass verges. Lanes are often sunken where valleys are crossed.*
- *Major A120, A130 and M11 roads cross parts of the area.*

Other landscape features

- *High density of moated farmsteads.*
- *Spire of Thaxted church is a local landmark in the north.*
- *Large castle mounds at Pleshey, Gt Canfield.*
- *A few small historic parklands, e.g. Terling Place and New Hall Boreham.*
- *London Stansted Airport - extensive flat runways and large buildings.*
- *Various small active and disused airfields e.g. North Weald, Boreham.*
- *Two locally visually prominent pylon routes cross east-west in close proximity north of Thaxted, and another route runs north-south between Braintree and Chelmsford.*
- *Sand and gravel pits near Boreham and Chigwell St James.*
- *Small irrigation reservoirs are common.*

Landscape Condition

The condition of the hedgerows and woodlands overall is moderate. In some parts many hedges have been lost, or are very fragmented. In others, such as around Terling they are well managed. Localised erosion of character occurs due to sand and gravel workings. The condition of the small settlements overall is good. However, some farmsteads have large visually intrusive modern sheds and/or conifer planting out of character.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

The landscape was subject to early enclosure and then evolved gradually.

However, significant change has occurred since the Second World War with rationalisation of field pattern and loss of hedgerows associated with agricultural intensification. This is now considered to have peaked.

Future trends for change may include increasing urban and transportation developments especially associated with the major road corridors. This may include pressure related directly or indirectly to Stansted Airport expansion and potential growth area in RPG9.

The main influence on the landscape will probably continue to be agricultural. Pressures could include larger farm buildings, irrigation reservoirs, forestry and various recreational uses near urban areas. Equally changes in the agricultural subsidy regime could bring opportunities for conservation and restoration of hedgerow pattern, and improved management of woodlands.

Uttlesford District Plan 2005

S7 The Countryside

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.

GEN1 Access

Development will only be permitted if it meets all of the following criteria:

a) Access to the main road network must be capable of carrying the traffic generated by the development safely.

-
- b) The traffic generated by the development must be capable of being accommodated on the surrounding transport network.*
 - c) The design of the site must not compromise road safety and must take account of the needs of cyclists, pedestrians, public transport users, horse riders and people whose mobility is impaired.*
 - d) It must be designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities if it is development to which the general public expect to have access.*
 - e) The development encourages movement by means other than driving a car.*

GEN2 Design

Development will not be permitted unless its design meets all the following criteria and has regard to adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

- a) It is compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings;*
- b) It safeguards important environmental features in its setting, enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impact of new buildings or structures where appropriate;*
- c) It provides an environment, which meets the reasonable needs of all potential users.*
- d) It helps to reduce the potential for crime;*
- e) It helps to minimise water and energy consumption;*
- f) It has regard to guidance on layout and design adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the development plan.*
- g) It helps to reduce waste production and encourages recycling and reuse.*
- h) It minimises the environmental impact on neighbouring properties by appropriate mitigating measures.*
- i) It would not have a materially adverse effect on the reasonable occupation and enjoyment of a residential or other sensitive property, as a result of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, overbearing impact or overshadowing.*

GEN7 Nature Conservation

Development that would have a harmful effect on wildlife or geological features will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the

feature to nature conservation. Where the site includes protected species or habitats suitable for protected species, a nature conservation survey will be required. Measures to mitigate and/or compensate for the potential impacts of development, secured by planning obligation or condition, will be required. The enhancement of biodiversity through the creation of appropriate new habitats will be sought.

ENV3 Open Spaces and Trees

The loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens through development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value.

ENV8 Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature

Development that may adversely affect these landscape elements

Hedgerows;

Linear tree belts;

Larger semi natural or ancient woodlands;

Semi-natural grasslands;

Green lanes and special verges Orchards;

Plantations;

Ponds;

Reservoirs;

River corridors.

Linear wetland features Networks or patterns of other locally important habitats will only be permitted if the following criteria apply:

a) The need for the development outweighs the need to retain the elements for their importance to wild fauna and flora;

b) Mitigation measures are provided that would compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality.

Appropriate management of these elements will be encouraged through the use of

conditions and planning obligations.

Policy Conclusions

It is concluded that there are no policies within the National Planning Policy Framework nor Local Development Framework which would impede the proposed development in respect of the landscape and visual issues. The Character Assessment should be used to establish the baseline against which potential Landscape and Visual Impacts can be assessed.

ENV3 The site itself is set to formal gardens and as such does not include any traditional open spaces but rather the grounds of a large house.

ENV8 In relation to the Moat (see below) the setting of this will be undisturbed retaining the relationship of this feature with the main house.³



³ Note the house itself 'Canfield Moat' is not listed.

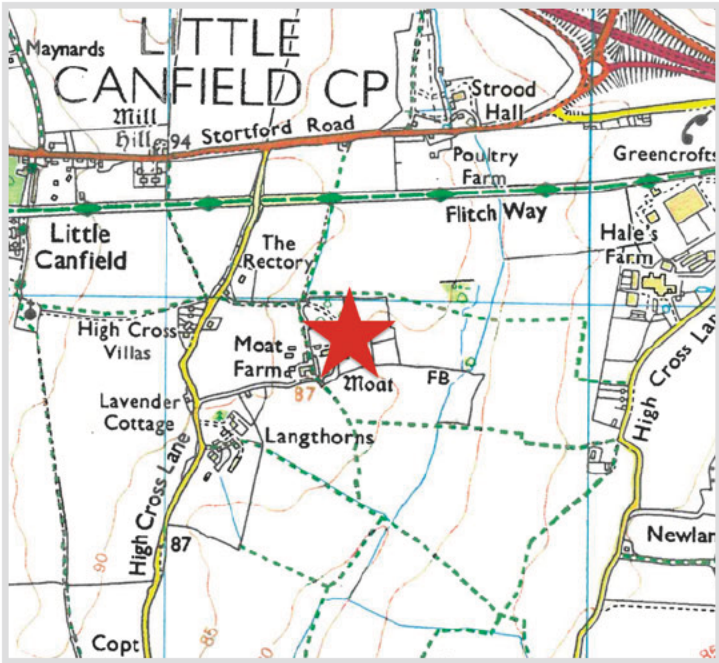
In relation to GEN2 (Design) it “*safeguards important environmental features in its setting, enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impact of new buildings or structures where appropriate*”. Valuable trees are retained, the moat retained and surrounding tree cover is retained to reduce if not eliminate views of new build into the site. This is with the exception of the two gatehouses which will be visible at close distance but have been designed to appear congruous. At longer distances the view of the gatehouses will be partially obscured and the roofs will not break the surrounding tree height - which is the same at all points and from all receptors for all development proposed at the site.

S7 The principle of development on this site in the countryside is covered in the Planning Statement.

Evaluation of existing Landscape

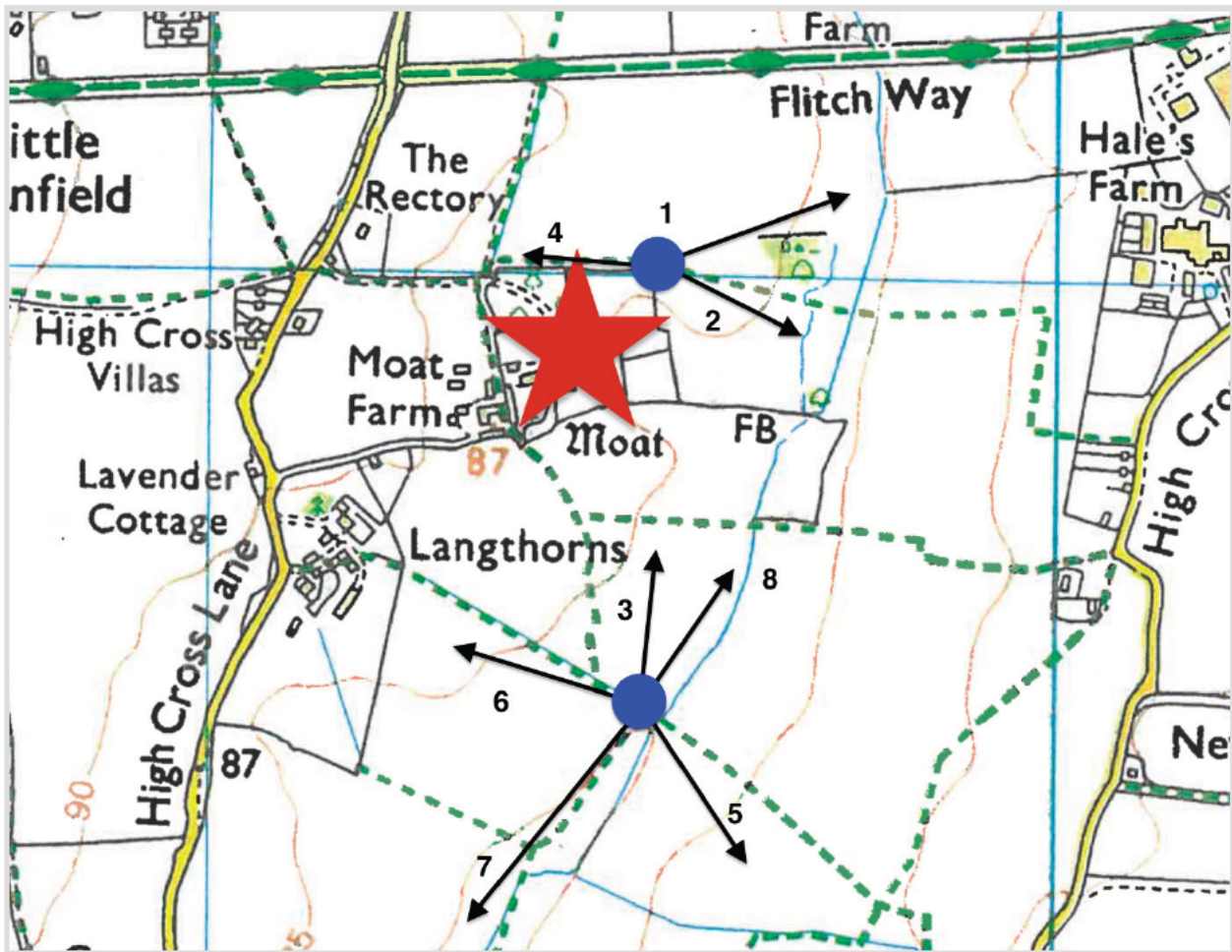
The surroundings of the site almost exactly mirrors the Landscape Character Assessment by being an extensive area of gently undulating arable farmland bisected by the Chelmer Valley. Irregular fields are enclosed by thick but intermittent hedgerows, or just marked by grassy banks and ditches. In long 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.

The immediate area around the site only differs from this general description in that whilst it is undeniably tranquil it is not secluded. The immediate area is characterised by being surrounded by pockets of development - be it the plant nursery at Langthorns, Hales Farm and Moat Farm or small numbers of houses such as High Cross Villas, The Rectory and housing along High Cross Lane.



Fitch Way to the north is raised somewhat above the landscape and has trees along either side and in effect represents a physical barrier to view from the north / area of Stortford Road.

In order to better inform this study of the nature of the countryside over and above the character assessment 8, photographs were taken from two points to the north and south of the site. These were numbered 1-8 and were taken in the directions given below.



The photographs shown over the next 4 pages show the character of the area well. Gently undulating farming countryside interspersed with copses and large wooded areas and clusters of houses and other development such as farms, the nursery and of course the site itself. The site is unusual as it contains a large group of trees that obscures to a great if not total degree the buildings on site.

It should be noted that key features of the landscape such as hedgerows, field boundaries and footpaths are somewhat degraded. The lack of key features should also be noted. This is not a landscape visited for the quality of the views but a utilitarian landscape used for activities.



View 1



View 2



View 3



View 4



View 5



View 6



View 7

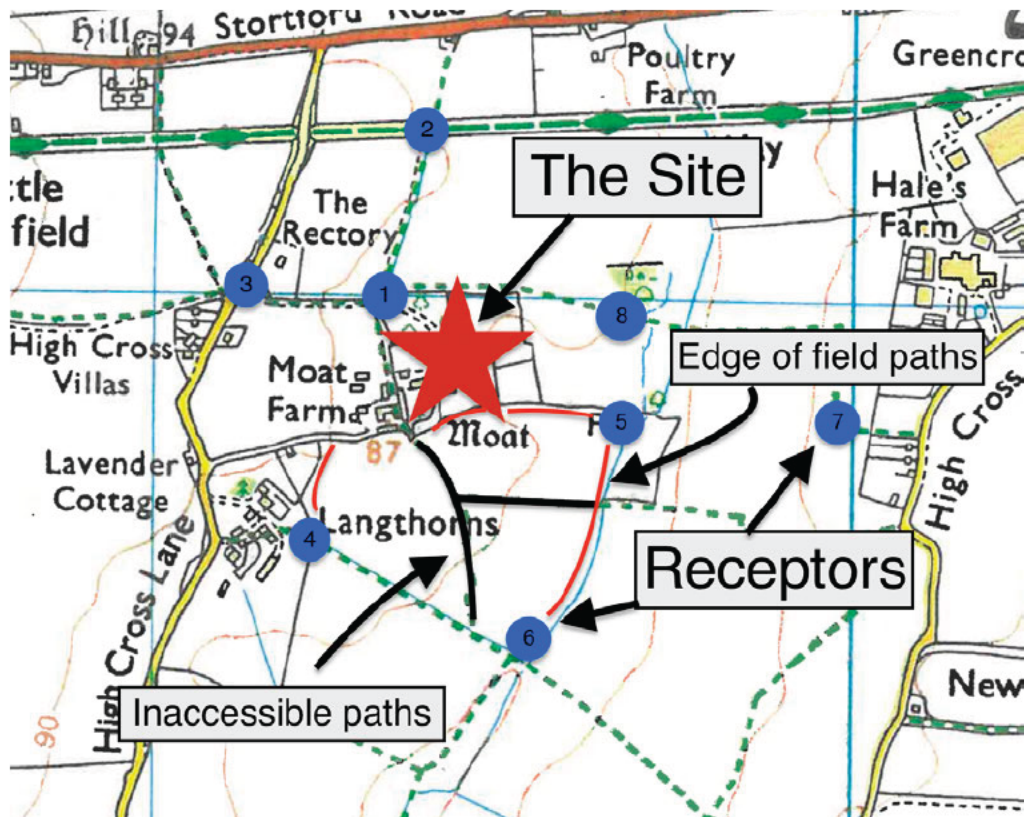


View 8

Evaluation of Landscape and Visual Impacts

Field surveys were carried out to verify and expand upon information gathered in the desk study. These were undertaken on 13 April 2022. As part of this field assessment, a photographic survey was carried out to record representative views of the site from all 8 select receptors (See plan below). These photographs were taken with a Canon EOS 100D camera using a 18-55mm Lens. All photographs were taken at 1.57m height. All photographs had the middle of the site as the focal point.⁴

Receptor Locations



Receptor Locations around site

⁴ It should be noted that 2 paths crossing a field were inaccessible due to crops however it was clear that local people used the common 'edge of field' walking route (see plan).



Receptor 1 view back to the site note formal setting of gates



Receptor 2 view back to the site note taller and thicker tree coverage to area of 'stables'



Receptor 3 view back to the site note buildings of Moat Farm lie lower than the tree line



Receptor 4 view back to the site note buildings of Moat Farm lie lower than the tree line



Receptor 5 view back to the site note main house just visible and area to right has taller and thicker trees in areas of the 'stables'



Receptor 6 view back to the site not it is difficult to see any building on the site which would be the same for the proposed dwellings



Receptor 7 view back to the site note no buildings on the site are visible and area of trees where stables would be are taller and thicker



Receptor 8 view back to the site note no buildings on the site are visible and area of trees where stables would be are taller and thicker

Landscape Impact Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity

It is considered that the landscape sensitivity is low in that the landscape is ordinary in character with some elements such as hedgerows in poor condition. The footpath network is generally poor and poorly maintained or inaccessible. There is no protected or designated status for the landscape nor heritage recognition. There is no protection in national or local policy for this type of landscape in this location. The proposed development would be in character and within the capacity of the landscape. (See appendix C).

Landscape Magnitude of Change

The magnitude of proposed change is considered negligible. The development would introduce barely discernible elements or physical change to the landscape. Key characteristics of the landscape and its integrity are unaffected. (See appendix B).

Magnitude of Landscape Change = Insignificant

See Appendix A

Visual Impact Assessment

Visual Sensitivity

It is considered that the visual sensitivity is low in that the landscape is generally of utilitarian value with users focussed on activity rather than defined features or valued 'views'.

Generally the area has views of limited value and footpaths are not well used nor maintained. (See appendix E).

Visual Magnitude of Change

The magnitude of proposed change is considered negligible. The development could be missed by a casual observer and does not alter the composition of views or introduce incongruent features. (See appendix D).

Magnitude of Visual Change = Insignificant

See Appendix A

Mitigation & Monitoring

There is no mitigation or monitoring proposed for the development.

Summary and Conclusions

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has concluded that there is insignificant effect on the Landscape or Visual amenity of the area resulting from the proposed development.

Appendix A: Landscape / Visual Change Matrix of significance

	Magnitude of Change				
		Negligible	Low	Medium	High
Sensitivity	Negligible	Insignificant	Insignificant	Insignificant	Insignificant
	Low	Insignificant	Minor	Minor	Minor to Moderate
	Medium	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Moderate to Major
	High	Insignificant	Minor to Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major

Appendix B: Magnitude Criteria - Landscape Change

Magnitude	Criteria
High	<p>Result in the permanent loss of characteristic landscape elements and features and/or their setting; Introduce uncharacteristic or dominant elements; Be at complete variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape; Substantially erode the landscape character and/or condition of the area; Undermine any designation or the nature of a vulnerable landscape; Be at complete variance with the landscape objectives and policy guidelines for the area; and Be incapable of mitigation.</p> <p>Retain the majority of existing landscape components and/or enable the full restoration and/or replacement of characteristic landscape elements and features; Introduce new landscape elements and features that through good design enables a sense of place to be fully restored; Have a strong contextual fit within the scale, landform and pattern of landscape; Substantially enhance the landscape character and/or condition of the area; Deliver substantial landscape objectives and policy guidelines for the area; and Be fully capable of mitigation.</p>



Magnitude	Criteria
Medium	<p>Result in the partial loss or alteration of characteristic landscape elements and features and/or reduce or remove their setting; Introduce uncharacteristic components alongside characteristic features or elements; Be at odds with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape; Be a noticeable change, although not necessarily uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape; Result in a deterioration of landscape objectives and policy guidelines for the area; and Be capable of some mitigation.</p> <p>Retain existing key features and/or enable partial restoration of characteristic landscape elements and features; Introduce new landscape elements and features that through good design enables sense of place to be restored; Fits well with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape; Enhance the landscape character and/or condition of the area; Deliver some landscape objectives and policy guidelines for the area; and Be capable of mitigation to deliver local benefits.</p>



Magnitude	Criteria
Low	<p>Result in temporary or minor loss or alteration of landscape elements and features and/or reduce their setting; Introduce some uncharacteristic components alongside characteristic features or elements; Not quite fit with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape; Be a discernible change, although not uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape; Result in a minor deterioration of landscape character and/or condition; Not fulfil landscape objectives and policy guidelines for the area; and Be capable of mitigation that maintains existing scenario.</p> <p>Retain existing key features and/or allow limited restoration of characteristic landscape elements and features; Introduce new landscape elements and features that through good design enables some sense of place; Respect the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape; Enables limited enhancement of the landscape character and/or condition of the area; Deliver limited landscape objectives and policy guidelines for the area; and Be capable of mitigation to ensure that the proposals would blend in well with the surrounding landscape.</p>
Negligible/None	<p>The development would introduce barely discernible elements or physical change to the landscape.</p> <p>Key characteristics of the landscape and its integrity are unaffected.</p>

Appendix C: Criteria for Sensitivity of Landscape Receptor

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	<p>Features, of good to excellent condition, which are dominant within the landscape and are fundamental in defining the distinct landscape character of an area.</p> <p>Important characteristics and features recognised as forming an intrinsic part of the landscape, giving rise to a strong unique character and sense of place.</p> <p>Distinctive individual or rare features, which are likely, but not necessarily subject to statutory protection e.g. TPO's or Listed Buildings and/or given significant protection by planning policy.</p> <p>A landscape of strong positive and distinctive character with limited capacity to accommodate the development / change without affecting the baseline situation. These are likely, but not necessarily, statutory protected landscapes e.g. AONB, National Park, Registered Parks and Gardens recognised for their quality or cultural associations.</p> <p>Generally none or few detracting or uncharacteristic features. Low potential for replacement or for mitigation.</p>

Sensitivity	Criteria
Medium	<p>Locally important and notable features, in good to average condition with some evidence of erosion, that contribute to the overall character of the area.</p> <p>Features and elements protected by local policy.</p> <p>A landscape of positive character and recognisable sense of place, with some capacity to accommodate the development / change without affecting the baseline situation. May include local landscape designations, or other designations indicating local cultural or historic value.</p> <p>Some detracting features may be present. Specific opportunities for restoration or enhancement.</p>
Low	<p>Elements of average to poor condition, that make a limited contribution to the overall character of the area.</p> <p>Features or elements that are uncharacteristic and detract from the landscape character of the area.</p> <p>A landscape of ordinary character with some evidence of erosion and limited sense of place. Capacity to accommodate the development / change without affecting the baseline situation. Designations unlikely.</p> <p>Detracting features or elements are notable. Good opportunities for restoration and enhancement.</p>



Sensitivity	Criteria
Negligible/None	<p>Elements that make a negative contribution to the overall character of the area.</p> <p>Degraded landscapes with detracting, uncharacteristic features.</p> <p>Capacity for development will provide opportunities for restoration and enhancement.</p>



Appendix D: Magnitude Criteria - Visual Change

Magnitude	Criteria
High	<p>Proposal results in the total, permanent loss of a highly valued view; Proposal introduces dominant or discordant elements altering the composition or balance of the view; Proposal introduces features not already present on / or part of the skyline.</p> <p>Proposal removes substantial visual detractors; Proposal introduces positive elements that substantially enhance the composition of the view; Development introduces an immediately apparent landmark or feature.</p>
Medium	<p>Proposal is clearly visible and recognisable but not prominent in views; Proposal introduces elements that are not necessarily already characteristic and/or are incongruous; Development may form skyline features amongst existing development and/or vegetation.</p> <p>Proposal removes limited visual detractors; Proposal is a visible but characteristic element complementing the composition of the view.</p>
Low	<p>Proposal is only a minor component or slightly uncharacteristic part of the view and does not introduce incongruous features; Proposal does not alter the overall composition of the view or dominance or balance of elements within it and therefore might be missed by a casual observer.</p> <p>Proposal removes limited visual detractors; Proposal is only a minor component of the view and compliments the composition and balance of existing elements.</p>



Magnitude	Criteria
Negligible/None	Proposal perceived as a background component in view or is subservient to other elements within it. The development would barely be discernible.



Appendix E: Criteria for Sensitivity of Visual Receptor

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	<p>Recognised or important views, including those identified within and protected by policy. Visual amenity assessed as good to excellent, an area of high scenic value. These views may include tourist destinations and those marked on maps.</p> <p>Designed views particularly from within and to historic landscapes/ heritage assets.</p> <p>Observers whose attention or interest may be focussed on the landscape to include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Residential properties with views from rooms occupied during daylight / waking hours (predominantly ground floor). ○ Users of rights of way and recreation trails. ○ Users of land with public access including Open Access.



Sensitivity	Criteria
Medium	<p>Views which are locally recognised including those protected by local policy such as visually important open space or special landscape area. Visual amenity assessed as average to good. These views may include local destinations and well used footpath routes.</p> <p>Views to or from locally important heritage assets.</p> <p>Views of the landscape are part of, but not the sole purpose of activity to include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Residential properties with views from rooms unoccupied during daylight / waking hours (predominantly first floor rooms)○ Those playing or spectating at outdoor sports or undertaking formal outdoor recreation.○ Users of local roads where there are clear / open views across the landscape and low levels of traffic, generally travelling at a low speed.





Sensitivity	Criteria
Low	<p>Views which are not recognised or have limited value, such as footpaths which are not well used. Areas of average to low visual amenity.</p> <p>Detracting features may be clearly apparent.</p> <p>Attention is focussed upon the activity and not the wider landscape to include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Receptors engaged in sports or○ Users of main roads travelling at speed, or local roads where the focus is on the road ahead owing to level of traffic and/or the composition of views.○ Places of work/study.
Negligible/None	<p>Attention is not focussed upon the landscape at all.</p> <p>Within urban areas where the landscape is not a feature of the view.</p>

