

Land at Chelmsford Road, Hartford End, CM3 1JY

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

September 2023



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Plumb Associates Ltd was commissioned by Stockplace Investments Ltd to undertake a landscape and visual impact appraisal (LVIA) of land off Chelmsford Road, Hartford End to form part of an outline application to construct up to 50 dwellings.
- 1.2 The purpose of the LVIA is to identify potentially adverse landscape or visual effects caused by the development proposals and consider how these can be avoided, reduced or mitigated.
- 1.3 Plumb Associates Ltd is a Landscape Institute Registered Practice

2 Methodology

- 2.1 The methodology for this LVIA follows the principles set out in “*Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition*”, published by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment (2013) to ensure that it accords to best practice. Details of the assessment methodology are set out in Appendix 1; however a summary is provided below.
- 2.2 The Study Area (Appendix 2) was determined through a desktop mapping review to identify the extent of visibility into the site. This is determined by topography, and the presence of intervening vegetation and existing development. Based on the results, a study area of 1km was considered appropriate for the location and scale of development. The site survey confirmed that the study area was appropriate.
- 2.3 A site survey was undertaken on 29th August 2023 by Steve Plumb MCIEEM CEnv CMLI, a chartered landscape architect with over 30 years professional experience. The purposed of the site survey was confirm the extent of the study area was appropriate and to assess the potential effects on the proposal from representative viewpoints.

Assumptions and limitations

- 2.4 The LVIA is based on the following assumptions:
 - The only existing vegetation to be removed would be for the creation of the new access.
 - The proposed built form would broadly accord with the block plan (ref XXX) with development being a maximum of 2.5 storeys in height.
- 2.5 The viewpoint photography and fieldwork was undertaken from within the site and from public highways and public rights of way. Assumptions on the effects from private land including residential receptors have been made where appropriate.

Baseline description

- 2.5 The first step in the LVIA process is to describe the baseline landscape and visual condition within the Study area. This is based on published documents and site assessment and includes any landscape changes that may occur beyond the proposed development.

Identifying receptors

- 2.6 The baseline information and details of the proposed development are used to:
- Identify the components of the landscape that could be affected by the proposed scheme – landscape receptors
 - Identify the extent of possible visibility and those people who may be affected by the proposed scheme – visual receptors
 - Select representative viewpoints to demonstrate the extent of visibility of the proposed scheme and its relationship with the surrounding landscape.
- 2.7 Potential landscape receptors include:
- Physical influences on the constituent elements of the landscape influenced by its underlying geology, topography and hydrology.
 - Vegetation cover
 - Human influences associated with land use and management, buildings and their setting
 - Aesthetic and perceptual qualities of the landscape resulting from its scale, complexity and tranquillity.
- 2.8 Visual receptors are people that may be likely to experience a change in their existing view, either positive or negative, during construction and/or operation of the proposed scheme.
- 2.9 Viewpoints are used to demonstrate the relative visibility of the site and the proposed development on surrounding landscape features and visual receptors. The viewpoints are selected to be representative of range of effects that could arise for the proposed development from near, middle and long-distance locations. The viewpoints are all from public locations although comments will be made of the effects from private viewpoints.

Mitigation

- 2.10 The results of the appraisal are used to determine mitigation measures to prevent/avoid, reduce or compensate for adverse effects on the landscape arising from the proposed scheme.

- 2.11 In the first instance the results of the appraisal are used to inform the scheme design process to try to avoid or minimise any potential adverse effects. Where this cannot be achieved secondary measures such as new planting can be used to lessen any effects.

Proposed development

- 2.12 The proposal is an outline application for up to 50 dwellings and associated landscape and the creation of a new access onto Chelmsford Road. The buildings will be up to 2.5 storeys in height. A new vehicular access will be created off Chelmsford Road. An open space with an attenuation basin will be provided on the southern part of the site.

3 Baseline description

- 3.1 The site is within the hamlet of Hartford End within the parish of Felstead. There are residential properties to the north which front onto Chelmsford Road. To the south is a new residential development that has been constructed on the site of the former Ridleys Brewery. The surrounding areas is predominately in arable farm production although there is a large area of mown amenity grass which forms part of a residential property to the west. Image 1 shows the site (outlined in red) in context.



Image 1 – The site in context

- 3.2 The site is within the Chelmer river valley and there is a gently rolling topography. The site slopes gently from a high point in the north-east of approximately 49m AOD to 43m AOD in the south
- 3.3 The site is approximately 2.4 hectares and comprises a field in arable production. There is an established hedge on the boundary with Chelmsford Road and sections of hedging comprising native and ornamental species on the northern boundary. The western boundary has no hedge and only a single Field Maple tree. A new hedge has been planted beyond the southern boundary as part the Ridley Green development.
- 3.4 There are no public rights of way within the site. The closest is a bridleway to the south of the River Chelmer running west from Chelmsford Road.
- 3.5 The site is not within a Conservation Area. There are no Listed Buildings within the site. Keepers Cottage is a 17th Century or earlier cottage which is grade II listed and

approximately 125m north of the northernmost boundary of the site. There is a 19th Century suction pump located north-east of the site on the eastern side of Chelmsford Road.

4 Planning Policy Context

Overview

- 4.1 This section of the report summarises the landscape and visual policies relevant to the Site and proposed development.

National Policy

- 4.2 National policies on landscape and visual matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹, last updated July 2021.
- 4.3 Section 12 of the NPPF sets out national policy in relation to the design of new development. Paragraph 130 lists several criteria in respect of the design of new development. The criteria explains that development should be *“...visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping...”* And *“...sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)...”*.
- 4.4 Section 15 of the NPPF sets out national policy on conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 174 sets out various criteria which afford protection to the natural and local environment including *“protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...”* and *“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 trees and woodland”*.

Local Planning Policy

- 4.5 Uttlesford Local Plan was adopted in 2005 with most policies being saved in 2007. Saved policies are relevant to landscape character include:

Policy GEN2- Design: ‘Development will not be permitted unless its design meets all the following criteria’ and supplementary guidance (only criteria relating to heritage and character are listed). “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.”

ENV3- Open Space 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.” This is an important policy in relation to the greens which are common in the area.

Policy ENV6 – Change Of Use of Agricultural Land to Domestic Garden:
“Change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden will be permitted if the

proposal, particularly its scale, does not result in a material change in the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside...”

- 4.6 The draft Local Plan 2019 was withdrawn by councillors in 2020. Subsequently work has been progressing on producing a new Local Plan by 2024.
- 4.7 The Landscape Character Assessment for Uttleford, Braintree, Chelmsford, Maldon and Brentwood was produced by Chris Blandford Associates and published in 2006. This is reviewed in Section 5 below.
- 4.8 As part of the evidence base for the 2019 Local Plan Landscape and Visual Appraisals were commissioned to assess potential development sites within the District; however none assessed the area around Hartford End.

Felsted Neighbourhood Plan 2020

- 4.9 The Felsted Neighbourhood Plan provides the following commentary relating to landscape character:

About Integrity and Character

The community is vocal and determined in expressing its concern that ‘excessive development’ of market housing is harming the character and heritage of the village, the constituent Greens and hamlets and the rural nature of the Parish. This has been raised consistently as a key concern throughout our consultation.

...

Similarly, the individual charm of the constituent Greens and hamlets is also seen to be threatened by coalescence. Avoiding coalescence does not mean that the Plan rejects all development in a Green or hamlet, but it does require the Plan to place restrictions on developments that threaten the individual integrity of a settlement in order to minimise the risk of coalescence between settlements within the Parish.

- 4.10 To inform the Plan, Felsted Parish Council commissioned AECOM to undertake a detailed heritage and character appraisal of the Neighbourhood Area. The appraisal resulted in the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment (FHCA). The Plan stated ‘development proposals should reflect the FHCA report’. The development site is within the Southern River Valleys Character Area and is reviewed in 5.3 below.

5 Summary of relevant published landscape character assessments

National Character Area

- 5.1 The site falls wholly within NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands. This provides a very broad-brush assessment of a wide geographical area. This assessment therefore focuses on the more detailed local assessments.

Local Landscape Character of Uttlesford District – Chris Blandford Associates 2006

- 5.2 The site lies wholly within A6 Upper Chelmer River Valley which extends into the City of Chelmsford. The assessment relevant to the site and surrounding area is summarised below:

Key characteristics

- Narrow valley, with a restricted valley floor.
- Small meandering river channel on the left side of the valley close to the rising ground of the valley side.
- Dense riverside trees.
- Arable valley sides with a fairly open character.
- Small linear settlements occupy the upper valley sides or straggle down to a few bridging points.
- Historic watermills and Second World War pillboxes are distinctive features.
- Mostly tranquil away from Great Dunmow, Chelmsford and the A120.

Overall Character

The River Chelmer and its valley stretches from the southern edge of the historic town of Thaxted with its tall church spire and windmill, southwards to the point at which the river meets the urban edge of Chelmsford. It is a narrow valley within the surrounding gently undulating boulder clay plateau. There are several small tributary streams that form valley sides such as the Stebbing Brook that joins the River Chelmer north of Felsted. The gently undulating valley floor has an enclosed character and restricted views often framed by the many riverside and hedgerow trees, a string of small wet woodlands and the sloping valley sides. The undulating valley sides which are steep in places, have a more open character with low thick but fragmented hedgerows, scattered hedgerow trees and only occasional woods separating the large arable fields that line the valley sides meeting at the river. The fields to the east of the River Chelmer tend to be larger and more regular in shape. Those to west of the river tend to be smaller pastoral fields or areas of rough pasture or wet meadow in the small floodplain with larger arable fields dominating the valley sides. As the River Chelmer approaches Chelmsford it becomes more sinuous and meanders further

from the east valley side. The majority of the settlements excluding Great Dunmow are situated high on the valley sides with very limited modern development. There are also a few small narrow lanes that cross the river before joining the road on the opposite valley side. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of local vernacular buildings with timber-frames, bright colour washed walls and thatched roofs. There is an overall sense of tranquillity within the river valley, with a comprehensive network of public rights of way and narrow lanes winding through the landscape. The river valley permeates Chelmsford introducing an important green corridor of 'natural' character into the urban fabric of the town.

Visual Characteristics

- Generally open views from the valley sides into the gently meandering valley floodplain, which are framed in places by small patches of woodland.
- Enclosed and framed views along the valley corridor.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by extensive enclosed meadow pastures along the river valley floodplains and pre-18th century generally irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older. Whilst much 20th century development has occurred, particularly in and around Little Waltham, the original medieval pattern of dispersed settlements and scattered farmsteads largely survives, with isolated farms, moated sites, and small hamlets strung out along linear greens.

None of the historic landscape features listed related to the development site.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture within the valley of the River Chelmer. The area contains 23 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Nine CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Eseley Wood, Home Wood, Bush Wood, Hoglands Wood/Frederick's Spring, Markshill Wood, Clobbs Wood.
- Three CWSs of woodland habitats to the south.
- Fourteen CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitat including Flitch Way and Felsted Fen.
- Twelve CWSs with species-rich hedgerows and copses; and along the River Chelmer and its tributaries including Stebbing Brook.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the River Chelmer and its tributaries from fertilizer and pesticide run-off from agricultural valley slopes and floor.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential residential expansion of villages onto valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agriculture intensification.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include dense riverside trees and a string of small wet woodland on the sloping valley sides, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive, with open and framed cross valley views and long views along the river corridor potentially affected by new tall or non-screened new development. Views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. Historic integrity is strong, with a largely surviving pattern of medieval dispersed settlements, isolated farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along linear greens, small historic parklands and a number of churches and local vernacular buildings with timber-frames, bright colour-washed walls and thatched roofs. Several important wildlife habitats are scattered throughout the area (including 23 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, species-rich hedgerows and copses). Overall this character area has relatively 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.

Enhance - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon valley sides.
- Conserve and enhance cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.

- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Protect and enhance the role of the river valley in providing a network of informal open space and nature conservation sites.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the green 'natural' character of the river valley through appropriate management of wildlife habitats.

Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment - 2017

- 5.3 The development site lies wholly with LCA5: Southern River Valleys as identified in the FHCA. The relevant elements are summarized below.

The key characteristics of LCA 5: Southern River Valleys are as follows:

- The gently sloping valleys are formed by the River Chelmer in the west and the River Ter in the east. The Ter supports a series of fishponds and mill ponds, which are relics of an industrial past;
- Development is sparse throughout the area, and is limited to residential properties and farmsteads;
- The base of the river valleys are wide and occupied by open pasture; and
- The minor roads which cross the area are flanked by narrow grass verges with well-kept hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

Green space and public realm

There is no public green space within the LCA, although the public right of way network provides access into open countryside.

Views

In general, views are limited by roadside vegetation; however, gaps in vegetation and footpaths across open land afford occasional views. In such locations, topographical variation resulting from the two rivers creates opportunities for a range of views across the area.

Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the pattern and structure of the landscape and the local vernacular.

- Isolated trees are a characteristic feature, providing structure to the landscape;
- A general lack of settlement, industry and infrastructure leads to relatively high degree of tranquillity;
- Cream coloured rendered walls are common on houses in the area, which creates a sense of unity;
- The historically open character of the LCA has been well preserved;
- The winding lanes with hedgerow boundaries prevent longer views, and limits the impact of views of modern development.

Issues to be addressed

The following has been identified and could be addressed through new development or active management.

- The loss of hedgerow and tree field boundaries results in larger fields and the loss of landscape features.

Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the tranquillity of the area which principally results from the lack of development, particularly on the valley floor

- The rural character of country lanes; and
- The landscape setting of Leez Priory and the valleys of the River Chelmer and River Ter, and views from public rights of way.

6 Landscape Appraisal

Landscape assets within the site

- 6.1 The site consists of a single arable field with hedges on the eastern boundary and part of the northern boundary. There is no hedgerow on the western boundary and the hedge bounding Ridley Green is newly planted and still establishing. There is no public access to the field. The landscape assets are considered to be of medium landscape value.
- 6.2 The proposal would result in the loss of the arable field and a small section of the eastern boundary hedge. The proposal would not impact any good quality trees or hedges and would provide an opportunity to plant new good quality specimens, which is identified as an issue to address in the local landscape character assessments. The landscape assets are assessed to be of medium susceptibility.
- 6.3 The proposal would introduce up to 50 new houses and open space into the site. There would be the loss of a short section of hedge but opportunities for new hedge tree planting.
- 6.4 The development would materially alter the physical characteristics of the site however the site does not contain landscape features of high value. It is considered that the magnitude of change would be medium adverse.

Effects on local landscape

- 6.5 The site falls within the Upper Chelmer Valley LCA as identified in Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment 2006 and the Southern River Valleys LCA5 as identified in the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment 2017. The relevant characteristics are summarised in Section 5. These character areas are assessed as being in good condition and contain distinctive features, most of which do not directly relate to the site.
- 6.6 The development site is situated on the side of the Chelmer Valley which has potential to be sensitive to change; however it lies between two areas of existing residential development and therefore would be viewed as part of the existing settlement and would not result in an expansion of the hamlet beyond its current boundaries.
- 6.7 It is considered that the scale of the proposed development would not be incongruous to the LCA characteristics. As noted in both local LCA, views within the valleys are restricted by topography and vegetation. The visual assessment confirmed that to be the case for this site (see Section 8). Features such as the boundary

hedgerows would be retained and enhanced and the extent of that any changes would be experienced would be very localised.

- 6.8 The proposed development would result in the loss of a single arable field but would allow boundary planting to be replaced. The proposed development would immediately abut Ridley Green, a recently constructed development of a similar scale. It is considered therefore that it would not be significantly out of character. The magnitude of change on the LCAs is assessed as being low with the nature of change being adverse.

7 Visual baseline

- 7.1 The visual baseline describes the existing visual conditions within the Study Area and intervisibility between the Site and the surrounding area. This is informed by the desktop assessment and site survey. The site survey visit was undertaken on 29th August 2023 by Steve Plumb CMLI to survey the site and surrounding area to assess the potential for the scheme to affect visual amenity from representative viewpoints.
- 7.2 The site is close to the bottom of the Chelmer Valley within 100m of the watercourse. The surrounding area has a pronounced rolling topography.
- 7.3 The site bounds Chelmsford Road. Littlely Park Lane joins the road just to the south of the site. There are limited numbers of public rights of way within the vicinity of the site. The two main routes were the bridleway and public footpath running south and west of the site and a public footpath running north from Littlely Park Lane (See the Definitive Rights of Way Map extract in Appendix 3). These were assessed to determine the potential views from them.

8 Visual appraisal

- 8.1 The visual receptors that are considered potentially sensitive to the proposed scheme area:
- Residents of Chelmsford Road
 - Residents of Ridley Green
 - Users of Chelmsford Road
 - Users of Littlely Park Lane
 - Users of Public Bridleway Great Waltham 49
 - Users of Public Footpath Great Waltham 48
 - Users of Public Footpath Great Waltham 37
- 8.2 The likely effects of the proposal have been assessed for each of these viewpoints without mitigation. Section 9 summarises the mitigation that can be adopted which would lessen any adverse effects that might be experienced.

Residents of Chelmsford Road

- 8.3 The majority of the residential properties north of the site face onto Chelmsford Road (Photo 6). Intervening buildings and vegetation mean that there would be negligible views over the site. There are two properties, The Brewer's House and Hillside, that back onto the site. There are trees and hedges on the boundary with The Brewer's House but the rear boundary of Hillside comprises a post and rail fence (Photos 1 & 2).

- 8.4 The residents of The Brewer's House would have views filtered in part by the existing vegetation however without mitigation the effects on residents of Hillside in particular would be high with the nature being adverse.

Residents of Ridley Green

- 8.5 Ridley Green is a gated community with no public access. There is a row of new houses facing onto an amenity space which abuts the southern boundary of the site (Photo 3). The closest properties at the western end of the site are side on to the proposed development (Photo 4). There are few visual detractors. The value of the view experienced therefore is assessed to be moderate to high.
- 8.6 The residents of Ridley Green facing the development site would see the new housing over the amenity green. These would be filtered a little by the developing boundary hedge and trees on the green. Without mitigation the magnitude of change on this visual receptor would be medium to high with the nature of the change being adverse.

Users of Chelmsford Road

- 8.7 Chelmsford Road contains a mix of existing residential development to the north (Photo 6) and south of the site (Photo 5) with farmland to the east and beyond the developed area. There are no pavements on the section of Chelmsford Road within the study area and therefore it is concluded that users would be primarily in vehicles with few using the route for recreation (Photo 7). The users would experience a mix of farmland and residential uses. It is considered that the susceptibility to change would be low for these users. Given its characteristics and susceptibility to change this receptor is assessed as having a low sensitivity.
- 8.8 The users of Chelmsford Road would only experience brief views of the site filtered by boundary vegetation and existing residential development. The magnitude of change on this visual receptor is judged to be low with the nature of the change being adverse.

Users of Littley Park Lane

- 8.9 Littley Park Lane is a narrow lane enclosed by post and rail fencing which gently rises as it runs east from Chelmsford Road (Photo 8). There is a small cluster of houses at the junction however it then continues through small paddocks. It is principally used by vehicles with only limited value for recreational use due to its narrowness and limited connections. It is considered that susceptibility to change would be low for recreational use these users. The route runs through attractive countryside albeit with existing residential development visible therefore it is assessed as having moderate sensitivity.

- 8.10 Views for users travelling west towards the site would be largely filtered by the surrounding landforms, vegetation and existing residential properties. The magnitude of change on this visual receptor is judged to be low with the nature of the change being adverse.

Users of Public Bridleway Great Waltham 49

- 8.11 The bridleway lies to the south of the River Chelmer and runs west from Chelmsford Road. The route follows the river running through grassland maintained as lawns with scattered parkland trees before continuing southwest away from the river when it reaches Hartford End Spring.
- 8.12 The landscape setting contributes to the views of the users of the PRoW who will experience an area of scenic quality within a rural location. This receptor is therefore considered to be of high susceptibility to change. Based on the value and susceptibility to change this receptor is considered to be of high sensitivity.
- 8.13 Views northwards towards the development site are screened by the Ridley Green development and its associated landscaping (Photos 9 & 10). The historic brewery building is of three storeys and therefore taller than the proposed development. While the development site rises to the north any views of buildings would be over existing built form. It is judged that the effects on users of the bridleway will be low while the nature of the change would be adverse.

Users of Public Footpath Great Waltham 48

- 8.14 The public footpath leaves Bridleway 49 south of Mill House at Hartford End Spring and follows the River Chelmer in a broadly western direction. Beyond the woodland it passes through arable farmland.
- 8.15 The landscape setting contributes to the views of the users of the PRoW who will experience an area of scenic quality within a rural location. This receptor is therefore considered to be of high susceptibility to change. Based on the value and susceptibility to change this receptor is considered to be of high sensitivity.
- 8.16 Views towards the development site are screened by an established tree belt on the east side of the river (Photo 11). Beyond the trees are buildings associated with Mill House. It is judged that the effects on users of the public footpath would be negligible due to the lack of views.

Users of Public Footpath Great Waltham 37

- 8.17 The public footpath runs northeast from Littley Park Lane to the edge of Littley Park before turning northwest towards Priors Green. The first section climbs a relatively

steep slope. The southern section runs through a small paddock then beyond a boundary hedge it continues through arable farmland.

- 8.18 The landscape setting contributes to the views of the users of the PRoW who will experience an area of scenic quality within a rural location. This receptor is therefore considered to be of high susceptibility to change. Based on the value and susceptibility to change this receptor is considered to be of high sensitivity.
- 8.19 Views west towards the development varied at different points along the route. Views from the northern section of the path were partly screened by the intervening landform and vegetation although occasional views over the development site were glimpsed in the context of Ridley Green and Hillside (Photos 12 & 13). Lower down the slope the views of the development site were filtered by existing development at Ridley Green and the junction with Littley Park Lane and intervening vegetation (Photo 8). Overall the effects were assessed as being low to moderate adverse.

9 Mitigation

- 9.1 The purpose of mitigation is to prevent or avoid, reduce and/or remedy adverse effects of a scheme on the environment and those experiencing them.
- 9.2 The proposal will provide new hedges on the boundaries and include tree planting as part of the wider landscape strategy. As these establish they will help to mitigate the effects of residents in Hillside and Ridley Green in particular.
- 9.3 The new open space would be located close to the southern boundary where it can tie into open space provided in Ridley Green. This will create a larger buffer between the existing and new dwellings as well as providing a play area and opportunities for biodiversity enhancements.
- 9.4 The SUDS will require the creation of two attenuation basins within the open space area. The western basin would provide additional separation between the dwelling on the boundary of Ridley Green and new houses provided as part of the proposal. Views can be further filtered by appropriate tree and shrub planting. These features would also provide biodiversity enhancements.
- 9.5 The sensitive choice of materials such as for boundary treatments and paths will ensure that the scheme relates to surrounding landscape character. Roofing materials will also be important to help mitigate the glimpsed long views from the east of Chelmsford Road.
- 9.6 An outline landscape strategy, which would be agreed at reserved matters, has been developed which provides more details on the proposed measures to mitigate the limited harm to the landscape which has been identified.

10 Conclusions

- 10.1 A landscape and visual impact assessment has been undertaken by Plumb Associates Ltd, a Landscape Institute Registered Practice, in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition methodology to determine the potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity resulting from a proposal to construct up to 50 new houses and associated open space and landscaping at a site west of Chelmsford Road, Hartford End.
- 10.2 The site comprises a single field in arable production situated between existing residential development. The site is within the Upper Chelmer Valley so is within gently rolling landscape. The overall landscape quality of the area is considered to be high and in relatively good condition, although there are numerous sections of missing hedgerow locally.
- 10.3 The site is typical of the local landscape character in that it comprises farmland with missing hedges; however it contains none of the key features identified in the local landscape character assessments for the area. Views within the local landscape are confined by topography and vegetation. It is concluded therefore that the proposal would have low effects on the local landscape character and these effects would be limited to the immediate area around the site.
- 10.4 The desktop study identified few publicly accessible viewpoints where visual effects could be experienced. An assessment was undertaken of all those identified.
- 10.5 The most significant visual effects would be experienced by residents of The Brewer's House, Hillside and part of Ridley Green. The effects would be mitigated by the proposed scheme layout and planting plan which would buffer Ridley Green and provide screening for The Brewer's House and Hillside although this would take some time to establish.
- 10.6 The visual effects from the receptors further from the site boundaries were largely screened by existing development, vegetation and topography. Where views were glimpsed these were limited and filtered.
- 10.7 The results of the LVIA will be used to develop a landscape strategy that will help mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects and deliver landscape and biodiversity enhancements.

11 References

AECOM – 2017 - Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment

Chris Blandford Associates – 2006 - Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment

Felsted Parish Council – 2020 - Felsted Neighbourhood Plan

Landscape Institute 2013 – Guideline for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – 3rd Edition

Plumb Associates 2023 – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Land at Hartford End

Uttlesford District Council – 2005 – Uttlesford Local Plan

ite Photographs

Photo 1 – View north across the site showing The Brewer’s House and Hillside



Photo 2 – The Brewer’s House and Hillside showing extent of existing vegetation



Photo 3 – Part of the existing development at Ridley Green fronting the amenity green within that site



Photo 4 – House at western end of Ridley Green has a side wall facing the development site. A proposed attenuation basin would provide a landscape buffer to the new development.



Photo 5 – View north from River Chelmer bridge along Chelmsford Road



Photo 6 – Existing residential development fronting Chelmsford Road



Photo 7 – View from edge of Ridley Green development north along Chelmsford Road



Photo 8 – View west along Littley Park Lane from entrance to FP37. Hillside visible on the skyline



Photo 9 – View from BW49 is screen by existing buildings



Photo 10 – Views further west on BW49 are filtered by existing vegetation and development



Photo 11 – Views from FP48 filtered by existing trees



Photo 12 – View from highpoint on FP37 shows roof lines of Ridley Green and Hillside set below the vegetated skyline



Photo 13 – View from further south on FP37 shows landform and vegetation screening the development site



Appendix 1

Explanation of LVIA Methodology and terms used in the appraisal

The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the advisory guidance set out in the document - *“Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition”*, published by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment (2013) to ensure that it accords to best practice.

Landscape assessment

Landscape effects are defined as changes to landscape elements, characteristics, character and qualities of the landscape as a result of development and these may be judged adverse, neutral or beneficial.

Predicted landscape effects are considered under the following hierarchy:

- Landscape elements: introduction or removal of trees, vegetation and built elements that combine together to form landscape patterns.
- Landscape patterns: degradation or erosion of groups and arrangements of landscape elements forming patterns of landscape character types.
- Landscape character: the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, reflecting the combination of geology, landform, soils vegetation, land use and settlement. Changes to some or all of these may occur due to the construction and operation of the proposed development, the magnitude of whose consequent landscape effects may be sufficient to alter the defined landscape character type(s) of a particular area.
- Cumulative landscape effects: resulting from additional changes to the landscape caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other proposed development (associated or separate from it), or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future.

Defining landscape quality

Landscape quality	Typical Indicators
Very High	All landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Buildings are in local vernacular and materials. No detracting elements are evident
High	Most landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Most buildings are in local vernacular and materials. Few detracting elements are evident
Medium	Some landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Some buildings are in local vernacular and materials and some detracting elements are evident
Low	Few landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Few buildings are in local vernacular and materials. Many detracting or incongruous elements are evident

Very Low	No landscape elements remain intact and in good repair. Buildings are not in local vernacular and materials. Detracting or incongruous elements are much in evidence
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The landscape assessment considers the:

- Sensitivity of the affected landscape resource (high, medium or low);
- Type of effect (adverse, neutral or beneficial – temporary or permanent – direct or indirect); and
- Predicted magnitude of effect (high, medium, low or negligible).

Consideration of the sensitivity of the landscape resource, in combination with the magnitude of effect due to development, is fundamental to landscape assessment.

Landscape sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity has been determined by reference to the baseline assessment of the existing landscape and is categorised as 'high', 'medium' or 'low'.

Category	Criteria
High	Landscape of high sensitivity where in terms of landscape character, condition and value there is limited ability to accommodate change and limited scope for mitigation. Landscape elements combine to form an area of strong, positive and distinctive character. A landscape in good condition that may also have some rarity and a low potential for replacement or mitigation. E.g. may have absence of man-made elements and/or sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Will include landscapes of high value such as those protected at international or national level, e.g. National Parks and AONBs.
Medium	Landscape of medium sensitivity exhibiting positive character though with evidence of degradation/erosion of some elements and features. Generally positive character in reasonable condition with some valuable elements and features and/or evidence of degradation/erosion, with opportunities for replacement or mitigation. May contain some man-made elements, which may be out of scale or consistency with the local character. Some noise and human activity but not dominant. Landscapes protected at a regional level or non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value e.g. good levels of recreation.
Low	Landscape of low sensitivity where there is greatest scope for landscape change in the form of development, mitigation and enhancement. Poorly defined character, in poor condition, with a low incidence or absence of valuable elements. Change is unlikely to be negative, with scope for restoration enhancement or creation of new landscape. Contains frequent utility, infrastructure or industrial elements, busy, noisy locations with prominent human activity.

Magnitude of Landscape Change

Magnitude of change	Description
High	Change that may be large in scale and extent, including the loss of key landscape elements and features or the addition of new uncharacteristic elements or features, leading to change in the overall landscape character
Medium	Moderate change through the loss of valuable landscape elements or features or the addition of new uncharacteristic elements or features. Change can comprise a notable change in landscape character over a large area to intensive change over a more limited area.
Low	A low level change typically affecting smaller areas of specific landscape character, including the loss of characteristic elements or features or the addition of new features or elements
Negligible	A negligible level of change affecting small areas of landscape character, including the loss of some landscape elements or feature which are either characteristic of the existing landscape or hardly noticeable.

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	Medium	Low
Large	Major	Major/moderate	Moderate
Medium	Major/moderate	Moderate	Moderate/minor
Low	Moderate/minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible

Visual assessment

Visual effects are a subset of landscape effects and are wholly concerned with the effect of a development on views, and the general visual amenity of people who will have views of the development. Visual effects may include the following:

- Visual obstruction: physical blocking of a view.
- Visual intrusion: the visual intrusion of the proposed development into an existing view or loss of particular landscape elements or features already present in the view.
- Cumulative visual effects: where more than one development may be viewed simultaneously from a viewpoint, or views occur sequentially where proposed development may be viewed from a number of differing locations, most commonly from a road, rail route or long distance path.

The significance of the visual effect will depend on

- The sensitivity of the receptor to the effect
- The magnitude of the predicted change.

Definitions of visual receptor

Receptor Sensitivity	Description
High	Viewers whose attention or interest is focussed on the landscape such as communities or occupiers of residential properties.

	Users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way whose attention or interest may be focussed on the landscape Communities where the development results in changes in the landscape setting or valued views enjoyed by the community
Medium	Viewers with a moderate interest in their environment such as locations on routes through the landscape such as local footpaths or local roads or users of public sports grounds and amenity open space.
Low	Viewers with a passing interest in their surroundings and whose interest is not specifically focussed on the landscape e.g. working premises or locations on main roads or railways.

Visual Effects: Magnitude of change

Magnitude	Description
Large	Total loss of, or major alteration to, key valued elements, features or characteristics of the baseline. The introduction of elements considered to be prominent and uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Would be at considerable variance with the landform scale and pattern of the landscape. Would cause a high quality landscape to be permanently changed and its quality diminished/
Medium	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements that may be prominent but which are not considered substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Would be out of scale with the landscape and at odds with the local landform and pattern. Would leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality
Small	Minor loss or alteration of one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline or an introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. May not quite fit the landform and scale of the landscape. Would affect an area of recognised landscape character.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline or an introduction of elements that are not characteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Maintain existing landscape quality and maybe slightly at odds to the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape.

The significance of the visual impact is determined by the assessment of the sensitivity of the visual receptor and the magnitude of the visual impact of the proposed development on the existing view.

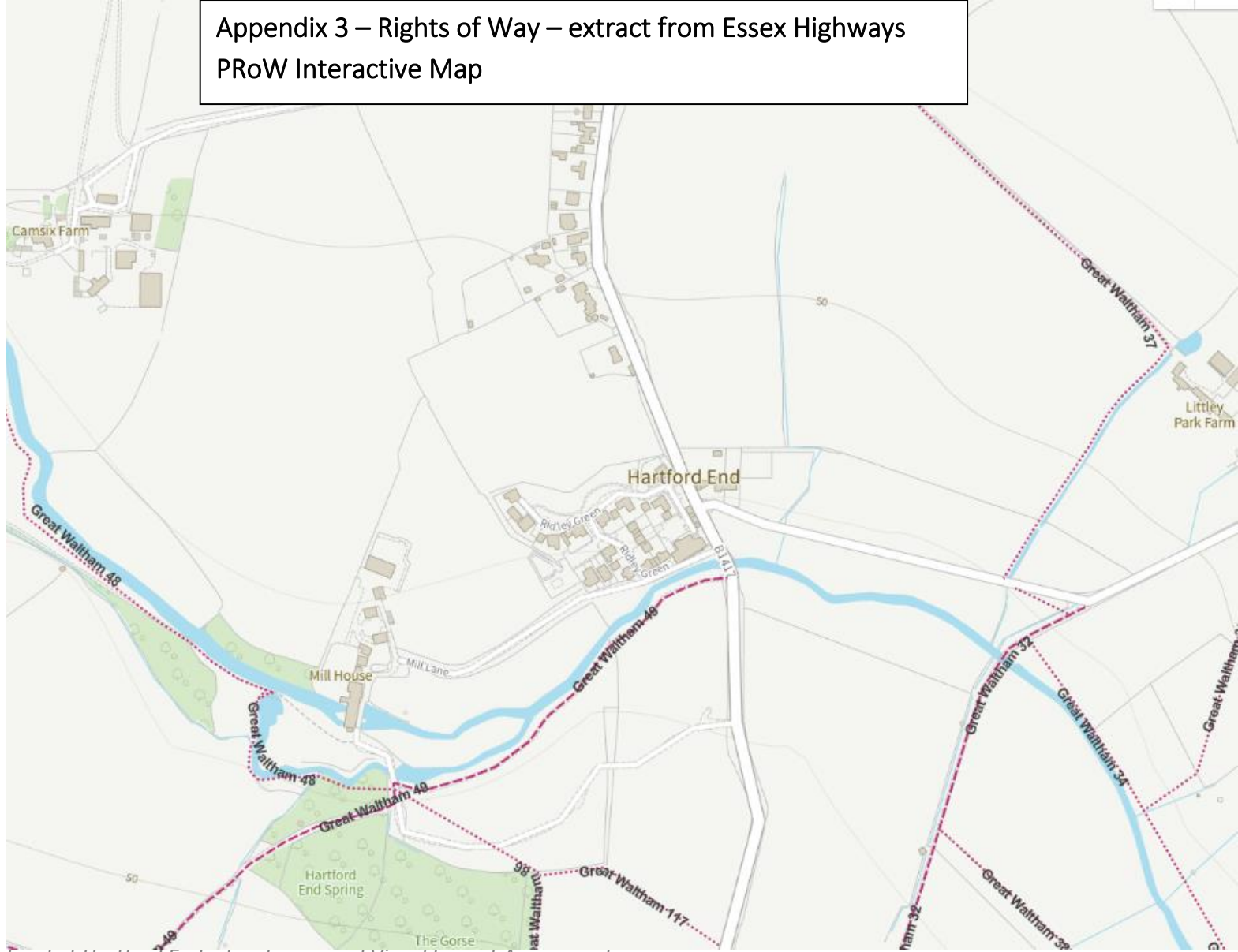
Significance of Visual Effect

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	Medium	Low
Large	Major	Major/moderate	Moderate
Medium	Major/moderate	Moderate	Moderate/minor
Small	Moderate/minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Minor	Minor/Negligible	Negligible

Appendix 2 – Study Area



Appendix 3 – Rights of Way – extract from Essex Highways
PRoW Interactive Map



Land at Hartford End – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Plumb Associates Ltd