



**BIDWELLS**

**BABRAHAM RESEARCH CAMPUS  
FIRST PROPOSALS CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18) – DEC 2021  
PLANNING REPRESENTATIONS  
APPENDIX 4 : LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL AND GREEN  
BELT STUDY**

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# BABRAHAM RESEARCH CAMPUS, LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL & GREEN BELT STUDY

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## Quality Assurance

Site name: Babraham Research Campus  
Client name: Babraham Research Campus Limited  
Type of report: Landscape & Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Study  
  
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# 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and Green Belt Study has been prepared on behalf of Babraham Research Campus Limited in connection with the representations to the First Proposals stage of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (Regulation 18 consultation) and in respect of Land at Babraham Research Campus (see Map 01 in Appendix 1), hereby referred to as the Site.
- 1.1.2 Babraham Research Campus is currently identified within the First Proposals consultation document, under Policy S/BRC, as a Policy Area, with a proposed policy direction to remove the developed area of the Campus from the Green Belt.
- 1.1.3 The aim of this LVA and Green Belt Study is to:
- Assess the landscape and visual baseline conditions, including relevant planning policy, designations, key characteristics, important views and potential visual receptors;
  - Assess the landscape and visual sensitivity to inform the development of the parameter plans;
  - Make a qualitative assessment of the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development;
  - Assess the impact on the qualities of the Green Belt; and
  - Make recommendations about the appropriateness removing the Site from the Green Belt designation and informing ongoing refinement of the design proposals.
- 1.1.4 Ultimately this document aims to understand the landscape and visual effects associated with the potential development of the Site within the Cambridge Green Belt and therefore to inform decision-making on removal of the Site from this policy. Therefore, the LVA and Green Belt Study will focus on the area identified in drawing 110 – Parameter Plan with Area to be Removed from Green Belt in Appendix 2.

## 1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site, also known as the Babraham Research Campus, is located to the west of Babraham village. It largely comprises of commercial and laboratory buildings sited within the setting of the Babraham Hall parkland, which is preserved to the north east of the Site. The parkland is a major open green space ancillary to the Site, with another large portion of grassland to the west and south of the Site's access roundabout and along the River Granta. Smaller pockets of green space are scattered amongst the built form providing some discrete recreational opportunities (see Map 02 in Appendix 1).
- 1.2.2 The north-western edge of the Site is enclosed by a tree belt that runs sinuously along the River Granta. The majority of the Site's boundaries are well defined by the existing tree belt, with the exception of a gap along the River Granta to the south-west of the Site and a second gap to accommodate the roundabout access.

## 2.0 Appraisal Methodology

2.1.1 The LVA takes account of current best practice guidance, namely:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal', (GLVIA3) produced by the Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal (Third Edition, 2013);
- 'Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations' Technical Guidance Note 02/21, by the Landscape Institute; and
- 'An Approach to Landscape Character Appraisal' by Natural England (October 2014).

2.1.2 It considers two separate but inter-linked topics: 'Landscape effects' and 'Visual effects'.

2.1.3 Landscape effects relate to changes in the scale, pattern, character and quality of the landscape. These include direct impacts such as loss of vegetation, as well as perceptual aspects such as changes to tranquillity. Landscape effects do not need to be visible.

2.1.4 Visual effects relate to specific changes in views and the effects on visual receptors (e.g. residents, users of public rights of way or recreational facilities). Changes to the visual setting of protected cultural or heritage features are also considered (e.g. Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas). However, the assessment of the significance of the heritage assets is not within the scope of the LVA (see Initial Heritage Appraisal, October 2021).

2.1.5 This LVA and Green Belt Review concerns the Site and study area as shown in Map 01, Appendix 1. The Site consists of the area that is proposed for removal from Green Belt under the new Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

2.1.6 The appraisal starts with the definition of the landscape and visual baseline, which identifies key characteristics and constraints relating to the Site and its context. The baseline studies include landscape designations, published landscape character assessments, field observation (undertaken in May 2021) and representative viewpoints. The planning policy context is also taken into consideration in relation to the identified distinctive landscape qualities at a local scale.

2.1.7 The baseline findings provide the basis for understanding the value in landscape and visual terms of the receptors that would be affected by the proposed development. This is combined with their susceptibility to change to establish the relative sensitivities.

2.1.8 Landscape and visual sensitivity are described using a scale from low to high which reflects the following parameters.

2.1.9 Landscape sensitivity:

- Low Sensitivity – the receptor is not considered of high value, therefore lacking distinctive or unique qualities; it is also characterised by a low susceptibility to change whereby the baseline condition would not be altered by the proposed development.
- Medium Sensitivity – the receptor is of moderate value as including some elements of distinctive quality and importance, but lacking consistence or uniformity; albeit capable to accommodate the proposed development some changes to the baseline condition are expected therefore the receptor would be characterise by a medium susceptibility to change.
- High Sensitivity – the receptor is considered of high value due to its distinctive qualities and uniqueness; the proposed development is likely to unduly alter the baseline condition resulting in a high susceptibility to change of the receptor.

2.1.10 Visual sensitivity:

- Low Sensitivity – the view is of limited value, with low aesthetic qualities and detracting elements; the receptors are engaging in activities that would not involve or are not dependant on the appreciation of views of the surrounding landscape, therefore susceptibility to change is low.

- Medium Sensitivity – the view is valued at local level and reasonably attractive, but otherwise unremarkable with some detracting features; the receptors are engaging with activities where appreciation of the contextual landscape is not the primary focus (i.e. cyclists on roads or travellers on rail) but it contributes to the setting of the route. In residential visual amenity terms, it is a secondary/periphery view.
- High Sensitivity – the view is valued for its high scenic qualities and/or protected by planning designations, it is a distinctive view, visually intact and coherent with no detracting/deteriorating features; the receptors are engaging in activities where awareness of the contextual landscape is likely to be high (i.e. ramblers on public footpaths). In residential amenity terms, it is a primary/main view.

2.1.11 Landscape effects have been considered for those landscapes and characteristics relevant to the Site and study area. Similarly, an appraisal of the visual effects has been carried out for relevant visual receptors. The appraisal considers a Year 1 scenario, assuming the Site is developed in accordance to the proposed parameter plan (see Appendix 2). A Year 15 scenario is not considered as the parameter plans do not include sufficient details to adequately inform the assessment of the impact of mature planting on the identified effects. However, the allocation of strategic open space or landscape areas has been considered where relevant and appropriate.

2.1.12 At this stage, a full landscape and visual impact assessment has not been undertaken. Instead, a qualitative appraisal of the key issues has been completed to inform the development proposals. Therefore, it should be noted that while relevant guidance is followed to define the applied parameters, this appraisal does not include judgement on the significance of landscape and visual effects.

2.1.13 The LVA findings will inform the Green Belt Review, which will consider possible harm to the Cambridge Green Belt from a landscape and visual perspective. Details of the approach to the Green Belt Review are found in Section 9.

## **2.2 Study Area**

2.2.1 The initial baseline study identified several statutory designations within the Site's context, although mostly located at 1km or more from the Site (Map 04 Appendix 1). It is also noted that the Site enjoys a substantial degree of visual enclosure provided by the existing woodland blocks and tree belts that define the Babraham Research Campus site.

2.2.2 Considering the scale of the proposed development, the level of screening afforded by the surrounding vegetation and existing development, it was concluded that a 3km study area would be appropriate for the assessment (i.e. a 3km radius from the centre of the Site).

## **2.3 Desk-Based Study**

Information for the LVA was gathered from the following sources:

- National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021);
- South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan (Adopted September 2018);
- South Cambridgeshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2010);
- Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (June 2011);
- Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping (LUC, November 2020);
- Cambridge Green Belt Study: A Vision of the Future for Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire District Council (September 2002);
- 2012 Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, December 2012);
- Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (LDA, November 2015);

- Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (LUC, August 2021);
- National Character Area 87 'East Anglian Chalk (Natural England);
- Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, February 2021);
- The Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database;
- Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Site-centred digital raster map; and
- Aerial photography: Google Maps (<http://maps.google.co.uk/>).

## **2.4 Field Study**

2.4.1 A field survey was undertaken in May 2021 to assess:

- Landscape characteristics;
- Views of the Site from the surrounding areas;
- The location of visual receptors; and
- The potential visual effects arising from the proposed development.

2.4.2 The survey was generally undertaken from publicly accessible locations such as roads, bridleways, tracks, footpaths and public open spaces.

## 3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1.1 Future proposals for the Site comprise the development of further employment land within and adjoining the existing built up area of the Campus. In addition, low density redevelopment of existing Campus-linked housing is proposed.
- 3.1.2 A Campus Strategy Plan and emerging Illustrative Masterplan have been prepared to indicate the locations of the key development zones. These plans also indicate a supporting infrastructure and renewable energy zone south of the River Granta. This land is within the Campus estate but falls outside the Site assessed within this Appraisal. All land to the south of the River Granta, together with the Historic Parkland and Estate are proposed to be retained within the Green Belt.

### 3.2 Parameter Plans

- 3.2.1 The proposed development strategy is presented in the parameter plan found in Appendix 2. This comprises the redevelopment of existing buildings and extension of the Campus on currently undeveloped land.
- 3.2.2 The proposed R&D development on vacant land (orange hatches on the parameter plan) is located on the northern part of the Site. Buildings within these areas would be limited to two storeys plus rooftop plant, which is in line with most of the existing buildings. The proposed R&D development to the south and south-west (cyan hatches on the parameter plan) requires the demolition of existing buildings. The height of the replacement buildings would again be two storeys plus rooftop plant.
- 3.2.3 To the east is the proposed residential development (purple hatch on the parameter plan). This also requires the demolition of existing buildings, which would be replaced with largely two storey buildings, although some three storey may be included.
- 3.2.4 Strategic landscape buffers are located around some of the R&D areas and within the proposed development parcels. The purpose of the strategic open space is to mitigate the expected visual effects by providing gaps between the built forms and areas for planting along the edges. Retention of the landscape buffer along the River Granta would also protect its biodiversity value and ecosystem services.

## 4.0 Planning Context

### 4.1 National Planning Framework

- 4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) sets out the overall economic, social and environmental objectives that the planning system should follow to achieve sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is a *'presumption in favour of sustainable development'* (Par. 10). More specifically, the NPPF policies relevant to the Site and proposed development are detailed below.
- 4.1.2 The NPPF requires care of the public rights of way setting and strategic vision. Par. 100 states that *'planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails'*.
- 4.1.3 The framework stresses the importance of high-quality design. It states that efficient use of land should take into account *'the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy spaces'* (Par. 124). Par. 126 adds that *'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'* Good architecture and master planning need to be supported by *'appropriate and effective landscaping'* (Par. 130) to enhance and promote a strong sense of place.
- 4.1.4 In defining the planning system obligations and scopes, the framework highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural environment. In particular, *'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)* (Par. 174). The countryside has a particular value on its own for its intrinsic character and beauty.
- 4.1.5 It is noted that the new NPPF does not clearly define what constitutes a 'valued landscape'. Useful in the NPPF 2019 revision (retained in the 2021 update) is the update to Par. 11 which provides some additional guidance through footnote 6. This defines, more thoroughly than before, *'areas or assets of particular importance'* as: *'habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 181) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 63); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.'* For the purposes of this LVA, in addition to the Landscape Institute TGN 02/21, it is believed that the 'Stroud DC v Gladman high court judgement (reference CO/4082/2014) is still appropriate and valid; therefore, to be valued in terms of the NPPF would require the landscape to show *'some demonstrable physical attribute rather than just popularity'* i.e. it has to be 'out of the ordinary'.
- 4.1.6 The framework promotes a *'strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructures'* (Par 175). Habitat and biodiversity protection and enhancement is a fundamental point for sustainable development and should be considered not just at a local scale but as an interaction with wider national and international ecological networks.
- 4.1.7 Furthermore, the NPPF specifically addresses Green Belt policy objectives. It stresses that policies should aim *'to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristic of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence'* (Par. 137). It also defines what is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and exceptions to this definition, such as *'limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
- *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.'* (Par 149 g)
- 4.1.8 The national framework also provides particular emphasis on the countryside, suggesting that the *'intrinsic character and beauty'* should be recognised as well as the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services (Par. 174 b).

## 4.2 Local Planning Framework

4.2.1 The Site falls within the administrative area of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) where planning decisions are regulated by the adopted Development Plan, which includes a number of documents and planning policies relevant to the landscape and visual assessment. These are listed below (Green Belt policies are considered in Section 9).

### **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, South Cambridgeshire District Council, (September 2018)**

- **Policy S/2: Objectives of the Local Plan**

4.2.2 This policy sets out the strategic objectives of the local plan, setting out six key objectives to guide development within the district. Objectives include the protection of *'the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage, as well as protecting the Cambridgeshire Green Belt.'*

- **Policy HQ/1: Design Principles**

4.2.3 This policy is prefaced with the acknowledgement that settlements within the district vary in character. *'All new development will have an impact on its surroundings. Development needs to be of an appropriate scale, design and materials for its location and conform to the design principles set out in the policy.'*

4.2.4 *'Any development must also take proper care to respond to its surroundings, and create sustainable, inclusive and healthy environments where people would wish to live, work, shop, study or spend their leisure time'. In order to achieve such design quality, the policy lists fundamental design principles which include protection and enhancement of natural and historic assets, as well as conserving the countryside and open spaces, referring to the District Design Guide SPD and village design guides where appropriate.*

- **Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character**

4.2.5 This policy focuses on the preservation and enhancement of local and national character and distinctiveness of the landscape as prescribed by existing evidence, such as the National Character Area Profiles.

4.2.6 *'The district's landscape is dominated by arable farmland with dispersed woodlands and often low, trimmed hedgerows. As a result, it is a predominantly open landscape, allowing long views. A mosaic of hedgerows, fields, parkland and small woodlands create variety and combine to create an often treed skyline. A greater degree of enclosure and a more detailed landscape is often associated with settlements and the many small river valleys.'*

- **Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure**

4.2.7 The policy protects and conserves the green infrastructure network established within the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy produced by the Council in partnership with local organisations in 2011 (Figure 1). The Site is located within a green corridor along the River Granta.

4.2.8 The policy states: *'Proposals that cause loss or harm to this network will not be permitted unless the need for and benefits of the development demonstrably and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the district's green infrastructure network.'*

4.2.9 Conversely, proposals that positively contribute to the function and character of the green infrastructure network will be supported.

4.2.10 It is noted that the policy's supporting text clearly highlights the landscape value associated with green infrastructure networks, including a distinctive multi-functionality: *'It includes a wide range of elements such as country parks, wildlife habitats, rights of way, bridleways, commons and greens, nature reserves, waterways and bodies of water, and historic landscapes and monuments. The network comprises rural and urban green infrastructure of different sizes and character, and the connections and links between them. It is part of (and contributes to) the wider environment. It includes both land that can be open to the public and areas that are not accessible.'*

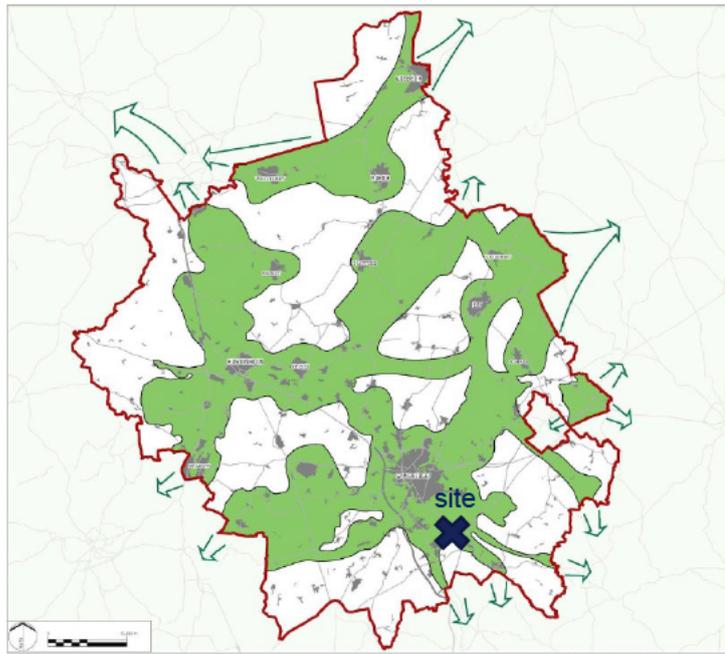


Figure 1 - Green Infrastructure extract from the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)

#### South Cambridgeshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

- 4.2.11 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) forms part of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF), with a purpose to ensure *'the delivery of sensitively and appropriately designed, sustainable developments.'* The Guide identifies that all *'new development will have an impact on its surroundings. The aim must be that any development, from a major urban extension to Cambridge to an extension to an existing home, takes all proper care to respond to its surroundings, including existing buildings, open spaces and village edges, and ensure an integrated scheme that does not harm local amenity and wherever possible, brings benefits to the area.'*
- 4.2.12 The SPD requires that any new development, *'must sit comfortably in its landscape, taking account of the topography and natural or man-made features. New development should not intrude upon the skyline, with the exception of specifically agreed features selected as landmarks, in the tradition of church spires or towers. ... careful consideration must be given to the height and form of buildings, with the built form broken down to appear as a composition of forms, rather than one large form and utilising trees and other planting to soften the impact on long distance views.'*
- 4.2.13 The SPD also sets out the local landscape character of Cambridge, which is explored further in the following landscape baseline section (Section 5.2).

## 5.0 Landscape Baseline

### 5.1 Landscape and Related Designations

5.1.1 Landscape and related designations (e.g. relating to heritage and recreational access) within 3 km of the Site, relevant to the appraisal of landscape and visual effects, are set out in Table 1. This should be read in conjunction with the Maps contained within Appendix 1.

Table 1 - Landscape and Related Designations

DESIGNATION/FEATURES	PRESENT WITHIN THE SITE	PRESENT WITHIN THE STUDY AREA (2KM)
National Parks	No	None within the study area.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	No	None within the study area.
Special Landscape Area (or similar local designation)	No	None within the Study Area
Green Belt	Yes	The Site lies within the Cambridge Green Belt.
World Heritage Sites	No	None within the study area.
Scheduled Monuments	No	There are Scheduled Monuments within the study area north of the Site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Barrow and Enclosure;</li> <li>• Worstead Street; and</li> <li>• Bowl barrow on Copley Hill.</li> </ul>
Conservation Areas	Babraham Conservation Area.	There is one Conservation Area in proximity to the Site: Babraham Conservation Area.
Listed Buildings	Grade II Babraham Hall the Institute of Animal Phycology, and Grade I Parish Church of St Peter South West of Babraham Hall.	There are a number of listed buildings within the study area. Please refer to Map 04 in Appendix 1.
Registered Parks and Gardens	No	No
Country Park	No	Wandlebury Country Park.
Recreational Trail	No	The E2 European Long Distance Route runs along the Roman Road to the north of the Site.
Public Right-of-Way (PRoW)	No	There are several PRoWs within the study area, including footpath 12/5, which runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site.

## 5.2 Landscape Character

5.2.1 To help identify the key characteristics and sensitivity of the landscape within which the Site is located, reference is made to published Landscape Character Assessments. Those applicable to the study area are set out below.

5.2.2 It is noted that a set of evidence based documents have been published in support of the First Proposals consultation on the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, that will inform the development of the new plan policies. This includes a revised landscape character assessment for the Greater Cambridge area, which includes the City of Cambridge and the surrounding rural landscapes and villages of South Cambridgeshire.

5.2.3 While the Greater Cambridge Local Plan is not yet adopted, the supporting evidence is a material consideration and it is the most recent, reliable information on local landscape character. Therefore, the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (February 2021) should be given precedence over the landscape character information in The Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (1991), South Cambridgeshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2010), Appendix 9 of the Cambridge Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) and the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (2015).

### National Character Area (NCA) Profile 87: East Anglia Chalk

5.2.4 The Site is located in NCA 87. Key characteristics and distinctive features of the NCA are:

- *‘Distinctive chalk rivers, the River Rhee and River Granta, flow in gentle river valleys in a diagonally northwest direction across the NCA.*
- *The rolling downland, mostly in arable production, has sparse tree cover but distinctive beech belts along long, straight roads. Certain high points have small beech copses or ‘hanger’, which are prominent and characteristic features in the open landscape.*
- *Archaeological features include Neolithic long barrows and bronzeage tumuli lining the route of the prehistoric Icknield Way; iron-age hill forts, including that at Wandlebury... and large numbers of later moated enclosures, park lands created, sheepwalks, arterial routes and nucleated villages that emphasise the land use change of this period.*
- *Brick and ‘clunch’ (building chalk) under thatched roofs were the traditional building materials, with some earlier survival of timber frame.*
- *Isolated farmhouses built of grey or yellowish brick have a bleached appearance.*
- *The settlement is focused in small towns and villages.*
- *There are several expanding commuter villages located generally within valleys.*
- *Roads and lanes strike across the downs perpendicularly and follow historical tracks that originally brought livestock to their summer grazing. Today major roads and railways are prominent landscape characteristics of the NCA.’*

5.2.5 The NCA profile is described as a *‘visually continuous, open landscape, with occasional long views over the lower land to the north and west. The valleys of the rivers Granta, Rhee and Cam have a contrasting small-scale intimacy that is enhanced by small woods, pasture and wetland vegetation.’*

### Regional Landscape Character

5.2.6 Landscape East published in January 2009 an overview of the landscape typology of the region. This can be accessed through the website ( <http://www.landscape-east.org.uk/> ) where the interactive map aids identification of the relevant typologies for a specific area. However, this resource is not currently functioning and therefore information on the landscape typology of the study area is not available.

## Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (2021)

- 5.2.7 The Greater Cambridge Shared Partnership published an updated landscape character assessment produced by Chris Blandford Associates. As shown on Map 7 in Appendix 1, the Site is located in the landscape character type (LCT) 8 and landscape character area (LCA) 8A and adjacent to LCA 9D.
- 5.2.8 **Landscape Character Type (LCT) 8 – Lowland Chalklands** is an *'intensively farmed arable landscape forming the gently rising transition between the Lowland Farmlands and the Chalk Hills.'* Topography is gently rolling and dissected by small streams. There is limited woodland cover, which includes scattered copses and shelterbelts of deciduous woodland. However, *'smaller fields with more distinctive hedgerow and tree boundaries occur around the edges of villages within this LCT.'* Former parkland landscapes also include some tree cover.
- 5.2.9 Late enclosures have impacted the landscape pattern resulting in the prevalence of linear and occasionally sinuous fields. However, the strong rural character has deep historic roots including ancient routes, earthworks, Roman sites/features and a settlement pattern of *'dispersed historic, nucleated villages on lower landform'*. Major roads cutting across the landscape are locally detracting features.
- 5.2.10 While some villages, particularly to the west of the LCT, have retained their small scale and historic character, others along the key routes into Cambridge have expanded into ribbon development including *'a substantial science and technology park at Babraham.'*
- 5.2.11 The intensively farmed landscape, with fragmented grassland and limited woodland cover, is not characterised by a rich ecology; there are few designated sites across the LCT.
- 5.2.12 Permeability throughout the LCT is supported by a complex network of main and secondary routes that often trace historic links. Long-distance routes and a number of footpaths also provide *'strong connections through the wider landscape'*.
- 5.2.13 The Assessment concludes that the landscape condition and strength of character of the LCT are *'moderate'*. The following key landscape sensitivities are identified:
- *'Low-lying, gently rolling landform dissected by small streams in shallow valleys*
  - *Medium to large sized fields enclosed by hedges*
  - *Strong sense of historic integrity, with several visible historic earthworks, routes and buildings*
  - *Tranquil, often remote rural landscape away from major roadways and extended villages'*
- 5.2.14 The management objectives for the LCT include:
- *'Conserve and enhance existing hedge boundaries and restore where possible*
  - *Conserve the tranquil and uninterrupted rural character*
  - ...
  - *Manage the agricultural landscape and soils both for production and opportunities to improve biodiversity*
  - *Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows and consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows where these have been lost/become fragmented*
  - *Manage planting of new trees and woodland in order to conserve open views of the undulating chalkland and emphasise landforms whilst improving biodiversity'*
- 5.2.15 **Landscape Character Area (LCA) - 8A Pampisford Lowland Chalklands** *'is a settled landscape comprising villages located on key historic routes along the River Cam and River Granta with a wooded character and strong sense of visual enclosure.'*
- 5.2.16 Key characteristics of the LCA include:

- *‘Mature hedgerows, small blocks of woodland and shelterbelts combine with occasional lines roadside trees to create a visually enclosed, intimate character*
  - *Scattered designed historic parkland features, including some modern developments of large science and technology research parks, in proximity to the River Cam and River Granta*
  - *Settlement pattern of scattered small villages on elevated ground at the edges of the River Valleys’*
- 5.2.17 This LCA is a transitional landscape between the river valley and the Chalk Hills. It is characterised by rising topography and a broad landscape with irregular field pattern. The ecological qualities of this LCA are not rich. However, fragmented habitats include some lowland calcareous grassland and small block of woodlands, which provide some landscape interest.
- 5.2.18 Woodland cover is critical in creating a distinctive sense of enclosure and intimacy. This results in a diverse visual experience as *‘views are generally short and enclosed by landform, woodland and shelterbelts, but occasionally there are framed long views towards wooded horizons from high ground.’* The linear village pattern is well integrated into the landscape, *‘with church spires occasionally providing landmarks and built form appearing in a wooded context. Generally, this is a tranquil rural landscape.’*
- 5.2.19 Parklands are also distinctive features within the LCA: *‘Scattered designed parkland at Pampisford Hall, Babraham Hall and Bartlow Park is a distinctive feature of the LCA and adds to the well treed character. Historic parkland is the setting for the Babraham Research Institute and Granta Park which offer campus-like settings for science and technology parks featuring large modern buildings which provide a contrast to the rural character elsewhere’*
- 5.2.20 The Assessment identifies the following sensitivities specific to the LCA:
- *‘Well wooded, visually enclosed, intimate character;*
  - *Scattered designed historic parkland features, including some modern developments of large science and technology research parks, in proximity to the River Cam and River Granta.’*
- 5.2.21 **LCT 9 - River Valleys** is located to the south-west of the Site along the floodplain of the river Granta. *‘Its character is intimate and small scale, derived from a pattern of flat grazing meadow and wet woodland.’*
- 5.2.22 The river valley supports a diverse mosaic of habitats, including floodplain grazing marsh, deciduous woodlands, semi-improved grassland, lowland fens and meadows. The rivers themselves are designated as County Wildlife Sites (CWS). Woodland follows the river channels and edge of settlements.
- 5.2.23 The historic associations of the LCT are strong, with similar features to the adjacent LCT 9, including Babraham Hall parkland. In landscape terms, *‘the river valleys themselves are historically a grazing landscape, which over time has been enclosed into a mosaic of riverine meadows.’*
- 5.2.24 This LCT is characterised by a lack of settlements, although the edge of settlements on the adjoining LCT fall within the River Valley LCT in places. Development is therefore of low density, with a few historic properties, mills and country houses.
- 5.2.25 Connectivity across the LCT includes limited PROWs and small number of minor roads.
- 5.2.26 The Assessment considers the condition of the landscape of this LCT to be ‘good’ with a ‘strong’ sense of character.
- 5.2.27 The identified key sensitivities include:
- *‘Small scale, enclosed landscape*
  - *Rich, floodplain landscape of small-scale, grazed pastures, riparian vegetation and valley woodlands*

- *Tranquil, rural landscape away from the main roadways that cross it*
- *Variety of historic/cultural features including remnants of historic parkland, former mills and moated sites, often related to nearby historic settlement cores.*

5.2.28 The management objectives for the LCT include:

- *‘Conserve and enhance the tranquillity and rural qualities of the river landscape*
- *Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows*
- *Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and woodland where these have been lost/become fragmented*
- *Protect sites and features of historic and cultural value*
- *Identify, conserve and consider opportunities for restoring wetland habitats such as wet woodland, grazing marsh, grasslands and lowland meadows.’*

5.2.29 **LCA 9D – Granta River Valley** *‘is characterised by a pattern of designed parkland and a sense of separation between historic villages on the raised edges of the floodplain in the Lowland Chalklands.’*

5.2.30 Key characteristics of the LCA include:

- *‘...’*
- *Sense of separation between villages on elevated land in the neighbouring Lowland Farmlands*
- *Time depth associated with historic routes into Cambridge, the Icknield Way and designed parkland’*

5.2.31 The strongest landscape qualities of the LCA are based on the pastoral use of the floodplain. The irregular field pattern is enclosed by hedgerows and shelterbelts of trees, which define a small-scale, visually enclosed landscape. Views are generally short and framed by individual trees. Pockets of lowland meadow and a mosaic of habitats contribute to the natural value of the LCA.

5.2.32 Settlements are lacking and urban character is limited to the edge of villages located in the adjoining LCAs. Minor roads provide connectivity between villages.

5.2.33 The specific sensitivities identified for the LCA include the *‘sense of separation between villages on elevated land in the neighbouring Lowland Farmlands.’* It is also noted that the specific landscape guidelines include the conservation of the *‘distinctive sense of rural isolation and separation between villages in the Lowland Farmlands and Lowland Chalklands.’*

### **5.3 The Site and its Setting**

5.3.1 The Site is located in the lower valley of the River Granta. The local landscape is characterised by distinctive and contrasting qualities. One of these is the commercial nature of the Babraham Research Campus, which sits within the historic park of Babraham Hall. Most of the residential area of Babraham is designated as a Conservation Area. Buildings sit within the characteristic river valley landscape, with prominent woodland features and discrete parklands.

5.3.2 The complex network of PRoWs and roads within the study area provides good landscape permeability and opportunities for recreation.

5.3.3 The local character as experienced during the site surveys is described in the following sections.

#### **Built Form and Settlement Pattern**

5.3.4 The built-up area within the Site currently consists of scattered buildings within the Campus, with intervening green space and carparks.

5.3.5 Built form across the Campus is diverse, including modern architecture and historic buildings. The latter include the listed buildings of Babraham Hall and the Parish Church of St Peter. The

church sits within a discrete garden area, secluded from the surrounding development. The Hall occupies a prominent location, along the main access road, facing the retained parkland.

- 5.3.6 The historic buildings contrast with the modern buildings, which also portray a variety of architectural styles and materiality, despite some attempt at continuity in the use of shallow-arched roof shapes and light colour cladding. The architectural detailing at human scale includes various frontage treatments, fenestration rhythm and entrance features.
- 5.3.7 The buildings are located only to the west of the main access road. The master plan appears denser to the north and west of Babraham Hall; there are fewer buildings closer to the entrance and the southern boundary.
- 5.3.8 The Campus also includes some residential uses to the north-east. This modern architecture is secluded from Babraham village, which is of more historic character. The linear pattern of the village along the High Street is separated from the Campus by a dense woodland belt (see Map 02 in Appendix 1).
- 5.3.9 Scattered farmsteads are found within the Study area where Sawston is the larger village, located to the south-west of the Site and subject to ongoing residential expansion on the northern settlement edge. As a result, Sawston's character is profoundly different from Babraham, which has largely retained its historic character, whereas Sawston provides a more diverse architectural and urban character. The introduction of modern architecture is particularly noticeable at the northern edge of Sawston, where the use of brightly coloured materials for the roofs results in a striking skyline feature (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2 - Sawston settlement extension to the left of the view*

#### Landform

- 5.3.10 The Site is located on the floor of the River Granta valley (Map 3 in Appendix 1). The topography of the valley is consistent and flat. The more distinctive topography to the north and east of the Site is highlighted by hangers and woodland copses on hilltops and slopes.

### Vegetation Cover

- 5.3.11 The study area is characterised by scattered woodland blocks, mostly deciduous (Map 08 in Appendix 1), which result in a relatively wooded landscape and skyline. Along the River Granta the woodland assumes a linear form, with tree belts on lower ground and around the Site.
- 5.3.12 Distinctive landscape features are the hangars and woodland copses on the more elevated terrain. The woodland cover at Wandlebury Park is also prominent. Although extensive views are available from higher ground, this established woodland character provides an intimate sense of enclosure along the river valley.

### Flood Risk and Drainage

- 5.3.13 As shown in Map 09 in Appendix 1, the Site is partially located within the flood zones associated with the River Granta. The landscape character of the river corridor is characterised by Willow trees and riparian vegetation connecting to the surrounding meadows.

### Historic Context

- 5.3.14 Detailed analysis and assessment of the heritage aspects of the Site and its context are provided in the Initial Heritage Appraisal by Bidwells (October 2021). While relevant aspects will be considered within the LVA, the historic maps in Appendix 1 illustrate the evolution of the landscape and urban context between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Notably, the landscape and settlement pattern appear intact until 1903.
- 5.3.15 The first house within the Babraham Estate was built in 1576. The current Hall, which is the third of the re-built houses, was constructed in 1832. The Agricultural Research Council was accommodated on the Site in 1948, beginning its transformation into what is now the Babraham Research Campus.
- 5.3.16 The surrounding landscape has remained relatively unchanged throughout this period, and retains strong historical association.

## **5.4 Green Infrastructure**

- 5.4.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) comprises a network of land that includes natural, semi-natural spaces and green corridors. GI is intrinsically associated with landscape qualities and multifunctionality. Ultimately, GI is *'the tool by which ecosystem services can be planned and delivered through policy'*.
- 5.4.2 As noted in Policy NH/6, the Site is located within the identified GI network (Figure 1) and it is therefore expected to contribute to its quality.
- 5.4.3 The evidence base of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) includes a review of the district-wide GI network, which updates the Cambridge Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) that currently forms part of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan documents. The first two stages of this review are published in the GCLP document library: Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping (LUC, November 2020).
- 5.4.4 The report assesses the existing GI network and defines seven GI themes associated with the main ecosystem services. These themes are:
- *'Landscape, cultural heritage and sense of place;*
  - *Biodiversity and geodiversity;*
  - *The water environment;*
  - *Access and connectivity;*
  - *Recreation and play;*
  - *Carbon sequestration; and*
  - *Agriculture and community food growing.'*

5.4.5 According to the report, the Site and its contextual landscape are associated with all the identified GI themes (Figure 4). The river corridors are highlighted as *'key areas where GI intervention could result in multiple benefits.'*

**5.5 Landscape Receptors**

5.5.1 The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment guidance defines landscape receptors as *'overall character and key characteristic, individual elements or features, and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape'*.

5.5.2 Based on the findings of the desk-top study, published landscape character assessments and field observations, key landscape receptors are considered to be:

- **The Local Landscape Character – LCA 8A and 9D;**
- **The Cambridge Green Belt –** Detailed appraisal of the impact on the Green Belt purposes is provided in Section 9; however, given the clear implication that this spatial designation has for landscape character and its association with distinctive landscape elements of the study area (such as the rural character, open views and scattered settlement pattern) it is also considered a critical landscape receptor in its own right.
- **The Setting of Public Rights of Way (PRoWs)**
- **The Setting of Heritage Assets -** Babraham Conservation Area and listed buildings in proximity of the Site.
- **The Wooded Skyline**
- **The Green Infrastructure Network –** River corridor.
- **Tranquillity –** Intimate and rural qualities of the characteristic landscape pattern.



Figure 3 - GI Opportunity Map

## 6.0 Visual Baseline

### 6.1 Visual receptors

- 6.1.1 The Site is largely enclosed by the surrounding tree belts and buildings. The Green Belt area is clearly compartmentalised along the river valley, with greater expression of its openness in the wider landscape of medium-large scale fields where extensive views are more typical, particularly from the rising topography to the north.
- 6.1.2 The complex networks of roads and PRowS allow for a diverse range of views towards the Site.
- 6.1.3 The following visual receptors are considered to be relevant for assessment purposes:
- Ramblers on the surrounding PRow network, particularly close to the Site or at elevated locations;
  - Road users in proximity to the Site;
  - Residents on the north-east edge of Sawston; and
  - Road users approaching Cambridge along the A1307.

### 6.2 Representative Viewpoints

- 6.2.1 Nine viewpoints were selected to represent 'typical views' from the identified receptors at varying distances and orientation from the Site. The viewpoints are located within 3km of the Site (please see the viewpoint locations map in Appendix 3).
- 6.2.2 For each viewpoint the following information is provided:
- Representative panorama or photograph;
  - A description of the existing view; and
  - A qualitative assessment of the predicted visual effect.
- 6.2.3 It was not possible to safely acquire a representative view for the receptors on the A1307. However, visual effects will be considered based on the driving experience tested during the site visit and available Google Street View images (Figure 4). The views experienced by receptors travelling northwards on the A1307 are dominated by the contextual rural landscape. Despite the detracting road infrastructure features, the views are rather verdant with wooded skyline and open field visible where rising topography or gaps in the hedgerows allows wider vistas. Limited glimpses of the Campus buildings are visible through the woodland belt around the Site, which provides complete screening during the summer months.
- 6.2.4 The viewpoints used in the assessment are:

#### **Viewpoint 1: E2 European Long Distance Route** (circa 1,730m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents views experienced by ramblers on a popular and historically valued recreational route to the north of the Site, which is screened by intervening vegetation. Views on the PRow are predominantly enclosed by the hedgerow and trees along the path. However, glimpses of the cross-valley views are available through the gaps, even in the summertime.

Where available, the view is dominated by the rolling open landscape of the Green Belt. The fields are demarcated by hedges and the skyline appears largely wooded. The Babraham Research Campus is glimpsed in the distant background, and is the only development seen within the view. Visibility of the existing building is due to the opening in the tree belt along the A1307 that allows for the roundabout access to the Campus.

**Viewpoint 2N/E: Bridleway 12/12 – Babraham Research Campus** (circa 512m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents views experienced by ramblers on a PRoW to the south-west of the Site, visible in the background. The view of the River Granta valley is divided between the agricultural character of the fields in the foreground and the developed character of the Babraham Research Campus visible in the background. The visible buildings are perceived to be of relatively large scale and diverse architectural character. Ancillary storage/agricultural buildings are located in the middle-ground of the view and are characterised by a smaller scale and more rural character.

Notwithstanding the influence of these buildings, the view has a verdant character, enclosed by the characteristic tree belts and wooded skyline.

**Viewpoint 3: Bridleway 12/12 – Tree Avenue** (circa 388m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents the views experienced by ramblers on a PRoW to the south of the Site. The tree avenue associated with Babraham Hall's parkland is a prominent feature of the view, substantially limiting the field of view and screening most of the Babraham Research Campus and the Site, although glimpses of the research buildings would be available in winter.

The Hall, framed by the avenue, is visible in the far background.

**Viewpoint 4N/E: Public Footpath 12/5 North** (circa 163m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents the views of ramblers on a PRoW to the south-west. A thick tree belt provides screening to the Site and filters views of the buildings at Babraham Research Campus. However, glimpses of the buildings would be available during winter months.

The vegetated background limits the field of view, enclosing the open agricultural field. The skyline is defined by the tree canopies.

**Viewpoint 5S/W: Site Access on Cambridge Road** (circa 19m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents the views of road users from the main access into the Babraham Research Campus. Although the landscape in the foreground consists of open grassland, the buildings readily intervene to limit the field of view and screen the Site. The road infrastructure and Campus access are prominent features, exerting an urbanising influence on what is otherwise a verdant view. The skyline comprises a combination of buildings, with shallow arched rooftops and regularly replicated flues, and the woodland cover.

**Viewpoint 6: Footpath 12/14** (circa 385m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents the views of ramblers on a PRoW to the south-west of Babraham. The village edge, and the Conservation Area, are defined by large, agricultural buildings and the associated storage areas. The buildings and backdrop of dense tree belt enclose the view and screen the Site as well as the Babraham Research Campus buildings, although glimpses of the latter could occur during wintertime.

**Viewpoint 7: Footpath 21/11** (circa 578m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents the views experienced by ramblers on a PRoW to the north-west of the Site. The view is enclosed by the dense tree belt in the background, which screens views of the Site and the Babraham Research Campus, although glimpses of the existing buildings could occur during wintertime.

The view is very verdant and the skyline is defined by the tree canopies.

**Viewpoint 8: Babraham Road** (circa 0m from the Site)

This viewpoint represents the views experienced by residents and road users on the eastern edge of Sawston. The Site appears largely screened by the intervening vegetation, although the background is punctuated by views of the buildings within the Babraham Research Campus.

Notwithstanding the urbanising influence on an otherwise agricultural, open landscape, the view is substantially verdant, with a typically wooded skyline.

**Viewpoint 9: High Street** (circa 593m from the Site)

The viewpoint represents views experienced by road users approaching Babraham village from the south. The Site is screened by the intervening vegetation. However, during winter months, glimpses of the existing Babraham Campus buildings may be possible.

The view is typically rural, with a secondary road dissecting the agricultural fields. The tree avenue to the left of the view begins at Babraham Hall, while to the right is an informal woodland block. The mature vegetation encloses the fields, limiting the field of view and creating a green skyline.



*Figure 4 - Google Street View travelling westwards on the A1307*

## 7.0 Assessment of Landscape Effects

### 7.1 Landscape Sensitivity

- 7.1.1 The baseline study (Section 5) found that while the Site lacks distinctive or designated landscapes (Table 1), besides the Green Belt, the study area presents a number of relevant features and qualities that contribute to the value of the local landscape.
- 7.1.2 Despite the depreciation of historical landscape qualities due to the implementation of modern agricultural practice and the loss of ancient structure within the large field pattern, the distinction between the intimate river valley and the sense of openness of the rising topography results in a strong sense of place. The current landscape character is well established and aesthetically coherent throughout the study area. Within this dual landscape, hangers and woodlands on top of the hills become distinctive features that provide striking landmarks. Similarly, the sinuous tree belts along the river contribute to its characteristic sense of enclosure.
- 7.1.3 The grazing meadows and parkland along the valley preserve some historical association due to their relation to the setting of listed buildings, such as Babraham Hall. The river valley landscape is also an important feature of the setting of Babraham village.
- 7.1.4 The complex network of PRoWs contributes to the landscape value of the study area, providing a diverse recreational experience within a fundamentally tranquil landscape. The influence of Babraham village, the Research Campus and the A11 on the aesthetic qualities of the PRoW's contextual landscape is mitigated by the vegetation pattern, which encloses the existing built features within a wooded buffer. Traffic noise remains the only source of disturbance.
- 7.1.5 Therefore, the landscape value of the study area is considered medium-high, as changes to the settlement pattern have not compromised the intactness of the retained landscape qualities.
- 7.1.6 Landscape sensitivity is also defined by its susceptibility to change. It is noted that the Site lies within the curtilage of the Babraham Research Campus, an area pivotal to the evolution of the local landscape, where the most evident changes have occurred within the setting of Babraham village. It is therefore considered that the susceptibility to change is low, as the study area can accommodate the proposed development with no undue consequences on the baseline.
- 7.1.7 The combination of the defined landscape value and susceptibility to the proposed development results in a medium sensitivity of the study area. On the other hand, landscape sensitivity of the Site is considered medium-low due to the prevailing developed character of the Campus and limited distinctiveness.

### 7.2 Predicted Landscape Effects

- 7.2.1 Table 2 below sets out the key landscape effects of the proposed development (Visual effects are assessed separately in Section 8). The appraisal of the development effects considers a year 1 scenario, accounting for the proposed strategic open space but making no allowance for the growth of vegetation, if proposed. This provides a worst-case, and therefore robust, basis for assessment.

*Table 2 - Predicted Landscape Effects*

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS	PREDICTED LANDSCAPE EFFECTS
<b>Local Landscape Character</b>	The proposed development is sited within an existing commercial area at the edge of Babraham village. The urban and landscape character of the Site's context is influenced by the existing Campus. The proposed development will be consistent with the contextual landscape use and the scale of the existing buildings. It will not cause the direct loss of any distinctive landscape feature, despite a small increase in urban character that would result from a reduction of the existing

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS	PREDICTED LANDSCAPE EFFECTS
	grassland area to the north and north-west of the Site. The important landscape features are preserved, namely the parkland associated with Babraham Hall and the woodland along the River Granta.
<b>Cambridge Green Belt</b>	<p>Policy S/4 (see par 9.1.2) defines the specific purpose and qualities of the Cambridge Green Belt on a broad scale. These are intrinsically associated with the rural qualities of the study area's landscape and the preservation of the distinctive sense of openness. The proposal, albeit increasing the volume of built form within the Campus, does not adversely affect the rural character and openness of the wider landscape. The new buildings will be incorporated within the existing campus, and are enclosed by the existing tree belts, which clearly demarcate the developed areas from the countryside.</p> <p>Locally, the Green Belt parcel within the Babraham Research Campus has a developed character; the parkland and corridors of green infrastructure between the buildings are the only residues of openness. The Site is otherwise characterised by a strong sense of enclosure. At this scale, it is noted that the proposed buildings will interrupt the corridor of open land between B940 and B950, which provides recreational opportunities for the Campus visitors and employees, and entail the loss of open grassland to the north of the Site, therefore reducing the local sense of openness.</p>
<b>Setting of PRoWs</b>	<p>The proposal will not cause adverse effects on the identified receptors. The setting of the complex network of PRoWs within the study area is characterised by a prevailing rural landscape with scattered development, including small villages and farm hamlets as well as the Babraham Research Campus. The proposal is nested within the latter and will not introduce a new, isolated built form within the landscape.</p> <p>The setting of public footpaths close to the Site is influenced by more urban qualities than those further afield. Close to the Site, the river valley meadows coexist with the influence of the Campus. The proposal will slightly increase this influence, but without altering the baseline qualities of its countryside setting.</p>
<b>Setting of Heritage Assets</b>	<p>The Site has a strong physical connection with the Babraham Conservation Area and the listed buildings within the Babraham Research Campus. While the proposal would sit within the landscape and townscape setting of these assets, it is part of the modern evolution of the Campus which has already altered the historic landscape. The proposal, albeit reinforcing the developed character of the setting of these assets, will not transform the baseline character. Therefore, it is not anticipated to cause any adverse effects.</p>
<b>Wooded Skyline</b>	<p>The wooded skyline is a distinctive quality of the local landscape. Visual effects associated with this receptor are</p>

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS	PREDICTED LANDSCAPE EFFECTS
	<p>considered in Section 8. In landscape terms, it is noted that the Site is located in the lower river valley, not in a prominent location on higher topography. Therefore, despite the emerging flues of the proposal, it will not compromise the perceived qualities of the wooded skyline. The assessment of the visual effects on Viewpoint 1 (Appendix 3) provides further evidence of the lack of intrusion of the flues on the wooded skyline.</p>
<p><b>Green Infrastructure Network</b></p>	<p>The Site is located within the river corridor GI, and as such it has the potential to contribute to all seven of the GI themes. The current undeveloped nature of portions of the Site suggests that there are a number of landscape qualities associated with it that would contribute to GI purposes, namely biodiversity and water management. However, the private nature of the Campus, which is accessible only to employees and authorised visitors, and its developed character, limit the full multifunctionality that characterises GI corridors.</p> <p>It is also noted that the proposal includes strategic landscape buffers along the River Granta, a valuable ecological feature. The siting of the proposed developable areas, coordinated with the assessment of ecological impact (see Biodiversity Supplementary Report, to the Ecological Impact Assessment, July 2021 by TLP), provides a suitable buffer to protect ecological assets.</p> <p>It is therefore considered that, while the proposal will limit the capacity of the Site to contribute further to the wider GI corridor objective, it will not cause any adverse effects on its existing GI functions, which are largely associated with the River Granta.</p>
<p><b>Tranquillity</b></p>	<p>The proposed development would not directly impact on the intrinsic tranquillity of the rural landscape of the study area. However, it is noted that a probable increase in traffic associated with the proposed residential and commercial developments would contribute to the already disrupting effect of noise generated on the surrounding major roads (A11 and A1307).</p> <p>Although further clarification on the traffic generation associated with the proposed development will need testing with a Transport Assessment, it is acknowledged that this adverse effect would vary over time, and that the implementation of a strategic transport strategy within the Campus, including car-sharing, electric vehicles and cycling policies, could mitigate some of the adverse effects.</p>

## 8.0 Assessment of Visual Effects

8.1.1 The visual assessment considers the effects on visual receptors who currently experience views towards the Site and, therefore, may be affected by the proposed development. The assessment is based on:

- Site observations made during the site visits undertaken in May 2021, and
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) analysis.

### 8.2 Proposals Visibility

8.2.1 A computer-generated zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) was produced showing the areas from which it would be theoretically possible to view the proposed development, based on the topography and taking into account major visual barriers in excess of 5 m high (Refer to drawing UDS64404-A3-0101 Appendix 3). It does not take account of the screening effects of lower-level vegetation and buildings. Therefore, the ZTV analysis presents a 'worst case' scenario in terms of visibility and the actual extent of the envelope from which the proposals would be visible on the ground is likely to be much smaller.

8.2.2 The ZTV was produced using 'OS Terrain 5' data at 5 m resolution and assumes the maximum proposed building height of 17.33 AOD, which coincides with the maximum flue height, and a viewer height of 2 m.

8.2.3 The visual envelope of the ZTV appears relatively extensive, extending into the open countryside up to 3km from the Site. Public accessibility within this envelope was considered in locating the viewpoints and identifying the most sensitive receptors. The site visit established that mature tree belts provide substantial screening of the Site. The existing Babraham Research Campus buildings are also a constraint on local views. Notably, the rising topography to the north and east provides a visual obstruction and concentrates the visual envelope to the west of the Site.

### 8.3 Predicted Visual Effects

8.3.1 The assessment of visual effects on each of the identified viewpoints is detailed in Appendix 3. This is based on a year one operational scenario with no allowance for the growth of the proposed landscape buffers.

8.3.2 Table 3 below sets out the key visual effects as a result of the proposed development on the identified groups of visual receptors.

Table 3 - Predicted Visual Effects

VISUAL RECEPTORS	PREDICTED VISUAL EFFECTS
<b>Ramblers on PRowS</b>	<p>Most of the assessed viewpoints represent views available to ramblers on the network of public footpaths surrounding the Site. In the majority of cases, there would not be a substantial change to the character of the view, as the proposal is screened by intervening vegetation and topography. It is also nested within the existing buildings of the Babraham Research Campus, which are the most evident developed feature within the views.</p> <p>However, some adverse effects are caused on the views from bridleway 12/12 and footpath 12/5 close to the Site (Viewpoint 2 and 4). In this instance, the proposed development would cause an intensification of the developed character of the view, resulting from the loss of the green gap between the existing buildings, and thereby a local reduction in the openness of the Green Belt. At the same time, the proposal preserves the</p>

VISUAL RECEPTORS	PREDICTED VISUAL EFFECTS
	<p>compact nature of the Research Campus and would not result in its extension into the surrounding countryside.</p> <p>Conversely, the visual context of receptors in the further distance along the Roman Road (Viewpoint 1), despite the topographical advantage, are less affected by the proposals as the sequential layers of vegetation provide substantial screening.</p>
<b>Road users</b>	<p>Although less susceptible to change than pedestrians, these receptors include cyclists, who are likely to use the network of secondary, rural roads within the study area, including commuters to the Research Campus. Contrary to vehicle drivers, they have a degree of appreciation of the contextual landscape, which would substantially change in proximity to the Research Campus roundabout on Babraham Road. As demonstrated in Viewpoint 5, there would be an adverse effect on receptors approaching the Babraham Road roundabout from the south, due to the loss of openness and rural character.</p> <p>This is, however, a localised effect, as receptors on the wider road network would benefit from the substantial woodland screening as demonstrated in Viewpoints 8 and 9.</p>
<b>Residents on the north-east edge of Sawston</b>	<p>As demonstrated in Viewpoint 8, these receptors would not be adversely affected by the proposed development. Besides the intervening vegetation and topography providing a degree of screening, the proposal would be seen in association with the existing buildings and it will not cause the loss of perceptible gaps between the buildings. The character of the view is therefore preserved, as well as the perceived openness of the Green Belt.</p>
<b>Road users approaching Cambridge from the A1307</b>	<p>Although it was not possible to take a photograph to represent the views experienced on the A1307 travelling northwards towards Cambridge, it is noted that glimpses into the Site are available at the roundabout. Whilst the Site is largely screened by intervening vegetation, this would be less effective during winter. However, the proposal will be nested within the existing built form of the Research Campus and therefore the character of the view will be largely unchanged.</p> <p>The proposed residential development to the east of the Site is limited in height and is unlikely to break the wooded skyline. It is therefore considered that there would be no adverse effects on these receptors, who are also regarded as being of low sensitivity.</p>

## 9.0 Green Belt Review

### 9.1 Policy context

9.1.1 The planning policies relevant to the regulation and protection of the Cambridge Green Belt are set out below:

**South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, South Cambridgeshire District Council, (September 2018)**

- **Policy S/4: Green Belt**

9.1.2 This policy aims to preserve the extent of the Green Belt, as shown in the policy map (see Appendix 1), by preventing development that is not in accordance with the NPPF Green Belt policy. Although the policy refers to the old NPPF (2012), it is noted that the new framework (2019) retains the same level of importance for Green Belt areas and the same description of the five Green Belt purposes. The established purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are also set out in this policy, namely to:

- *Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;*
- *Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; and*
- *Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.'*

9.1.3 The 'special character of Cambridge and its setting' is described through a series of factors which include:

- *'Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;*
- *A soft green edge to the city;*
- *A distinctive urban edge;*
- *Green corridors penetrating into the city;*
- *Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting;*
- *The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages; and*
- *A landscape that retains a strong rural character.'*

The policy is informed by the findings of the Inner Green Belt Review 2012, which released some small areas on the edge of Cambridge to allow development. Both this and the Inner Green Belt Review 2015 for Cambridge City and SCD council reached a similar conclusion on the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt and the contribution of land on the edge of Cambridge (see section 9.2).

- **Policy NH/8: Mitigating the Impact of Development In and Adjoining the Green Belt**

9.1.4 This policy requires that:

- *'Any development proposals within the Green Belt must be located and designed so that they do not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.'*

- *Where development is permitted, landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained, will be attached to any planning permission in order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.*
- *Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality.'*

9.1.5 This policy recognises that the Green Belt is a 'key designation in the district, which protects the setting and special character of Cambridge.'

## **9.2 Cambridge Green Belt**

9.2.1 There is a sequence of documents available in the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City planning framework that review the Green Belt in and around Cambridge:

- Cambridge Green Belt Study, LDA, September 2002;
- 2012 Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, December 2012;
- Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, LDA, November 2015.

9.2.2 All documents are interconnected, as they, in turn, integrate and expand upon the previous publications. However, the 2012 and 2015 Inner Green Belt Boundary Studies are not spatially relevant to the Site.

9.2.3 The 2002 study defined the Green Belt qualities that contribute to the '*setting and special character of Cambridge*'. Of particular relevance to the Site and the Green Belt local context are:

- River approaches: The rural approaches to Cambridge along the river corridor are considered distinctive as linking the pastoral landscape context with the historic core.
- Relationship between villages and Cambridge: Villages are scattered around Cambridge; to the south and east within the River Valley there are numerous small settlements due to proximity to fresh water. '*This pattern of villages surrounding Cambridge, separated by a predominantly agricultural landscape, is a fundamental part of the setting and special character of the city.*' Each village possesses qualities that contribute positively to their character and therefore the quality and setting of Cambridge. Babraham affords the following valued qualities:
  - *'Wooded setting of the village;*
  - *River valley and water meadows;*
  - *Historic village core...;*
  - *Strong linear form;*
  - *Parkland setting on village edge;*
  - *Village scale;*
  - *Areas of tranquillity;*
  - *Enclosed pastures forming transition on edge;*
  - *...'*

*'The rural landscape separating the inner necklace villages, and separating those villages from Cambridge, plays a critical role in preserving the separate identities of these villages and therefore the immediate landscape setting of the city.'*

9.2.4 The 2002 study concludes with a list of 16 special qualities to be safeguarded. These include:

- ‘...
- *A soft green edge to the city;*
- *Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside;*
- *Elements and Features Contributing Positively to the Character of the Landscape Setting;*
- *The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of the necklace villages; and*
- *A city set in a landscape which retains strongly rural character.’*

9.2.5 It is noted that the Greater Cambridge Local Plan has now published a set of evidence that will inform the development of the new plan policies. This includes a revised Green Belt assessment for the whole Green Belt land in Greater Cambridge: Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (LUC, August 2021).

9.2.6 While the Greater Cambridge Local Plan is not yet adopted the supporting evidence is a material consideration and it is the most recent, reliable information on the Green Belt qualities.

9.2.7 The focus of the study is to identify the contribution the Green Belt land makes to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes and *‘the harm that is likely to result from expanding existing inset settlements (or settlements bordering the Green Belt’s outer edge)’*. In order to do so the Assessment:

- *‘identifies variations in openness and the extent to which land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt;*
- *and uses this to determine variations in the potential harm to those Green Belt purposes of releasing land within Greater Cambridge from the designation.’*

9.2.8 This Green Belt Assessment, although broadening the scope of the previous evidence to the whole Green Belt land, complies with the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt set out in the 2018 CCC and SCDC Local Plans (see 9.1.2), which are referred to as Purpose 1, 2 and 3. The 16 qualities (see 9.2.4) of the Cambridge Green Belt identified in the 2002 study are also agreed on and appropriately associated with the three purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt.

9.2.9 The Assessment applies a six-step approach that culminates with the definition of *‘variation in harm around Cambridge and inset settlement edges’*. The rating of harm of releasing land from the Green Belt for each parcel is the combination of the variation in contribution with the impact on adjacent Green Belt. The Green Belt harm is rated with a five-point scale from very high to low harm.

9.2.10 The Site is located in Parcel BA2 of this Green Belt Assessment. As indicated in Figure 6, the Assessment concludes that the Site has Low Harm. The parcel scored Limited/No Contribution to the first Purpose of the Cambridge Green Belt and Relatively Limited to the remaining two.

9.2.11 Notably, the land surrounding the Site (BA1, BA8, BA3, BA7 and OA6) has increasingly higher scores in harming the Green Belt.

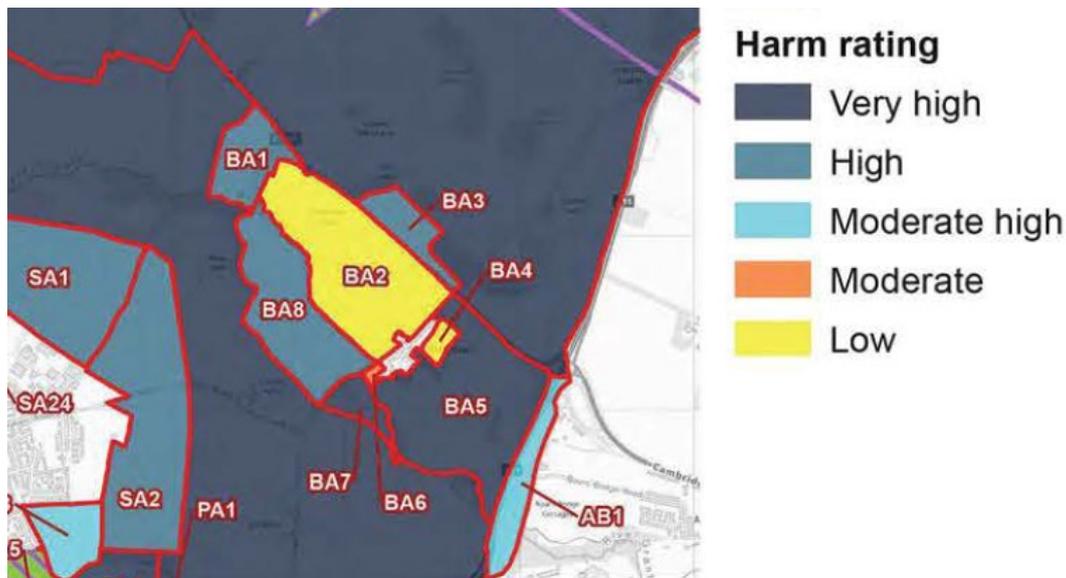


Figure 5 - Harm Rating map extract from the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Review (2021)

- 9.2.12 The detailed analysis identifies BA2 Parcel as open. However, it also highlights the existing woodland belt as a *'strong boundary feature'*. It also acknowledges that the *'extent of urbanising development within the west of the parcel results in urbanising visual influence.'*
- 9.2.13 The distinction between BA2 and the inset settlement of Babraham is considered *'moderate'*.
- 9.2.14 The contribution to the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes is set out as follows:
- Purpose 1 – Limited/No Contribution: The land is closely associated to Babraham village, but too distant from Cambridge to be closely associated to it.
  - Purpose 2 – Relatively limited: The Parcel has some relationship with Babraham and the *'significant amount of development (The Babraham Institute) that weakens its rural character'*, although this includes heritage assets with the Hall and the Church of St Peter. However, land to the north includes the historic parkland and woodland blocks/belt that make a *'positive contribution to the character of the landscape and the quality of Cambridge's setting, including as experienced on approach to the wider city from the southeast along Cambridge Road/Babraham Road (A1307).'* Furthermore, the land to the west is strongly associated with the river Granta and allows *'some appreciation of the topographical framework of the city.'*
  - Purpose 3 – Relatively limited: The Parcel is separated from Great Shelford by a wide landscape gap and is lacking a direct road link. *'The parcel has some degree of relationship with the inset settlement, but also has a degree of distinction from it.'*
- 9.2.15 The BA2 Parcel also scores *'negligible'* in the release as an expansion of Babraham. Therefore, should land be released for development, is it considered that *'it would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the north, east or west to Green Belt purposes due to strong boundary separation by woodland belts, open land and the A1307, to the north and west, and Cambridge Road to the east.'* Nor there would be an impact on land to the south-east.

### 9.3 Assessment of the Effects on the Cambridge Green Belt

- 9.3.1 The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is *'to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open'* (NPPF, 2021). The openness of the Green Belt is then linked to the five Green Belt purposes identified in the NPPF:
- To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one other;

- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
  - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land.
- 9.3.2 Furthermore, to ensure that the proposal is acceptable development in accordance with NPPF Par 149, it has to be demonstrated that the proposal has no greater impact on the 'openness' of the Green Belt than the existing development.
- 9.3.3 In the first instance, it is noted that the NPPF does not provide any definition of 'openness' and its relation to landscape and visual characteristics. However, the following case law is of relevance:
- **Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government 2015** shows that the concept of 'openness' is not '*narrowly limited to [a] volumetric approach*'; in this case it is considered that the '*visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of 'openness of the Green Belt'*' and it relates to the capacity of the Green Belt to fulfil its purposes.
  - More recently in the **Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others v North Yorkshire County Council 2020**, it was reiterated that visual effects should be given appropriate weight when these are a relevant consideration for the assessment of the impact on the Green Belt's openness.
- 9.3.4 Openness can therefore be defined on the basis either of a volumetric approach or a perceptual approach (i.e. on the basis of visual impact). Since this is an LVA, only the latter is considered here, with the volumetric approach addressed in the Planning Statement by Bidwells (XXX 2021).
- 9.3.5 With regard to the visual aspects of Green Belt's openness, it is believed that Lord Justice Lindblom's statement that '*the policy implicitly requires the decision-maker to consider how those visual effects bear on the question of whether the development would "preserve the openness of the Green Belt"*' substantially confirms the link between the assessment of the visual effects within an LVA and the effects of the development on the 'openness' of the Green Belt.
- 9.3.6 Therefore, with reference to the findings of Section 8, it is believed that in visual terms the proposal would not result in adverse visual effects on the overall openness of the Green Belt. The proposed development is assessed against a hierarchy of openness. Whilst the development would be introduced into open areas within the existing Campus, thereby reducing their internal openness, it would not increase the extent of the Campus or the perceived openness of the surrounding countryside. The identified adverse effects are confined to particular locations within the Site or to its immediate proximity, and to views from a specific direction (see Viewpoint 2 and 5), and therefore would not harm the openness of the wider Green Belt.
- 9.3.7 The Site is largely well screened by the existing vegetation; the woodland density would also filter views during winter months. Furthermore, the siting of the proposed building preserves a compact built form, avoiding inappropriate sprawl. However, it is acknowledged that the proposed building will be visible in some views from Bridleway 12/12 close to the Campus. As seen from this location, the proposed development would reduce the gap between the existing buildings, resulting in some loss of a sense of openness within the Campus.
- 9.3.8 The local planning framework and associated evidence base identify the specific character and function of the Cambridge Green Belt. These are largely associated with local landscape qualities, such as rural character, fields and settlement patterns. Section 7, Table 2, concluded that there would be no adverse effects on the wider qualities of the Cambridge Green Belt, as the proposal would not alter the existing landscape character. While, a localised loss of openness within the Campus is acknowledged, the proposal will not alter the relationship between the Campus and Babraham village, and therefore affecting the perceived separation between settlements.
- 9.3.9 In conclusion, it is believed that the proposed development is consistent with the more recent Cambridge Green Belt assessment (August 2021) and would therefore result in a low level of harm. The analysis of visual and landscape aspects of the effects on the Green Belt found that the overall qualities and openness of the Cambridge Green Belt would be preserved, and the proposal will not cause harm. Where adverse effects are identified, these are limited to a very

local scale (i.e. the Campus and its immediate context) and a restricted group of receptors (i.e. users of the Campus and nearby PRowS).

# 10.0 Summary of Effects

## 10.1 Summary of Landscape Effects

- 10.1.1 The proposed development is sited within the Babraham Research Campus. The Babraham Research Campus introduces a contrasting commercial character to the otherwise rural setting of the village. This urbanising influence results in a medium-high sensitivity for the landscape of the study area, which is largely characterised by the Granta River Valley.
- 10.1.2 The location of the proposal within the Campus will be consistent with the landscape baseline. It will not introduce a new, isolated feature, but will be nested within the existing context of large, research buildings. Despite the localised increase in urban character, the overall landscape baseline would not be altered fundamentally, and there would be no adverse effects on the setting of heritage assets or the PRow network.
- 10.1.3 No adverse effects are also identified on the distinctive wooded skyline, as the proposal sits within the lower river valley, or on the River Granta's role as a valuable landscape feature with considerable GI potential. While it is noted that the proposal will somewhat limit the capacity to fully express the GI value of the Site, the private nature of the Campus, reinforced by controlled access, constrains the multifunctionality of the GI corridor and therefore its potential to contribute to all identified GI themes.
- 10.1.4 The location of the development also mitigates potential effects on the Cambridge Green Belt. The Site is substantially enclosed by existing buildings and vegetation, contrasting with the openness typical of the wider Green Belt. Further considerations of the effects on the Cambridge Green Belt is provided in the summary below (par 10.3). However, it is noted that, at a local landscape scale, the proposal will reduce the appreciation of openness within the Campus itself, which is provided by green corridors between the buildings and open grassland. The proposed development will reduce the extent of the green corridor between B940 and B950, resulting in an increased sense of enclosure and the loss of open grassland to the north of the Site.
- 10.1.5 Finally, it has been highlighted that the proposals are likely to cause adverse effects on the distinctive tranquillity of the contextual rural landscape. This is the result of the cumulative effects of the existing disturbance provided by the A11 and A130 with the additional traffic generated by the proposed development. These effects would, however, vary over time and should be reconsidered against the findings of future Transport Assessments.

## 10.2 Summary of Visual Effects

- 10.2.1 The visual baseline identified four main groups of visual receptors. For each group, excluding the road users on the A1037, representative viewpoints were analysed to inform the assessment of visual effects.
- 10.2.2 The assessment of the representative viewpoints indicates that the proposed buildings would be largely screened by intervening vegetation, and occasionally the buildings on the Campus. Although it is acknowledged that the same degree of screening would not be achieved in winter, most of the woodlands and tree belts within the surrounding area are sufficiently dense to limit glimpses of the proposal.
- 10.2.3 In a few situations the proposal is likely to extend above the existing tree canopies or result in a perceived increase in the density of development. Where the character of the view is preserved, this would not cause adverse effects. However, this is not the case for receptors on bridleway 12/12 (Viewpoint 2) to the south-west of the Site. In this instance, the increase in urban character would result in the loss of a green gap between existing buildings and, therefore, a localised reduction in perceived openness.
- 10.2.4 Localised adverse effects would also be experienced by road users at the entrance to the Research Campus. The proposed development to the north of the Site would result in a substantial change to the visual context of these receptors, with the loss of views across open, rural landscape.

10.2.5 Nevertheless, the proposed development would be well contained within the existing tree belts, retaining a compact visual effect, and would largely preserve the wooded skyline and contextual sense of openness.

### **10.3 Summary of Green Belt Effects**

10.3.1 The appraisal of effects on the Cambridge Green Belt draws from the conclusion of the LVA. Both landscape and visual effects resulting from the proposed development have been considered against the specific function and character of the Cambridge Green Belt, which is identified as a receptor in its own right.

10.3.2 The LVA supports the conclusion that there would be no adverse effects on the overall qualities of the Cambridge Green Belt, which would retain its rural character and sense of openness.

10.3.3 The proposal is well screened by the existing vegetation. The Site, despite the Green Belt allocation, is in fact characterised by a strong sense of enclosure, due to the existing vegetation and buildings, which contrast with the intrinsic openness of the surrounding rural landscape. Furthermore, the proposal will be located within the cluster of existing buildings, maintaining the compact character of the Campus.

10.3.4 The few identified adverse effects relate to localised factors. One is the loss of the visual gap between the existing buildings in views from bridleway 12/12 to the south-west of the Site, which also results in the loss of a sense of openness in the green corridor within the Campus. The other is the loss of open grassland to the south-west of the Site access. Although both effects result in some harm through loss of perceived openness, this would be confined to the Campus and its immediate context, and would not be harmful to the qualities of the wider Cambridge Green Belt.

# 11.0 Conclusion

## 11.1 Design Recommendations

- 11.1.1 The LVA and the appraisal of effects on the Cambridge Green Belt conclude that there would be few adverse effects overall, and that the proposal is well integrated within the contextual landscape.
- 11.1.2 The proposed parameter plans (see Appendix 2) include strategic landscape buffers that are considered essential to mitigate some of the identified effects. Since the detailed design of these areas is not yet defined, it is recommended that the following design principles are applied to future detailing of the proposal:
- **Dense planting** around built development to the west and north-west in order to mitigate visual effects experienced by receptors on the bridleway 12/12, road users on Babraham Road and residents at the edge of Sawston.
  - **Larger tree specimens** to the north of the proposal to filter possible glimpses of the proposed built form and flues in views from the Roman Road recreational footpath (E2 European Long Distance Route).
  - **Retention of open, grassland landscape** to the west of the Site to preserve the river landscape character and retain the capacity to improve and support the River Granta GI corridor.
  - **Internal green gaps** between the existing and proposed built form to retain some local sense of openness.
- 11.1.3 It is noted that the mitigation of visual effects would be reliant on the successful establishment of proposed planting. Therefore, appropriate landscape maintenance plans should be required to ensure the planting will thrive and grow successfully.
- 11.1.4 Finally, the consideration of a Campus-wide transport strategy (see Transport Strategic Overview by Stantec, August 2021) that encourages the use of electric vehicles and cycling would mitigate effects related to the loss of tranquillity due to increased traffic flows.

## 11.2 Conclusions

- 11.2.1 This LVA was conducted on the basis of approved guidance and professional judgment. The comprehensive review of available evidence against the on-site study, undertaken as per the proposed methodology (as outline in Section 2), has resulted in the identification of few adverse effects. These are associated with localised factors; overall, the proposal is considered to be well integrated into its contextual landscape and would not alter the visual amenity of the study area.
- 11.2.2 In conclusion, the results of the LVA findings suggest that there would be no harm to the special qualities or intrinsic openness of the Cambridge Green Belt.