Land South of Longstanton

Landscape and Visual Technical Review Report

Stantec UK Limited
Hallam Land
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Document control sheet

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Executive Summary

Landscape, Visual and Green Infrastructure

The Site has no national or local landscape designations and lies outside of the South Cambridgeshire Green Belt. Nearby settlements of Longstanton and Northstowe are separated by robust green spaces that help to maintain their individual identities. The landscape is typical of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, characterised by gently undulating land, open arable fields, sparse woodland, and long views across the fen-edge landscape.

The Site comprises primarily arable fields, with a brook and variable boundary vegetation. Views into the Site vary: limited views from the north, east, and south due to vegetation and built form; more open views from the west; and elevated views into the Site are available from Wilson's Bridge over Northstowe Avenue. Key visual sensitivities for the local area include long, open rural views, historic landscape features such as ditches and driveways, settlement edges screened by hedgerows and trees; and the spire of All Saints Church and Wilson's Bridge are notable local visual landmarks.

The proposed development integrates sensitively with the existing landscape character and minimises effects on long, open views, whilst maintaining a robust green space between Longstanton and the proposed development to preserve settlement separation and character and to protect heritage settings.

Key view corridors toward All Saints Church and Wilson's Bridge are incorporated into the masterplan strategy. The proposed development offers enhanced connectivity through new footpath and cycle links to existing PROWs and the wider active travel network, utilising the green-blue infrastructure framework of the proposed development.

Green-blue infrastructure such as the brook corridor, green open space, sports pitches and SUDs drainage features, provide landscape structure to the proposed development. The masterplan demonstrates opportunity to strengthen planting along the Site boundaries, while avoiding overly dense screen planting that would feel out of character; and to provide organic shaped woodland blocks at the northeastern edge of the Site, and more geometric planting within the development areas.

1 Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Technical Review has been prepared to support the Stantec Technical Review Report for the proposed development at Land South of Longstanton. The assessment provides an overview of the Site's landscape character, visual context, and key sensitivities, drawing on detailed analysis of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands setting, the relationship with the neighbouring settlements of Longstanton and Northstowe, and the role of local landmark and heritage features; both within and in proximity to the development.

This report forms a key component of the overarching Vision Document for the scheme ensuring that landscape and visual principles are carried forward into the emerging development masterplan. The proposals outlined in this report set out a landscape-led approach, underpinned by settlement identity, and a robust green-blue infrastructure.

2 Landscape, Visual and Green Infrastructure

2.1 Landscape Designations and Context

The Site is envisaged to comprise of the following:

- Residential development of approximately 1,000 dwellings;
- Primary school;
- Local centre;
- Public open space;
- Play facilities;
- Biodiversity enhancements; and
- Associated infrastructure.

There are no national or local landscape designations upon the Site.

The South Cambridgeshire Green Belt boundary is situated to the south and east of the Site. Green Belt is a planning policy, not a landscape designation, however aspects of Green Belt such as openness is pertinent to landscape and visual matters.

Longstanton is situated to the north and northeast of the Site. The historic parts of Longstanton are in the centre of the settlement around All Saints Church and in the south of the settlement around the Church of St Michael. Aside from the two historic cores, much of the settlement is formed by modern estate and military housing. The settlement has a semi-rural character, and the western edges of the settlement are vegetated to varying degrees, which creates well-defined wooded edges that limit views out to the wider countryside.

Northstowe lies to the east of Longstanton; the two settlements are clearly separated by retained green space. Parts of Northstowe are undergoing construction. The centre of Cambridge lies approximately 9km to the southeast of the Site.

The Site is located adjacent to the dual carriageway of Northstowe Avenue, between Longstanton and the south of Northstowe. The B1050 road lies to the west of the Site. Between the western Site boundary and the B1050 are two large drainage ponds; to the south of the southernmost pond is a mobile phone mast.

There are no Public Rights of Way (PROW) within the Site. Wilson's Road bridleway is situated along the Site's southeastern boundary, extending from the end of Wilson's Road to Northstowe Avenue, and is vegetated by trees of varying density and maturity on both sides of the route. The bridleway crosses over Northstowe Avenue via a distinctive and local landmark bridge, Wilson's Bridge. There is a good network of PROW in the surrounding area. The Pathfinder Long Distance Walk passes through Longstanton to the north of the Site.

There are two Conservation Areas at Longstanton, and within these is the Grade I Listed Building Church of All Saints and Grade II* Listed Building Church of St Michael. The Conservation Areas include small open fields or green spaces and hedge-lined paths. All Saints Church is situated to the north of the Site, and the Church of St Michael is to the east of the Site.

There are no Scheduled Monuments in the Site and the Site is not on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

There is no Ancient Woodland within the Site.

There are no areas of public open space within the Site.

A planning application was submitted in 2025 for a solar farm on land to the east of the Site and Wilson's Road bridleway. The proposal for that application includes buffer planting of trees and hedgerows to screen the solar development. The Greater Cambridge Landscape Officer's comments on the solar application suggest that the buffer planting should not be a temporary feature, and that the buffer planting would alter the character of the surrounding landscape from large scale and open fields with long views to that of a smaller-scale landscape comprised of parcels with shorter views and thus would form a new landscape character baseline.

2.2 Landscape Features of the Site and Landscape Character

The landform of the Site is low-lying and gently undulating, appearing almost flat. A brook flows south-west to north-east through the western portion of the Site, and through large two drainage ponds which are outside of the Site boundary. The Site is formed by a medium-scale, irregular shaped field in arable use and a small rectangular field which borders Home Farm Road / School Lane and the northernmost drainage pond, and which appears to be fallow land.

Trees and hedges of varying density and age align much of the Site's southeastern boundary with Wilson's Track bridleway and part of the Site's northeastern boundary. There has been recent planting at the boundaries between the Site and the drainage pond parcels, however this planting has yet to establish and mature. There are mature trees which appear to be remnants of a former hedgerow field

boundary to the brook and the Site's northwestern boundary, situated between the two drainage pond parcels. The remaining Site boundaries are unvegetated, contributing to the Site's open character. The vegetated field boundaries of the Site and nearby fields are a key component of the rural aspects of landscape character.

The Site lies within National Character Area 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, which, "…*is a broad, gently undulating, lowland plateau dissected by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.*" Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands - National Character Area Profiles. Key characteristics of the national character area include:

- Gently undulating lowland plateau
- Variable, scattered woodland
- Predominantly open, arable landscape comprising planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species poor hedgerows, contrasting with irregular fields
- Diversity of building materials
- Settlements are clustered around major road and rail corridors. Widely dispersed smaller towns, villages and linear settlements create a rural character
- Major transport routes through the area
- Recreational assets including extensive rights of way network and tourist destinations include the city of Cambridge.

The Site is within 2A Longstanton Fen Edge Claylands character area, published in the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment by Chris Blandford Associates, February 2021, prepared on behalf of Greater Cambridge Shared Partnership. This is a large character area, and is noted as being a, "…*gently undulating, settled, open landscape with several villages located on raised 'islands' above The Fens.*" (1st paragraph, page 64, Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment by Chris Blandford Associates, February 2021). Key characteristics are:

"- *Settled rural landscape including villages with historic linear cores on elevated fen 'islands' buildings as well as small, isolated farms*

- *Fragmented pockets of ecological value include grazing marsh at Swavesey and Oakington, dispersed pockets of deciduous woodland and traditional orchards.*"

(2nd paragraph, page 64, Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment by Chris Blandford Associates, February 2021).

Other aspects of this character area include:

- Gentle rising topography from 5m AOD at the edge of The Fens to circa 30m in the south at the Wooded Claylands
- Network of drains across the land, becoming more regular in the north of the character area
- Arable fields, typically a medium size and semi rectangular pattern

- Fields defined by mix of fragmented hedgerows and distinctive straight historic drainage ditches and droveways, which originally connected villages with areas of common pasture on The Fens
- Sparse vegetation, with scattered tree clumps, some shelterbelts around farms, and occasional hedgerows. These overlap to give a perception of a treed horizon, and it is noted that this occurs on the edge of villages and farms, providing localised visual enclosure
- Orchards, small-scale paddocks and pastoral fields close to the edge of villages, providing intimacy and variety in the landscape
- Settled landscape, Longstanton and Northstowe are noted as amongst the small to moderate sized commuter villages. Villages are on low sand and gravel fen islands ad generally have an historic linear core following the main road
- Over time, more recent development has expanded several of the villages. Northstowe new settlement is being built out. Some small, linear settlements along roads and isolated farms, tend to be surrounded by hedgerows and trees.
- Hedgerows to paddocks, mature copses, tree groups and orchards frequently screen settlements, meaning built form is only intermittently visible in open views across the character area
- Largely flat landscape with sparse vegetation, enable long, open views between settlements. Large dramatic skies are a notable feature.
- Vertical features occasional on the skyline such as communications masts and poles, church spires and willow trees. The A14 dual carriageway is straight and detracts from local tranquillity.

Landscape sensitivities are identified for the landscape character type and for 2A Longstanton Fen Edge Claylands character area. These are shown in the extracts below.

Extracts of Landscape Sensitivities, Landscape Character Type 2 and Landscape Character Area 2A, pages 61 and 65, Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment:

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Network of historic ditches and droveways that contribute to the area's sense of place
- Peaceful, rural open character of the landscape
- Hedgerows, shelterbelts and small clumps of trees forming a distinctive, localised vegetation pattern in proximity to villages
- Surviving traditional orchards
- Remaining pockets of high ecological value landscape features such as grazing marsh alongside watercourses and scattered deciduous woodland
- Historic, linear village cores

Specific Landscape Sensitivities

In addition to the generic landscape sensitivities for this landscape character type, the following sensitivities are specific to this character area:

- Long, open views from villages across open, arable fields

Landscape guidelines for integrating development into the landscape are also provided for the landscape character type and for 2A Longstanton Fen Edge Claylands character area. These are shown in the extracts below.

Extracts of Landscape Guidelines – Guidance for Integrating Development into the Landscape, Landscape Character Type 2 and Landscape Character Area 2A, pages 62 and 65, Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment:

Guidance for Integrating Development into the Landscape

- Conserve the overall rural character, with dispersed Fen Edge villages, farms and cottages linked by rural roads and historic droves and tracks
- Ensure any village extensions are located on the high ground of the Fen Islands, avoiding incremental development on the flat, low-lying fen
- Ensure new developments on the edges of villages are integrated by wide hedgerows, copses and shelterbelt planting reflecting the local mixes
- Ensure a transition between Fen and Fen Island by retention and creation of small hedgerowed paddocks
- Conserve and enhance existing orchard and hedgerowed paddocks
- Maintain linear or rectilinear form of the settlements and avoid closes and cul-de-sacs where possible
- Ensure buildings are mostly set on the back edge of pavements, or face the street with small front gardens in the village cores
- Ensure new developments integrate/connect with existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) within development layout
- Ensure new developments reflect the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings of the area and pick up on the traditional building styles, height, materials, colours and textures of the locality
- Enclose boundaries facing onto roads by low brick walls and/or simple iron railings, timber picket fences and hedges as appropriate in the village cores
- Retain hedges and introduce them as boundaries alongside roads outside village cores
- Integrate water features, such as ditches dykes and ponds, into new developments as part of open spaces
- Avoid the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials, street furniture, lighting and signage as part of traffic calming measures wherever appropriate

Specific Landscape Guidelines

In addition to the generic landscape guidelines for this landscape character type, the following guidelines are specific to this character area:

- Ensure new development is integrated into the landscape sympathetically and does not affect long, open views

2.3 Views and Visual Amenity

Views of the Site from the north are limited by the combination of a line of trees with some gaps along the southern side of School Lane, dense linear belts of trees and shrub / scrub vegetation to the north of School Lane and the east of Home Farm Road and built form at the northern end of Longstanton.

Views of the Site from the east are limited by the built form of Longstanton and its wooded western edge, and belts of dense tree and structure planting associated with boundaries of Northstowe. There

are some partial views available of the Site from some areas of housing in the western edge of Longstanton, though the wooded edge limits those.

To the south of the Site, views are filtered by the line of trees along Wilson's Track bridleway, though there are gaps below and between trees on this route. South of the recently constructed Northstowe Avenue and north of the A14, vegetation bordering regular shaped medium fields limits views of the Site.

Views of the Site from the west are more open, because of little vegetation to field boundaries and along the B1050; although there is dense vegetation around Bar Farm and the associated access road connecting from and to the B1050, which provides partial filtering of the Site.

Wilson's Bridge PROW crossing over Northstowe Avenue is elevated and there are views available across the Site from that route heading northwards.

There are local views into the Site from Northstowe Avenue currently, though these would reduce if planting is implemented along that road corridor. There are local views into the Site from the B1050 and the junction of the B1050 with Home Farm Road and School Lane. There are also local views into the Site from School Lane through gaps between roadside trees and below the tree canopies and from the junction of School Land and Stokes Close at the edge of Longstanton and Conservation Area.

2.4 Landscape and Visual Analysis and Strategy

The **Landscape and Visual Analysis Plan** is at **Appendix A.**

The spire of All Saints Church in Longstanton is a distinctive local skyline feature in views from the Site and the wider surrounding landscape, providing local legibility for people using PROWs and the road network. The Church of St Michael can be perceived from the central part of the Site but is less noticeable in views from the wider landscape. Wilson's Bridge over Northstowe Avenue is a modern and distinctive local skyline feature in views from the Site and the wider area, which also provides local legibility.

There are no trees within the Site; and the Site boundaries are partly open with trees of varying density along some parts of the Site boundaries.

In relation to landscape character, new development should be integrated into the landscape sympathetically and avoid effects on long and open views.

A robust landscape separates Longstanton and Northstowe, maintaining the characters of the individual settlements. Development upon the Site would follow this approach, to have its own settlement character, separated from Longstanton by high-quality and robust green infrastructure. Maintaining a robust green space between the western edge of Longstanton and the edge of development within the Site would minimise effects of the development upon the Conservation Area and would reflect the pattern of green space from small field parcels in the Conservation Area to the eastern Longstanton settlement edge.

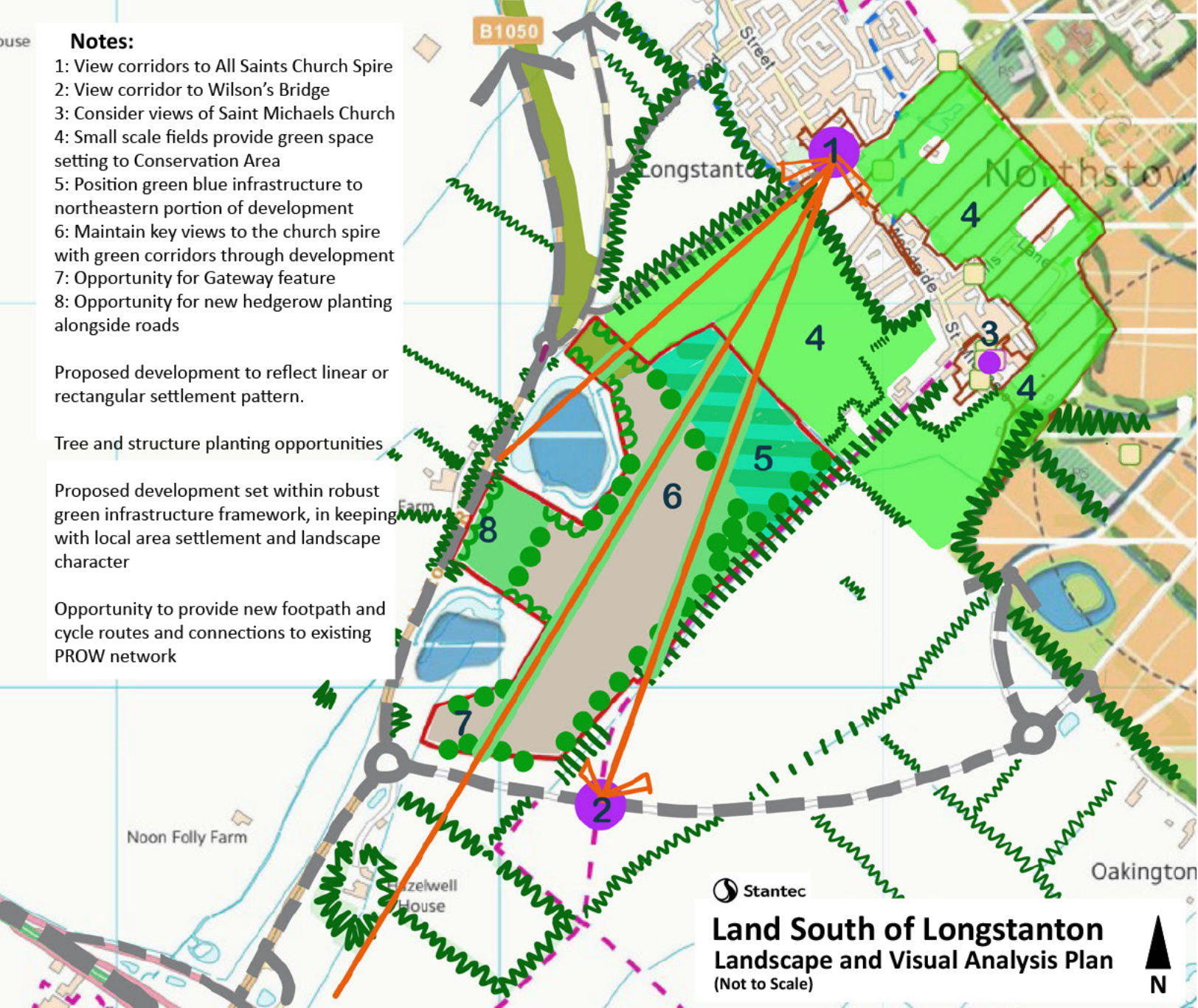
Development masterplan landscape strategy and design approach:

- Proposed development to reflect settlement characteristics for the local area, with development being linear or rectangular in pattern

- Maintain key view corridors as green corridors through the Site to All Saints Church spire
- Incorporate views towards Wilson's Bridge from within the proposed development as a design feature from key areas in the scheme
- Position green / green-blue infrastructure to the northeastern portion of the Site to service the proposed development and contribute to the green spatial separation between the proposed development and the western edge of Longstanton
- Tree and structure planting to strengthen the southeast Site boundary line of trees between the proposed development and Wilson's Road bridleway. Tree, woodland and structure planting to be sympathetically located around development areas within the Site to integrate, filter and soften views of new buildings from the north, east and south, whilst avoiding the creation of a mass of screen planting that is out of keeping with the landscape character and planting characteristics in the adjacent areas. Opportunity to allow views into the proposed development from locations along the B1050 and the junction of the B1050 with Northstowe Avenue
- Proposed development set within a green infrastructure framework, so that the proposed development is one of three different sized settlements set within a strong, interconnected landscape framework that separates them all and ensures their own individual characters, within proximity to each other and positively adding to the character of settlements contained within the wider landscape.
- Opportunity for a gateway feature within the proposed development near to the junction of the B1040 and Northstowe Avenue
- Blocks or areas of new woodland or structure planting to be organic in shape at the northeastern portion of the development, with more geometric or linear planting within the rest of the proposed development area
- Provide new footpaths and cycle routes to connect to the existing PROW and strategic active travel network including the Wilson's Road bridleway, utilising the green-blue infrastructure framework of the proposed development.
- Introduce hedgerow planting or hedgerow restoration to roadside edges at the periphery of the proposed development to assist with integrated the development into the landscape.
- Retention of the brook as part of the green-blue infrastructure framework for the development, with enhanced planting to provide an attractive, green-blue landscape feature between new built form of housing and the area of sports pitches.

Appendices

Appendix A Landscape and Visual Analysis Plan


Notes:
1: View corridors to All Saints Church Spire
2: View corridor to Wilson's Bridge
3: Consider views of Saint Michaels Church
4: Small scale fields provide green space setting to Conservation Area
5: Position green blue infrastructure to northeastern portion of development
6: Maintain key views to the church spire with green corridors through development
7: Opportunity for Gateway feature
8: Opportunity for new hedgerow planting alongside roads
Proposed development to reflect linear or rectangular settlement pattern.
Tree and structure planting opportunities
Proposed development set within robust green infrastructure framework, in keeping with local area settlement and landscape character
Opportunity to provide new footpath and cycle routes and connections to existing PROW network
B1050
Longstanton
Noon Folly Farm
Oakington
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
Stantec
Land South of Longstanton
Landscape and Visual Analysis Plan
(Not to Scale)
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