

# Land at Horseheath Road, Linton

Landscape and Visual Appraisal leading to Masterplan Evolution including HELAA Review

LDĀDESIGN

Linton: Masterolan & Landscape Evolution

# Introduction

This document has been produced on behalf of Endurance Estates as part of their representation to Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) in response to Greater Cambridge Local Plan - First Proposals regarding their Site located south of Horseheath Road, Linton (the Site).

This document reviews the Greater Cambridge Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), September 2021 in respect of the Site, particularly with regard to landscape and visual matters. It then outlines a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the Site leading to a landscape strategy for development that results in a refreshed masterplan approach that seeks to limit effects on landscape and visual receptors, as well as delivering additional benefits.

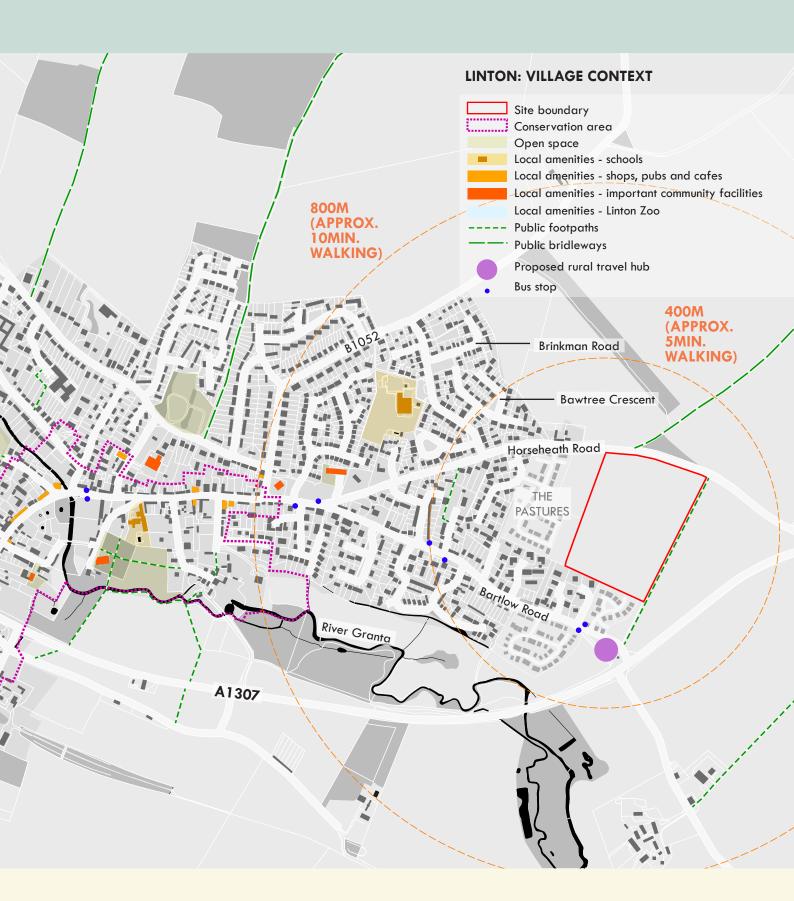
This document should be read alongside planning representations and supporting evidence which address the issues raised regarding development of the Site such that GCSP include the Site for future consideration within their emerging Local Plan allocations.

The Site is 6.57ha in area comprising of a single field on the eastern edge of Linton south of Horseheath Road. The Site is currently used for arable production enclosed by mature, continuous hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees with exception to parts of the north and western edges of the Site, which are notably more gappy in character. The Site slopes from Horseheath Road in the north down to the southwestern corner of the Site. A public footpath is located along the eastern boundary, outside of the Site, connecting Horseheath Road with Bartlow Road to the south.

Adjacent to the Site, a residential area is currently under construction to the west for 42 dwellings and allotments associated with The Pastures, and planning permission has been granted for 55 dwellings immediately south of the Site (September 2017). The Site will therefore be enclosed on two sides by residential development, meaning that this location would be a logical place for Linton to expand into, based on the evolution of the existing settlement pattern.

Linton offers a wide range of local services and amenities, including a village hall, schools (primary and secondary), shops, cafes, pubs, health centre, dental practice, places of worship and recreation areas, including a zoological garden. The village benefits from regular bus services to Cambridge and Haverhill. A 'rural travel hub' is proposed in close proximity to the Site along Bartlow Road, as part of the Greater Cambridge Partnership's 'Cambridge South East Transport Study', which will enhance the sustainability of the Site and eastern part of Linton. The hub would be delivered in Phase 2 of the Rural Travel Hubs project.





## **HELAA Review**

The HELAA was produced in order to support the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan as part of its evidence base. This seeks to assess potential sites submitted from the Call for Sites in terms of their suitability, availability and achievability. A 'Red, Amber, Green' (RAG) scoring system was used to carry out the assessment with regards to the three criteria. Sites were deemed to be unsuitable, unachievable or undeliverable if they were assessed as 'red' against any of the criteria.

The Site was included within the HELAA as site reference 40554 and was assessed as follows:

Criteria	Outcome
Suitable	Red
Available	Green
Achievable	Green

The 'Red' outcome regarding the suitability of the Site for development resulted from a 'Red' scoring for Landscape and Townscape issue. The remaining issues assessed for the Site were either 'Amber' or 'Green'.

The comments associated with the Site's assessment regarding Landscape and Townscape are as follows:

"The site is within the National Character Area 87 – East Anglian Chalk. This is an open, rolling, arable landscape running s-w to n-e along a wide chalk ridge to the south and east of Cambridge. The area has generally sparse tree cover, but wooded avenues and hilltop hangers of Beech are a notable features. This site is typical.

#### Local Character

At a local area the District Design guide locates the area in the Chalklands landscape character area. Village form is often strongly linier, following streams or valley bottoms, and features a detailed, enclosed series of paddocks and fields at the village edges.

#### Landscape Character Assessment (2021) Landscape Character Area - 7c Linton Chalk Hills

The site is an open arable field on the approach to the eastern edge of Linton. The site forms part of a defined entrance and landscape setting to Linton, with views over the village to the south, west and north west to Rivey Hill and woodlands. However, the site is fairly well screened by vegetation and landform in wider views. The site is separate from the village edge and would represent a significant extension into the countryside. Development of the whole site and 120 dwellings would not be possible without unacceptable landscape impacts."

From this assessment, the key concerns associated with development upon this Site are as follows:

- The Site forms part of a defined entrance and landscape setting to Linton;
- Views over the village to the south, west and north west to Rivey Hill and woodlands;
- The Site is separate from the village edge and would represent a significant extension into the countryside.; and
- Development of the whole Site and 120 dwellings would not be possible without unacceptable landscape impacts

The methodology of the HELAA in relation to Landscape and Townscape scoring is as follows:

Score	Assessment Criteria
Red	Development of the site would have a significant negative impact which cannot be mitigated.
Amber	Development of the site would have a detrimental impact which could be satisfactorily mitigated.
Green	Development of the site would have either a neutral or positive impact.

With the scoring method above, the assessment regarding the Site was judged 'Red' where development for 120 dwellings would have unacceptable landscape impacts that 'cannot be mitigated'.

Within the HELAA methodology for Landscape and Townscape, it states that 'if a site was found to be unacceptable at the proposal's scale/units/density etc. further consideration was given to determine if there was an option wherein development could occur if various amendments were made such as a reduction in unit numbers to the avoidance of a part of a site'. Unfortunately, this approach was not carried out for the Site as the assessment only considers 'Development of the whole site'.

It is noted that the majority of sites considered at Linton have been discounted in the HELAA as they have scored 'Red' under Landscape and Townscape. The development of all sites are deemed to have a significant negative impact which cannot be mitigated. Of the fourteen sites that have been put forward at Linton, thirteen have scored a 'Red' rating including one site which already has Reserved Matters Approval for 42 dwellings, albeit that the concerns relate to a larger scheme of 120 dwellings put forward. It is not clear whether any options regarding amendments such as reducing unit numbers have been assessed in relation to the sites at Linton in order to determine whether development in a site could occur.

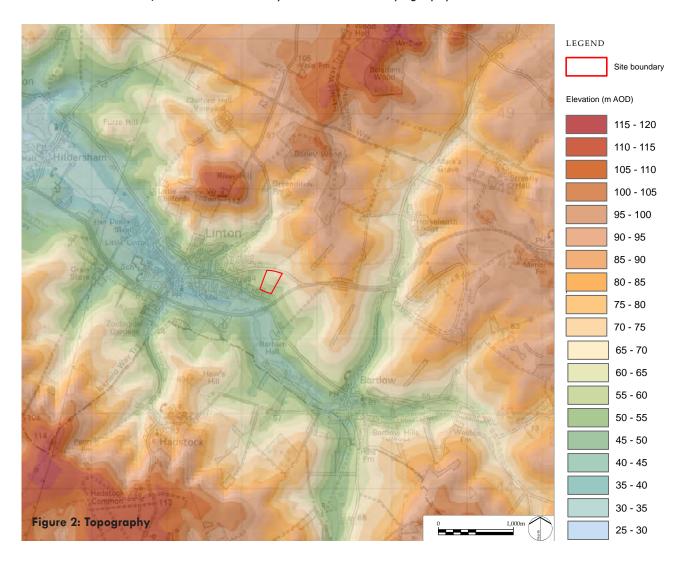
The following section of this document outlines a high-level Landscape and Visual Appraisal in order to determine the key landscape and visual receptors potentially effected by the proposed development that will shape the proposals in order to make the scheme 'satisfactorily mitigated' so that is can be considered to have an 'Amber' rating.

# Landscape and Visual Baseline

#### **Topography**

The topography of the Site and its surroundings are shown on Figure 2. The village of Linton is located within the valley floor of the River Granta which runs in a north westerly direction. The valley floor extends into valleys which run perpendicular into the water course. The east of the village is predominately located to the north of the watercourse, and to the west of the village the watercourse runs more centrally through the settlement. South of the River Granta, built form associated with Linton is located up to 55-60m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). In the north of Linton, built form climbs further up the valley side to 65-70m AOD.

The Site is located on the northern valley side and on the eastern edge of the Linton. It is lowest in the southern part of the Site where the ground rises from 55m AOD up to 65-70m AOD in the northwestern corner. The Site has a fairly consistent gradient across it. Beyond the north and east of the Site, the topography continues to rise. There are new homes currently being constructed to the west of the Site which are level with the lowest part of the Site. There are also approved plans for new housing to be constructed to the south of the Site, further into the valley floor at a lower topography than the Site.



#### Landscape Character

The Site lies within a transition zone between two National Character Areas, No. 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland and no. 87 East Anglian Chalk.

The East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA no. 87) is characterised by the narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs south-west—north-east across southern England.... a visually simple and uninterrupted landscape of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large regular fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges, with few trees, straight roads and expansive views to the north.

The vast majority of its landscape is open countryside, under cereal production.... It is an open landscape but trees on hill tops are visually distinct and characteristic. The smooth, rolling chalkland hills are dissected by the two gentle valleys of the rivers Granta and Rhee, which converge to form the River Cam just south of Cambridge.

The South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland NCA is characterised as 'an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernable over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century. The widespread moderately fertile, chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character.'

#### **Local Landscape Character**

A local authority scale Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was carried out in February 2021 by Chris Blandford Associates for Greater Cambridge. The Site is located within area 7C: Linton Chalk Hills which is summarised as a 'simple, large scale rolling arable landscape with scattered woodland and open views across the Granta River Valley'

The Key characteristics of this area are:

- · Simple rural landscape with large, rectilinear arable fields organised in an irregular pattern
- Sparsely scattered small woodland blocks, including ancient woodland
- Small pockets of lowland calcareous grassland and mosaic habitat
- Open character with long views across the Granta River Valley
- Distinctive linear features including earthworks, a Roman road, historic tracks, minor roads and dismantled railways

The Site is also in close proximity to two other LCAs: 8A: Pampisford Lowland Chalkland; and 9D: Granta River Corridor, both of which fall within the Zone of Visual Influence of the Site.

LCA 8A which is adjacent to the Site boundary is described as '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.'

The Key characteristics of this area are:

- Mature hedgerows, small blocks of woodland and shelterbelts combine with occasional lines roadside trees to create a visually enclosed, intimate character
- Settlement pattern of scattered small villages on elevated ground at the edges of the River Valleys

#### **Site Landscape Character**

The Site is characteristic of the local landscape character, sharing characteristics with both the 'Linton Chalk Hills' and the adjacent 'Pampisford Lowland Chalklands' Landscape Character Areas.

The topography of the Site is smooth as it gently rolls down the valley side towards the river corridor. The Site is rural but the urban fringe is visible. The proximity of the A1307 to the east as it climbs the hillside is a further urbanising effect on the Site's character. As the existing settlement edge of Linton gets closer to both the western and southern boundaries of the Site, when the approved developments are completed, the urban fringe character of the Site will become more dominant.

The Site is a rectilinear arable field retaining the historic field pattern of the region and is bounded to all sides by mature managed hedgerows. Field accesses are not gated and are maintained as gaps within the hedgerow. Existing and proposed tree belts adjacent to the Site at Horseheath Road and in the field to the south of the Site associated with consented development respectively, along with other vegetation in the landscape contributes to the creation of a green edge to Linton, which will become more similar to LCA 8A with vegetation combining to create a visually enclosed and intimate character.

Visually the Site is open with long distance views south across the Granta River Corridor and north west towards Rivey Hill which is in keeping with 7C Linton Chalk Hills.

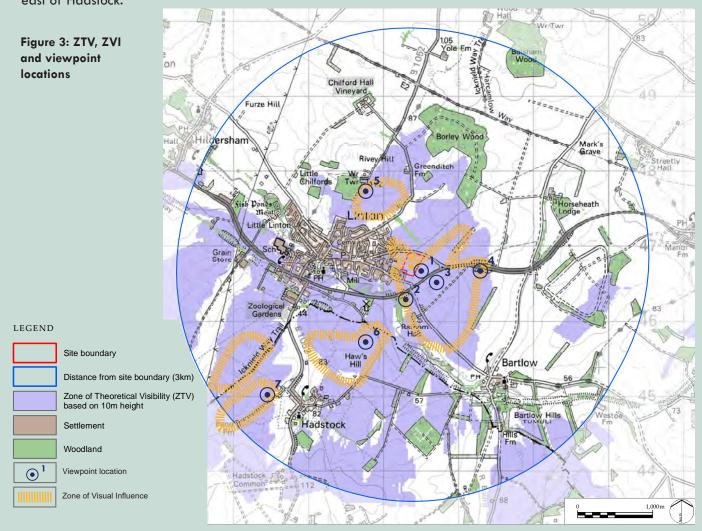


#### **Visibility**

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study is shown on Figure 3 below, which indicates areas of potential visibility. This is a computer generated model where housing was modelled at 10m high equivalent to a 2 story building. This provides a theoretical area of where the Site might be visible from and who might be able to view it. A site survey is then carried out using the ZTV to ascertain where actual visibility of the Site is available.

The ZTV indicated potential visibility generally along the valley of the River Granta. Potential visibility extended up to and beyond the 3km study area to the south of the Site where valley slopes face north towards the Site, whilst being limited by landform to the north and east by approximately 1km by Rivey Hill and a ridge west of Bartlow respectively.

From site surveys, actual visibility towards potential development within the Site would be limited to the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) as illustrated on Figure 3 below. This is due to the vegetation and topography associated with infrastructure (e.g. A1307, River Granta) as well as vegetation associated with settlements themselves (e.g. Linton, Hadstock) and along field boundaries. As a consequence, views are more limited than illustrated on the ZTV. The areas within the ZVI are within the valley side of the River Granta south of Borley Wood in close proximity to the Site (within c.1km), on the hillside of Rivery Hill to the north-west of the Site, on the north facing valley side of the River Granta west of Hadstock and northeast of Hadstock.



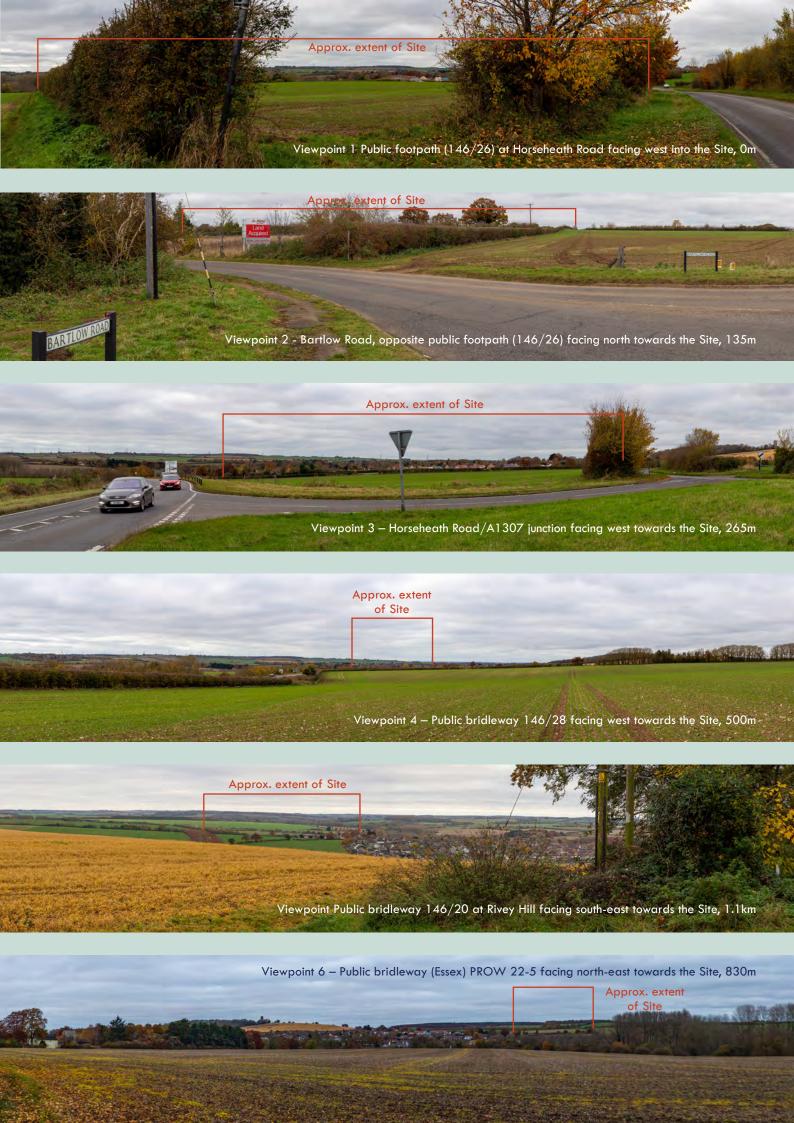
#### **Views**

The visibility of the Site from the surrounding landscape has been established during the site visit and described above. Views towards the Site are illustrated by the following viewpoint photographs and described below. The location of the viewpoints are provided in Figure 3 on the previous page. Full annotated photopanels and analysis of each viewpoint are provided in the appendix accompanying this document.

The following provides a summary of views towards the Site:

- Views to the east of the Site (viewpoints 1, 2, 3 and 4) illustrate the closest views and the potential change in view to the approach of Linton from Horseheath Road and Bartlow Road. Viewpoints 1 and 3 have direct views into the Site whilst viewpoints 3 and 4 are limited by vegetation and topography. From all viewpoints, the existing edge or consented development (land south of the Site) of Linton are visible. To varying degrees, the Site advances the perception of the edge of Linton further east. To reduce the mass and scale of development and to continue the existing and proposed green edge to Linton, it is recommended that development is offset from the eastern boundary to allow tree planting to screen and soften built form. In addition, it is considered that keeping development from the northeastern corner of the Site would assist with keeping the perception that Linton has maintained a green approach to the village along Horseheath Road, with the gateway to Linton focussed to the north-west of the Site.
- Views to the north of the Site are limited to the top of Rivey Hill. Public rights of way north of Linton are generally well screened with field boundary vegetation meaning that only Rivey Hill has views to the Site (viewpoint 5). Views from this location are elevated overlooking Linton and the River Granta valley. Existing 20th century development associated within the north of the village are perceived as a swathe of rooftops below. The Site is partially visible between intervening vegetation and built form associated with Linton. To reduce the perception that Linton is extending further along the granta valley, it is recommended that development is located in the south and west of the Site.
- Views to the south of Linton on the north facing valley slopes of the Granta valley (viewpoints 6 & 7) illustrate middle to long distance views towards the Site. These views generally illustrate how Linton has expanded up the south facing valley side of the River Granta, in some places nearly punctuating the ridgeline with built form. The Site is viewed in line with existing development associated with the Village, although the north-eastern corner is notably more visible due to its slightly higher ground level. To ensure that development in the Site is seen in harmony with existing development of Linton, it is recommended that development is kept away from the north-eastern corner of the Site.

In addition to views towards the Site, there is a key view from within the Site towards the Rivey Hill water tower facing north-west, a distinctive local landmark. Opportunities to celebrate this view within the proposed development should be considered.



# Landscape Opportunities and **Constraints**

#### Improving access to countryside

Within the Site there is an opportunity to create a new pedestrian link between Bridleway 146/25 and Footpath 146/26 and a potential crossing over Horseheath Road, improving the current situation where people are required to walk along a national speed limited road.

#### A wooded edge to Linton

A new woodland belt is proposed as part of the new approved developments to the south of the Site. Coupled with the woodlands to the north, the Site has the opportunity to connect these habitats together creating a new wildlife corridor and improving biodiversity within the area that will also also help to screen the existing edge of Llinton as well as proposed development in the Site from views to the east.

#### Using the topography of the Site

The contours of the Site provide opportunities to create development areas that work with the gradients of the land creating spaces that avoid steeply sloping roads and gardens.

The gently sloping valley side creates an opportunity to utilise the lower part of the Site for storing surface water runoff as well as a new area of public open space which could connect to the open space in the neighbouring development to the south.

#### Views to and from the Site

Within the Site there are views towards Rivey Water Tower in the northwest and long views southwards across the valley. There are opportunities to create view corridors towards Rivey Water Tower and to position buildings within the Site that follow the topography to maximise residents enjoyment of the views.

#### Maintaining a rural approach to Linton

By keeping development away from the north-eastern corner of the Site, not only does this help reduce landscape and visual effects by limiting built form on the highest area of the Site, but it also means that the approach along Horseheath Road can be enhanced with additional planting to maintain Linton's green and rural approach along Horseheath Road. A new village gateway at the entrance to the Site can be delivered in the far north-western corner near to the current gateway by The Pastures.





# **Masterplan Evolution**

The masterplan framework opposite illustrates the revised approach towards the development of the Site taking into account the landscape and visual constraints and opportunities identified as part of the LVA in the previous section.

The proposal is for up to 100-120 dwellings with associated public open space. Built development is located primarily to the west and southern parts of the Site to leave the highest and most visually sensitive area as green space. The proposed development in this location would be seen alongside existing views of new and consented dwellings within land west and south of the Site from views south of Linton.

The open space in the north-eastern corner of the Site maintains and enhances the green approach into Linton along Horseheath Road by use of proposed woodland planting, which ties into a network of existing and proposed woodland to the east of Linton, helping to strengthen Linton Chalk Hills character area. A gap between the proposed built edge of the development and the woodland is defined to allow a footpath to connect public footpath 146/26 north east of the Site with public bridleway 146/25 north-west of the Site aligned to views of Rivey Hill Water Tower.

Proposed roads are indicated to follow the contours of the land to enable efficient building methodology, as well as allowing street trees to be planted that would create a green layered effect between rooflines from views to the south of the Site.

Pedestrian connections are proposed to link with the new and proposed developments adjacent to the Site to create a permeable, safe and attractive place to live.

Vehicular access into the Site is proposed to the north-west of the Site off Horseheath Road with an associated path leading to Linton village centre and Linton Heights school. Pedestrian links to the public footpath east of the Site from streets within the development area are proposed to encourage permeability and a quick route to the proposed rural travel hub along Bartlow Road south of the Site.

Potential to explore a crossing between Site and bridleway; and delivering a surface treatment to footpath 146/26 such as self-binding gravel/hoggin to encourage walking to rural hub.





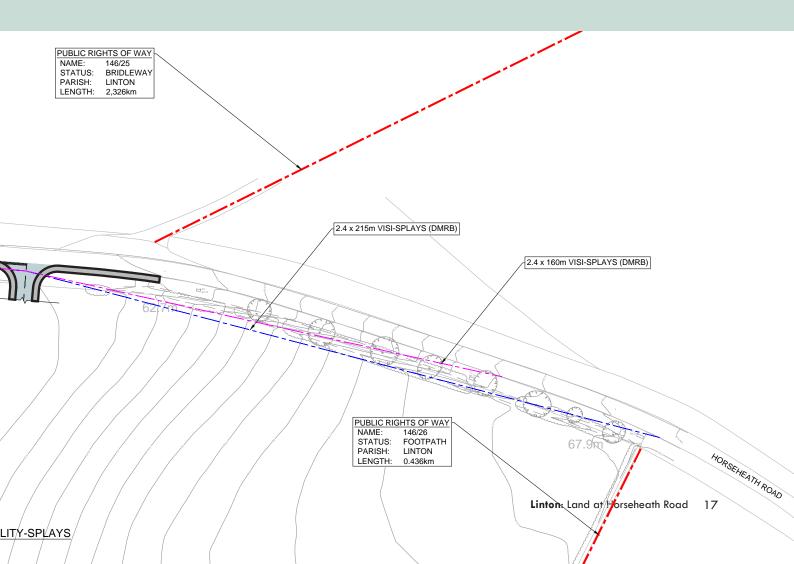
# Access

Access from Horseheath Road can be delivered in the form of a 5.5m carriageway with 2m footways in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Development Management General Principles for Development. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans would accompany any future planning applications for the site and would consider the development highway impacts in the context of the local and wider highway network and where required, present mitigation.

Pedestrian connectivity between the site and the village will be improved by connecting into the existing pedestrian infrastructure to the west of the site on Horseheath Road. This will provide pedestrian accessibility between the site and the local facilities and amenities within Linton, including access to Linton Heights Junior School.



The site's proximity to existing footpaths provides opportunities for improved connectivity both in terms of the site allocation in isolation, but also provides opportunities to improve accessibility for the wider catchment to access the proposed rural travel hub which will be located to the south of the site on Bartlow Road. The proposed rural travel hub is part of the proposals to enhance the A1307 as a public transport corridor. The hub will provide improved access for residents within rural areas to express commuter bus services travelling between Cambridge and Haverhill. The site is also within six minutes cycling distance from the Proposed Linton Greenway, an enhanced pedestrian and cycle route into Cambridge which is proposed to run parallel to the A1307. Access to these connections will further improve sustainable travel between Linton and the surrounding areas to the benefit of existing and future residents of the village.



# A Suitable Development

The HELAA produced by GCSP identified the Site south of Horseheath Road in Linton as not suitable in terms of Landscape and Townscape. This document has identified landscape and visual receptors following a high-level LVA that have shaped the proposed development in order to make the scheme appropriate. It is our recommendation that the assessment for the development of the Site in terms of Landscape and Townscape is downgraded to 'Amber' as this document outlines how the Site can come forward 'satisfactorily mitigated'.

The table opposite explains how the proposed development described in the Masterplan Evolution addresses the concerns of the HELAA:



HELAA Landscape and Townscape issue	Response
The site forms part of a defined entrance and landscape setting to Linton;	Development is located away from the north- eastern corner of the Site to allow open space to characterise the approach into Linton from Horseheath Road. Existing woodland planting north of Horseheath Road will be expanded into the Site to enhance a green gateway into the village.
Views over the village to the south, west and north west to Rivey Hill and woodlands;	There are no publicly accessible locations within the Site for people to appreciate the views across Linton or Rivey Hill. Glimpsed opportunities are available in limited gaps in hedgerow boundary vegetation along the public footpath to the east of the Site and along Horseheath Road. The proposal seeks to celebrate views towards Rivey Hill and its water tower by aligning an alternative route for the public footpath through the Site, that not only seeks to celebrate local distinctiveness, but also provides a safer alternative for users to walking along the carriageway of Horseheath Road.
The site is separate from the village edge and would represent a significant extension into the countryside	The Site would not be separate from the village edge as development is currently being constructed within land associated with The Pastures to the west and consent is granted for 55 dwellings in land immediately south of the Site. Views south of Linton upon the north facing valley sides of the River Granta demonstrate that The Pastures are discernible and set a precedent for development east of the village. Extending development to the public footpath east of the Site would be a logical and appropriate edge for the village, with the precedent already set by consented development south of the Site and the proposed rural travel hub beyond.
Development of the whole site and 120 dwellings would not be possible without unacceptable landscape impacts	The proposed masterplan does not seek to build development across the whole of the Site, instead locating built form in the least visually sensitive areas. The proposed landscape within the Site seeks to strengthen and enhance the character of the area through woodland planting. In conclusion, development of the Site can be 'satisfactorily mitigated'.

# **A Sustainable Proposition**

This document has demonstrated that the Landscape and Townscape issues identified in the HELAA can be addressed through the masterplan evolution resulting in an 'acceptable' score of Amber. This would lead to the following revised assessment summary:

Criteria	Outcome
Suitable	Amber
Available	Green
Achievable	Green

Consequently, the Site south of Horesheath Road at Linton should be considered for future allocation of development within the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The Site is a sustainable proposition associated with Linton as a Minor Rural Centre with a number of local facilities. A library and Linton Heights Junior School are within a 5 minute walk from the Site with Linton High Street just over a 10 minute walk.

In summary, the Site can deliver a number of benefits and is worthy of future inclusion within Greater Cambridge Local Plan as an allocated residential development.

- Up to 120 homes 40% affordable
- 3.2ha of new public open space and play area
- Improved safety for users of public footpath (146/26) linking with public bridleway (146/25)
- Woodland planting enhancing local landscape character, strengthening local green infrastructure, improving biodiversity and helping to absorb carbon.
- · Enhancement of public footpath to encourage people to walk to rural travel hub and reduce impact on the environment.



### Land at Horseheath Road, Linton

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Comment Planning

This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2015

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