

7. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 7.1 This chapter of the ES assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development with respect to Landscape and Visual Impacts. This Chapter also describes the methods used to assess the effects; the baseline conditions currently existing at the Site and surrounding area; the mitigation measures required to prevent, reduce or offset any significant negative effects; and the likely residual effects after these measures have been adopted.
- 7.2 The Environmental Dimension Partnership (“EDP”) has been instructed by Scentarea Limited (the “Applicant”) to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (“LVIA”) in respect of a proposed development at Blythe Business Park, Cresswell, Staffordshire (the “Site”). The aims of the assessment are to:
- (i) Establish the current baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the site and immediate surrounding area;
 - (ii) Assess the value of the landscape resource and its sensitivity to the proposed development; and
 - (iii) Identify the level of effect of the proposed development on the landscape, highlight any ‘significant effects’ and describe the extent to which these can be mitigated by scheme design.

Policy Context

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

- 7.3 It is stated at paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that ‘At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking’.
- 7.4 It goes on to state that in terms of Council decision making this means that “where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted”.
- 7.5 Paragraph 57 seeks to achieve high quality design in development, whilst in paragraph 64 it is noted that development should improve the “character and quality of the area and the way that it functions”.

- 7.6 Guidance at paragraph 98 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities when determining planning applications should “approve the application unless material considerations indicate otherwise and if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.”

Local Planning Policy

Adopted Development Plan

Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy Development Plan Document. Adopted Version 26 March 2014

- 7.7 The statutory development plan for the district is the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy Development Plan Document which was formally adopted on 26 March 2014. This has now replaced the former Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 1998 and is the document which contains the policies by which local planning applications will be tested against.

Policy SO9

- 7.8 Strategic Policy SO9 sets an overarching objective for the Core Strategy to ‘protect and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, biodiversity and geological resources’.

Policy DC1 – Design Considerations

- 7.9 The council has produced a Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document entitled ‘Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands’ which sets out the principles which are intended to guide design within the district. Policy DC1 states that new development should be in line with the Council’s Design SPG and should be well-designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by contributing to the special character of the area and meet the following objectives:

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity;
- detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; and
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

Policy DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting

- 7.10 The policy sets the objective that local landscapes and the setting of settlements should be enhanced and have regard to the local Landscape Character Assessment. This objective will be promoted by:

- Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;
- Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;

- Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape; and
- Identifying through the Site Allocations DPD and protecting from inappropriate development, areas of visual open space where the intention will be to retain the land's open and undeveloped appearance. Where appropriate the Council will seek public access agreements with the land owners and seek proposals for the enhancement or improvement of these areas as part of the green infrastructure network in accordance with policy C3. In exceptional cases, limited development of areas of visual open space may be acceptable where this will bring about overriding improvements to the open space itself.

7.11 Policy N8 in the former Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, which covered the 'Special Landscape Area' (SLA), has now been replaced by DC3 in the Core Strategy and other policies which do not specifically mention the SLA. Paragraph 8.6.12 of the Core Strategy states that *'the continued use of the current Special Landscape Area designation is therefore not considered sufficiently sensitive to local landscape characteristics and it is proposed to address local landscape impact through the use of a Landscape Character Assessment instead'*.

Policy CG3 – Green Infrastructure

7.12 The policy sets out the aspiration of the Council to develop an integrated network of high quality and multifunctional green infrastructure to achieve a range of objectives from open space provision, climate change adaption, recreation and ecological enhancement. Green infrastructure assets will be protected through the forthcoming Site Allocations Development Plan and the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Policy NE 1 – Biodiversity

7.13 Policy NE1 covers the protection and enhancement of biodiversity which will be guided by the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Staffordshire Moorlands Biodiversity Opportunities Map. The ecological assessment of the proposals and a review of background plans are contained within **Chapter 14** of the Environmental Statement.

Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

7.14 The assessment methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects prepared by EDP has been conducted with reference to the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013);
- Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Swanwick & LUC, 2002) produced on behalf of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage; and
- Planning for Landscape Change – Staffordshire County Council (2000).

7.15 The nature of landscape and visual assessment requires both objective analysis and subjective professional judgement. Accordingly, the following assessment is based on

the best practice guidance listed above, information and data analysis techniques. It uses subjective professional judgement and quantifiable factors wherever possible and is based on clearly defined terms (see Glossary, **Appendix 7.1**).

Study Area, ZTV and Viewpoint Selection

Study area

- 7.16 The study area for the LVIA extends to approximately 5km around the site. This has been partially informed by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility ("ZTV") of the development and an assessment of the sensitivity to change of the surrounding landscape and the predicted magnitude of change. Based on prior experience of assessing developments of this size and nature, and a detailed understanding of the prevailing landscape around the site, it is judged that any significant effects would not occur beyond the 5km study area and predominantly confined to within a 2km radius of the site.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 7.17 The theoretical visibility of the development is assessed with reference to the ZTV plan at **Figure 7.2**. This analysis provides an overview of the maximum theoretical extent of visibility within the study area based on a general landform model only and does not take into account potential screening by intervening built development or infrastructure and associated features (e.g. road or railway embankments) and vegetation cover, which are all taken into account during the assessment stage.
- 7.18 For this development, the ZTV has been calculated using the proposed heights given in the Building Height Parameters plan (ref:V3D-130101-003). Due to the outline nature of the application, the exact heights of the buildings had not been fixed and therefore the calculation is based on the best available information. The following heights have been used:
- Area A (proposed employment) – heights of the proposed structures are indicated in bands across the site ranging from 6m to 12m to eaves;
 - Area B (proposed housing) – the majority of the proposed buildings range from single to two storey residential dwellings and a two storey community centre based on the footprint of the current dance studio. Given that the majority of buildings would be 2 storeys, the ZTV has been modelled assuming an average height of 8m to ridgeline.

Site Visit

- 7.19 The ZTV is based on bare-earth (topography) only and does not take into account the actual visibility which is influenced by vegetation and intervening structures. The guidelines in GLVIA3 recommend that a site visit is undertaken in winter months to establish the actual visibility of development, when deciduous trees and hedges have shed their leaves and views are clearer and less filtered (which is considered to represent the 'worst case' scenario for visual assessment). An evaluation of the site's landscape fabric and character, and its relationship with the surrounding landscape, was also made during the site visit.
- 7.20 The site was initially visited by EDP in July 2012. It was re-visited on 17 December 2013 to enable viewpoint photography to be gathered under winter conditions. Conditions

during the winter visit were clear, intermittently sunny with good visibility and an average temperature of 7°C. The assessment therefore complies with best practice guidelines regarding the timing of the site visit and photography.

Representative Viewpoint Selection

- 7.21 With reference to the ZTV and actual site intervisibility, a total of eight photoviewpoints were considered appropriate to formally assess the impact of the development in landscape and visual terms. The viewpoint locations are shown in **Figures 7.1 and 7.2**. They were selected to be broadly representative of the landscape character and visual sensitivities of the study area, and locations in the general vicinity of the viewpoint from which potential views of the development were expected.
- 7.22 They are not intended to cover all areas and receptors from where views may be possible but are a sample designed to represent a range of receptors (e.g. footpath users, road users and residential properties), distances and directions around the site. The viewpoints were selected and agreed in consultation with the landscape officers from Staffordshire Moorlands District, Mr Arne Swithenbank and Mr Steven Massey (see **Appendix 7.5**).

Visualisations

- 7.23 In consultation with Mr Steven Massey, it was agreed to produce visualisations showing the broad height of the proposed structures on the employment land for three of the viewpoints (**Photoviewpoints 1, 3, and 5**). These were based on the indicative height zones given in the Building Height Parameters Plan and are contained in **Appendix 7.4**.
- 7.24 The visualisations were illustrative block montages created using a computer generated model and taken from the exact viewpoint locations. These have a cylindrical projection applied before photo-stitching to match the panoramic photographs, thus creating a 'virtual' panorama of the proposed development. With the virtual and photographic images overlaid with each other, common reference points were used to align both the virtual and actual images with foreground clipping.

Landscape Assessment Methodology

- 7.25 Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape fabric which may contribute to changes in its character and how this is experienced. These effects need to be considered in line with changes already occurring within the landscape and which help define the character of it.
- 7.26 Effects upon the wider landscape resource i.e. the landscape surrounding the development, requires an assessment of visibility of the proposals from adjacent landscape character areas, but remains an assessment of landscape character and not visual amenity.

Visual Assessment

Identifying Landscape and Visual Receptors

- 7.27 This assessment has sought to identify the key landscape and visual receptors that may be affected by the changes proposed.

7.28 The assessment of effects on landscape as a resource in its own right, draws on the description of the development, the landscape context and the visibility and viewpoint analysis to identify receptors, which, for the proposed development may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- The landscape fabric of the Site (e.g. field pattern, vegetation cover);
- The key landscape characteristics of the local context;
- The 'host' landscape character area which contains the proposed development;
- The 'non-host' landscape character areas where there is the potential for secondary effects beyond the host landscape character area; and
- Landscape designations on a national, regional or local level (where relevant).

7.29 The locations and types of visual receptors within the defined study areas are identified from Ordnance Survey maps and other published information (such as walking guides), from fieldwork observations and from local knowledge provided during the consultation process. Examples of visual receptors may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Settlements and private residences;
- Users of National Cycle Routes and National Trails;
- Users of local/regional cycle and walking routes;
- Those using local rights of way – walkers, horse riders, cyclists;
- Users of open spaces with public access;
- People using major (Motorways, A and B) roads;
- People using minor roads; and
- People using railways.

Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

7.30 The assessment of effects on the landscape resource includes consideration of the potential changes to those key elements and components which contribute towards recognised landscape character or the quality of designated landscape areas; these features are termed a landscape receptor. The assessment of visual amenity requires the identification of potential visual receptors that may be affected by the development. As noted, following the identification of each of these various landscape and visual receptors, the effect of the development on each of them is assessed through consideration of a combination of:

- Their overall sensitivity to the proposed form of development that includes the value attached to the receptor following the baseline appraisal, combined with the susceptibility of the receptor to the change proposed, determined during the assessment stage; and
- The overall magnitude of change that will occur - based on the size and scale of the change, its duration and reversibility.

Defining Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.31 A number of factors influence professional judgment when assessing the degree to which a particular landscape or visual receptor can accommodate change arising from a particular development. Sensitivity is made up of judgements about the 'value' attached to the receptor, which is determined at baseline stage, and the 'susceptibility' of the receptor, which is determined at the assessment stage when the nature of the proposals, and therefore the susceptibility of the landscape and visual resource to change, is better understood.
- 7.32 Susceptibility indicates *'the ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences'*². Susceptibility of visual receptors is primarily a function of the expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the susceptibility for both landscape and visual receptors and this is clearly set out in the technical appendices to this assessment.
- 7.33 A location may have different levels of sensitivity according to the types of visual receptors at that location and any one receptor type may be accorded different levels of sensitivity at different locations.
- 7.34 **Table 7.1** provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall sensitivity of a landscape receptor is judged within this assessment, and considers both value and susceptibility independently.

Table 7.1: Landscape sensitivity criteria

Category	Landscape Receptor Value Criteria	Landscape Susceptibility to Change Criteria
Very High	Nationally/Internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.	Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.
High	Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.	Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.

² Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition Page 158.

Category	Landscape Receptor Value Criteria	Landscape Susceptibility to Change Criteria
Medium	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.	Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.
Low	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.	Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.
Very Low	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled / degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.	Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.

7.35 For visual receptors, judgements of susceptibility and value are also closely interlinked considerations. For example, the most valued views are those which people go and visit because of the available view – and it is at those viewpoints that their expectations will be highest and thus most susceptible to change.

7.36 **Table 7.2** provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall sensitivity of a visual receptor is judged within this assessment, and considers both value and susceptibility independently.

Table 7.2: Visual receptor sensitivity

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
Very High	<p>Designed view (which may be to or from a recognised heritage asset or other important viewpoint), or where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. Key promoted viewpoint e.g. interpretative signs. References in literature and art and/or guidebooks tourist maps. Protected view recognised in planning policy designation.</p> <p>Examples may include views from residential properties, especially from rooms normally occupied in waking or daylight hours; national public rights of way e.g. National Trails and nationally designated countryside/landscape features with public access which people might visit purely to experience the view; and visitors to heritage assets of national importance.</p>

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
High	<p>View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of high scenic value, or destination hill summits. It may also be inferred that the view is likely to have value e.g. to local residents.</p> <p>Examples may include views from recreational receptors where there is some appreciation of the landscape e.g. golf and fishing; local public rights of way, access land and National Trust land, also panoramic viewpoints marked on maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides for their scenic value.</p>
Medium	<p>View is not promoted or recorded in any published sources and may be typical of the views experienced from a given receptor.</p> <p>Examples may include people engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape e.g. football and rugby or road users on minor routes passing through rural or scenic areas.</p>
Low	<p>View of clearly lesser value than similar views experienced from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.</p> <p>Examples may include road users on main road routes (motorways/A roads) and users of rail routes or people at their place of work (where the place of work may be in a sensitive location). Also views from commercial buildings where views of the surrounding landscape may have some limited importance.</p>
Very Low	<p>View affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.</p> <p>Examples may include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance.</p>

7.37 The tables above offer a template for assessing overall sensitivity of any landscape or visual receptor as determined by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape as set out at paragraph 5.38 of GLVIA 3rd Edition (2013). However, the narrative in this statement may demonstrate that assessment of overall sensitivity can change on a case-by-case basis.

7.38 For example a high susceptibility to change and a low value may result in a medium overall sensitivity, unless it can be demonstrated that the receptor is unusually susceptible or is in some particular way more valuable. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the overall sensitivity for both landscape and visual receptors.

Magnitude of Change

7.39 The magnitude of any landscape or visual change is determined through a range of considerations particular to each receptor. The three attributes considered in defining the magnitude are:

- Scale of Change;
- Geographical Extent; and
- Duration and reversibility/Proportion.

7.40 Receptor locations from which views of the proposed development are not likely to occur will receive no change and therefore no effect. With reference to the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and site survey, the magnitude of change is defined for receptor locations from where visibility of the proposed development is predicted to occur.

7.41 **Table 7.3** provides an indication of the criteria by which the size/scale of change at a landscape or visual receptor is judged within this assessment.

Table 7.3: Scale of change criteria

Category	Landscape Receptor Criteria	Visual Receptor Criteria
Very High	Total loss of, or major alteration to, key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements which strongly conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	There would be a substantial change to the baseline, with the proposed development creating a new focus and having a defining influence on the view.
High	Notable loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that are prominent and may conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will be clearly noticeable and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence.
Medium	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that may be evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements that may not be uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
Very Low	Barely discernible loss or alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline situation.

7.42 **Table 7.4** provides an indication of the criteria by which the geographical extent of the area affected is adjudged within this assessment.

Table 7.4: Geographical extent criteria

	Landscape Receptors	Visual Receptor Criteria
Largest	Large scale effects influencing several landscape types or character areas.	Direct views at close range with changes over a wide horizontal and vertical extent.
	Effects at the scale of the landscape type or character areas within which the proposal lies.	Direct or oblique views at close range with changes over a notable horizontal and/or vertical extent.
	Effects within the immediate landscape setting of the Application Site.	Direct or oblique views at medium range with a moderate horizontal and/or vertical extent of the view affected.
	Effects at the site level (within the Application Site itself).	Oblique views at medium or long range with a small horizontal/vertical extent of the view affected.
Smallest	Effects only experienced on parts of the Application Site at a very localised level.	Long range views with a negligible part of the view affected.

7.43 The third, and final, factor, in determining the predicted magnitude of change is duration and reversibility. Duration and reversibility are separate but linked considerations. Duration is judged according to the defined terms set out below, whereas reversibility is a judgement about the prospects and practicality of the particular effect being reversed in, for example, a generation. The categories used in this assessment are set out below.

7.44 Duration:

- Long term (20 years+);
- Medium to Long term (10 to 20 years);
- Medium term (5 to 10 years);
- Short term (1 year to 5 years); and
- Temporary (less than 12 months).

7.45 Reversibility:

- Permanent with unlikely restoration to original state e.g. major road corridor, power station, urban extension etc.;
- Permanent with possible conversion to original state e.g. agricultural buildings, retail units;
- Partially reversible to a different state e.g. mineral workings;

- Reversible after decommissioning to a similar original state e.g. wind energy development; and
- Quickly reversible e.g. temporary structures.

Residual Effects

- 7.46 Residual effects are those that remain once the landscape mitigation measures have taken effect, and unless otherwise stated, all effects described within this assessment represent residual effects.

Significance of Effect

- 7.47 The purpose of the EIA process is to identify the significant environmental effects (both beneficial and adverse) of development proposals. Schedule 4 to the EIA Regulations specifies the information to be included in all environmental statements, which should include a description of:

"...the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development."

- 7.48 In order to consider the likely significance of any effect, the sensitivity of each receptor is combined with the predicted magnitude of change to determine the significance of effect, with reference also made to the geographical extent, duration, and reversibility of the effect within the assessment. Having taken such a wide range of factors into account when assessing sensitivity and magnitude at each receptor, the significance of effect can be derived by combining the sensitivity and magnitude in accordance with the matrix in **Table 7.5**.

Table 7.5: Level of Effects Matrix

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Substantial	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible
Very Low	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible	Negligible/ None

- 7.49 Each effect is described and evaluated individually through the integration of all of the relevant factors and assessed as either **significant** or **not significant**. For landscape and visual effects, those effects identified at a substantial, major, major/moderate or

moderate level (bolded and underlined in the table above) are generally considered to be **significant** and those effects assessed at a moderate/minor, minor, minor/negligible or negligible level are considered to be **not significant**.

- 7.50 In certain cases, where additional factors may arise, a further degree of professional judgement may be applied when determining whether the overall change in the view will be significant or not and, where this occurs, this is explained in the assessment.

Definition of Effects

- 7.51 Taking into account the levels of effect described above, and with regard to effects being either adverse or beneficial, the following table represents a description of the range of effects likely at any one receptor.

Table 7.6: Definition of Effect

Effect	Definition
Substantial	Changes resulting in a complete variance with the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Major	Changes resulting in a fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Moderate	A material but non-fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Minor	A slight but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Negligible	A detectable but non-material change to the landscape resource of visual amenity.
None	No detectable change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.

Nature of Effect

- 7.52 Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies if they exist. Changes involving the addition of large scale man-made objects are typically considered to be adverse as they are not usually actively promoted as part of published landscape strategies. Accordingly, in the assessment, landscape effects as a result of these aspects of the proposed development will be assumed to be adverse, unless otherwise stated within the assessment.
- 7.53 Visual effects are more subjective as peoples' perception of development varies through the spectrum of negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects and, unless otherwise stated, will assume that all effects are adverse, thus representing the worst case scenario.

Cumulative Effects

- 7.54 Cumulative effects generally occur where there may be simultaneous or sequential visibility of two or more developments of the same type and scale, or where the

consideration of other schemes would increase an effect identified. Where other similar schemes are in the planning system and made known to the applicant, or are under construction, these are considered in conjunction with the proposed scheme.

Baseline Conditions

Establishing the Landscape and Visual Baseline

7.55 Landscape assessment is comprised of a study of two separate but inter-linked issues:

- Landscape character is the physical make-up and condition of the landscape itself. It arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects; and
- Visual amenity is the way in which the Site is seen and experienced; views to and from the Site, their direction, characteristics and sensitivity to change.

Landscape Baseline

7.56 This section addresses baseline landscape character issues with the baseline visual amenity situation dealt with in the following section.

7.57 A summary is provided of the relevant published landscape assessments which provide a helpful contextual understanding of the site's landscape character, identify features/characteristics of value, and highlight their potential sensitivity to development. However, these are typically broad-based studies which rarely deliver adequate information at the site level; this requires a site-specific landscape character assessment which EDP has also undertaken and which is described below.

National Landscape Character

7.58 The landscape of England has been the subject of a nationwide Landscape Character Assessment. The Countryside Agency, in conjunction with English Nature (now replaced by Natural England), produced 'The Character of England: Landscape, Wildlife and Natural Features'. The Character of England divides the English countryside into 159 separate National Character Areas.

7.59 The site falls within the 'Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands Area' Character Area 68. The key characteristics of the area are:

- Rolling, glacial till plateau rising to prominent wooded heights above the central valley;
- Wide, shallow central valley;
- Gently rolling landscape in the north, dissected by numerous small valleys;
- Frequent plantations and ancient woodland in former forest of Needwood;
- Varied hedgerow patterns: strongly rectilinear in Needwood Forest, irregular in the west, sub-rectangular elsewhere;
- Predominantly pasture with good hedges but some areas of more open arable with low hedges;

- Red brick and half-timber villages with sandstone churches; and
- Historic parks and country houses.

County Landscape Character Assessment (SPG)

- 7.60 In 2000 Staffordshire County Council adopted a Landscape Character Assessment ('Planning for Landscape Change') as an SPG that was prepared for the whole county. The County is divided into 22 local landscape character types and the document sets out priorities for landscape restoration within each area.
- 7.61 Of relevance to the proposal are the 'host' landscape character type which the site is located in and any adjoining areas where there is likely to be visibility of the proposal. The site lies within the 'Settled Plateau Farmlands' character type which also covers the existing business park and other land to the south of the A50.
- 7.62 The 'Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes' is broadly located to the north of the A50. An extract describing both character areas is included within **Appendix 7.2**.

Settled Plateau Farmlands (host area)

- 7.63 The Settled Plateau Farmlands dominant land use is noted as being dairy farms with some mixed farming. The land cover is described as a *"landscapes of rolling plateaux, on which boulder clay overlies Triassic mudstones. The soils, which are generally non-calcareous stagnogleys, support dairying with some mixed farming in a semi-regular pattern of hedged fields, with scattered woods and areas of remnant heath. There is a dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and farmsteads, with urban influences in places."*
- 7.64 The visual character of the area is described as being *"a low grade pastoral landscape where the landcover elements have been allowed to deteriorate to the point where field boundaries are marked by isolated beech, birch and stunted oak, remnant overgrown thorn and holly and lines of fencing. Fields consistently appear overgrazed and poorly drained, with rushes and rough grass present. Overall this is a landscape in which the difficulties facing traditional pasture farming and increasing horseculture combine to jeopardise the future well-being of the landscape fabric."*
- 7.65 The SPG reports that the pastoral farming, together with a network of narrow, often sunken, lanes and clustered farmsteads lend the landscape a peaceful, rural feel. Scale however is noted as being *"very much more reduced around the settlements where field pattern is smaller and more intact. Villages are identified as undergoing considerable expansion and the influence of busy road corridors and hobby farming are beginning to be noticeable."* Pasture farming is highlighted as intensifying and *"large areas of arable farming are now increasing the rate of decline of land cover elements."*
- 7.66 The characteristic landscape features are stated to include *"drystone walls and remnant hedgerows with overgrown thorn; small areas of relic heathland; gently sloping landform."* Incongruous landscape features identified include *"urban fringe farming with introduction of horseculture; extensive fencing for stock control, some use of inappropriate materials; signs of over-intensive grazing."*

- 7.67 Potential landscape enhancement measures are identified that could be put in place to help restore and improve on the existing landscape baseline. This is taken forward through the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. The bulk of these improvements relate to planting of new woodland that could help to counter some of the agricultural intensification that has taken place over the last century.
- 7.68 The SPG notes that new woodland planting could be *“of high value, to restore some structure to a landscape in which hedgerows have deteriorated and views across the landscape are opening up; to direct views away from the conurbation edge and screen edge development and urban edge artefacts; to diversify land use away from the current low grade farming.”*
- 7.69 Guidance for tree and woodland planting states that *“there is generally no restriction on the size of woodland planting that would be appropriate. Large scale planting of more than field size could easily be accommodated as could field corner planting associated with existing trees and hedgerows. Planting to the landcover pattern would be appropriate for most of the landscape, but design to respond to steeper slopes would be needed in places. Broadleaved or conifer planting would maintain the present character.”*

Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes (non-host landscape)

- 7.70 The sloping land to the north of the A50 falls within the Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes landscape type and is described as being a *‘landscape of irregular, hedged fields and numerous hedgerow trees on a sloping landform, often dissected by small steep sided wooded stream valleys draining the plateau tops’*. Where land cover remains intact it is noted that *‘the hedgerows and hedgerow trees to a large extent control and limit views across the landscape, with the rolling landform and steeper slopes often allowing longer views and showing up the pattern of fields and small woodlands’*.
- 7.71 Land use is identified as being predominantly low intensity pastoral farming, which together with a *‘network of narrow, often sunken lanes and clustered farmsteads, hamlets and villages of traditional Staffordshire red brick lend the landscape a peaceful, rural feel’*. However, where agricultural intensification has taken place it has resulted in a more open larger-scale landscape with declining traditional field boundary features, such as hedgerows being replaced by wire fences. Deterioration in landscape quality is noted as taking place along the urban fringes where the landscape character has been weakened. This would be representative of the situation in the landscape immediately north of the A50 which has been eroded by incongruous features such as road and urban development and pylons.

SPG Landscape Policy Zones

- 7.72 The site is located on the edge of an area identified in the SPG as ‘Landscape Restoration’ which is described as being sensitive to change where the SPG encourages the planting of new native woodland as part of the overall landscape strategy. The existing Blythe Business Park is located within an area of ‘Landscape Enhancement’ as it scores poorly on visual condition, habitat survival at a landscape scale, presence of characteristic features and has a lower than average “landscape quality”. The Site is identified as having a high absence of incongruous features, which ignores the context of the nearby large scale industrial buildings, ancillary development

and pylons. With regard to tranquillity the site is located on the boundary of “tranquil” and “non-tranquil” areas with the latter likely to reflect the noise of the nearby A50 corridor.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

7.73 The Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) was prepared by Wardell Armstrong on behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and published in 2008. This document serves to add more local context to the information provided in the County SPG by providing a finer-scale Landscape Character Assessment, settlement setting study and review of visual open space designations. The latter two elements of the LSCA deal with the main settlements within the district and do not cover the area contained by the site.

7.74 The key characteristics of the ‘Settled Plateau Farmlands’ landscape type are described as follows:

- Open large scale landscapes with extensive views from a rolling plateau;
- Low grade pasture farmland with overgrazed poorly drained fields with rushes and rough grass;
- Large scale regular and irregular field patterns with hedges and dry stone walls;
- Hedges deteriorated to the extent that field boundaries marked by isolated trees, fencing and remnant thorn and holly;
- Some blocks of mature broadleaf woodland;
- Heathland;
- Parkland;
- Dispersed Settlement;
- Developing urban fringe character due to proximity to Stoke-on-Trent; and
- Busy road network surrounds the area; railway line.

7.75 The section of the LSCA entitled ‘Landscape Planning guidelines’ note that urban fringe pressures can have an adverse impact on landscape quality with the proliferation of incongruous features such as the network of busy roads, railway, overhead power lines, horsey culture and over grazing associated with urban fringe farming.

7.76 In terms of enhancement, the landscape is described as requiring a *‘new vegetation structure to be created comprising of woodland, hedgerows and trees, which will screen the conurbation and soften the impact of larger scale obtrusive features such as overhead lines and major transport route’*.

7.77 Landscape Planning guidelines which were noted in the assessment include the following recommendations. Those of particular relevance to the proposal are identified below:

- The planting of small woodlands, hedgerows with associated trees and tree groups can also help to restore the vegetational cover and re-articulate the scale of the landscape. The new vegetational structure should link to existing remnant vegetation and field pattern. It should create a mosaic of spaces, some open, some wooded, and of small to medium scale;
- Where new development is proposed, the edge of the development and public open spaces associated with it should contain appropriate tree and shrub planting to reduce the visual impact of the development, and to enable it to be more readily assimilated into the landscape;
- Field boundaries should be retained, maintained and, in places, replaced to maintain the scale of the landscape. Stone walls or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure dependent upon local character. Replacement of hedges and drystone walls by fencing should be discouraged;
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional local buildings characteristic of this area; and
- The loss of semi-natural vegetation should be checked and remaining habitats should be protected, managed and where possible extended to create sustainable communities.

Landscape Character Assessment

Description of site

- 7.78 The overall site area is approximately 15.58ha. The Business Park originates from the c.1870s with the establishment of Blythe Colour Works, there has been historical continuity on the site with paint and glaze manufacturing and other industry and office uses ever since. **Figure 7.3** contains internal site visualisations which illustrate the range of building ages and styles on the existing business park site, which include: a substantial early brick and tile building with a pitched roof at the western end of the site (**Photoviewpoint D**); large scale modern steel portal buildings at the southern end of the site with ancillary silos and chimneys up to 20m to 30m in height (**Photoviewpoint C**); low level mixed material buildings of brick and corrugated steel near the southern boundary; and mid-20th century flat roofed buildings at the western end of the site (**Photoviewpoint G**).
- 7.79 The River Blithe runs through the centre of the Site (**Photoviewpoint F**) and is bordered by buildings and hardstanding along the majority of its course through the business park with steep banks and intermittent tree planting. Its course is fringed with reeds and the unmanaged banks support tall herb and grasses. Where the river forms the northern boundary of the arable field (Area A) it has a more naturalistic appearance and is lined with willow and alder trees. The mixture of buildings styles, whilst lacking visual coherence, reflects the historical organic development of the Site.
- 7.80 Historical map analysis carried out to inform the 2009 Environmental Statement for the Blythe Park CCGT indicate that a small beck may have bisected the site north-west to south-east, although this is indicated as a waterlogged/wetland area on later maps. A

spring is also noted on the historical maps in the south east corner of the site. Most recent maps show several drains and ponds in the vicinity of the site.

- 7.81 Area A is approximately rectangular in shape. **Photoviewpoint A** illustrates that the extension site is currently cultivated as arable farmland and was sown with oil seed rape/winter wheat during the site surveys. Part of the field was previously developed land with the other having been historically under agricultural cultivation. The banks of the River Blithe banks form the northern boundary meeting with a mature field boundary with a hawthorn hedgerow and oak trees along its eastern edge. There is a small stream which flows into the River Blithe along the western boundary of the field separating it from the business park. The southern boundary of the site is currently undefined since it bisects an open arable field.
- 7.82 Area B is located between the business park and housing off Sandon Road. **Photoviewpoint B** illustrates that the site is currently laid to grass and periodically mown. The field is directly overlooked by residential housing to the south (around Rookery Crescent) and to the west (around Sandon Close). An intact roadside hedgerow consisting predominantly of hawthorn forms the western boundary with Sandon Road. Area B includes a single storey building in the northeast corner which is currently used as a dance studio with an area of surrounding hardstanding and scattered ornamental trees.

Surrounding Context of the Site

- 7.83 The proposed extension land (Area A) sits on gently undulating land in the broad valley of the River Blithe. The land is in agricultural use and situated within predominantly large to medium scale arable fields. To the east of the site are horse paddocks near Leese House Farm. High voltage overhead power lines cross the landscape to the north, south and east, and the Crewe-Derby railway and the A50 trunk road are prominent transport corridors. To the north the land rises to approximately 203m AOD above the village of Draycott-in-the-Moors.
- 7.84 To the west of the business park and adjacent to the proposed housing site (Area B) is the village of Cresswell, comprising predominantly post-World War II housing stock. Historical records suggest that the village of Cresswell grew out of the former Colour Works which occupied the site of the business park and that the majority of the housing dates from after c.1957.

Topography

- 7.85 The site is situated on broadly level land between the 160m and 155m contour with a gentle slope down to the River Blithe which runs through the business park and forms the northern boundary of Area A (See **Figure 7.1**). The soil type either side of the river is described as being 'loamy soils with naturally high groundwater'³.
- 7.86 The topography rises gradually to the south of the site towards higher ground near New Buildings (**Photoviewpoint 8**) at 217m AOD. There is a noticeably steeper rise in landform north of the River Blithe towards the ridge of high ground between Blythe Bridge and Upper Tean.

³ National Soil Resource Institute. Soilscales. <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales>

Vegetation

- 7.87 The vegetation within the existing business park is dominated by semi-ornamental tree planting composed of semi-mature specimens of sycamore, oak, lime, copper beech, whitebeam, horse chestnut, spruce and cypress. This planting is typically arranged as intermittent specimens or small groups, predominantly within mown grass areas, largely restricted to the edge of the road and around the fringes of buildings. The most prominent groups of trees are the short avenue of mature lime trees that flank the entrance to the business park and a row of mature polar trees near the southern boundary which form a screen around the northern and western edges of the landfill bund.
- 7.88 The vegetation along the corridor of the River Blithe appears semi-natural in origin with tall herbaceous vegetation and trees including common alder and willow, many of which are likely to be self-seeded.
- 7.89 Area A to the north and west is bordered by scattered vegetation along the River Blithe and a drainage channel, with trees characteristic of wet ground conditions including alder and willow. There is a mature native hedgerow with some gaps along the south eastern boundary of Area A.
- 7.90 Area B is bounded by a clipped hedgerow to Sandon Road with a small number of young to semi-mature native hedgerow trees. A group of larger specimens are located along the rear garden boundary of dwellings (identified as 'mature trees' on **Photoviewpoint B**). Scattered trees follow the boundary of the existing business park to the east and the belt of mature Poplar trees adjacent to the existing factory are noted to the south west.
- 7.91 The tree stock is described in further detail in the Arboricultural Assessment also undertaken by EDP, which includes a full inventory of individuals and groups and an assessment of their quality and condition. Consultation with the local authority has confirmed that none of the trees within the site are subject to a Tree Protection Order (TPO).

Landscape Designations

- 7.92 All landscapes are different and valued to some degree, particularly by those who live, work and relax within them. However, some landscapes are designated at a national, regional or local level, reflecting their acknowledged value. The differing levels of designation, be it on a national, regional or local level, will have an intrinsic effect upon the inherent sensitivity of them to the development type proposed.
- 7.93 As demonstrated by **Figure 7.1**, the Site is not within, or in close proximity to, any landscapes designated at a national level, such as AONBs or National Parks. There are no Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest within 2km and the site lies outside the North Staffordshire Green Belt which is adjacent to the western boundary of Area B along Sandon Road.
- 7.94 EDP has prepared an **Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment**, submitted in support of this application, which considers the site in relation to the surrounding archaeological and cultural heritage resources and their settings. From the available

evidence, there are no records indicating that the site has a high heritage/archaeological value. There are also no designated heritage assets in close proximity to the site which would be adversely affected by the proposals.

- 7.95 Paynsley Hall, which lies approximately 850m to the west of the site, is a listed building with some remains dating back to the 16th century among the more modern extensions. An area around the hall is also designated as a Scheduled Monument due to its earthwork remains of a moat, outer enclosure and ridge and furrow field pattern. The nearest listed building is St Mary's House, which lies along Cresswell Old Lane approximately 200m to the north of the site.
- 7.96 The site was formerly part of an area designated as Special Landscape Area (SLA), a local landscape designation covering the majority of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council area outside of the Green Belt. This has now been replaced in the adopted Core Strategy with an approach to landscape assessment informed by landscape character studies.

Landscape Sensitivity to Change

- 7.97 Landscape character baseline assessments on a county or district level are necessarily 'broad-brush' appraisals that are not designed to identify the landscape character subtleties specific to individual sites. However, both the County and Local assessment attempt a more detailed classification that in the case of the land surrounding the Blythe Business Park does not recognise to a sufficient degree the *indirect* influence of adjacent land uses on the adjoining land. In addition with published baseline studies it is important to note that the sensitivity of a landscape to change is not inherent and is related to the specific development proposal being assessed.
- 7.98 Notwithstanding the greenfield context, the site lies adjacent to the existing business park and the Crewe-Derby railway corridor. There are few distinctive or high quality elements within the local landscape. The overhead power lines and nearby A50 trunk road reinforce the urban fringe influences, reducing the overall susceptibility of the site to accommodate development of a similar type to that already present (i.e. residential housing and employment land) as **low**.
- 7.99 Although the site was previously within a Special Landscape Area, the policy which covered this designation has now been replaced and the site cannot be considered of 'special' landscape value. The background studies which have been collected as part of the application have not revealed the site as being of high ecological, historic or arboricultural importance. The fields consist of arable and improved grassland, which are widespread habitats of low conservation significance, with trees and hedgerows being mainly restricted to the boundaries and capable of retention or replacement and enhancement within an appropriate development layout. The land is also entirely privately-owned land with no public access, and therefore has no recreational value and serves a limited role in the appreciation of the surrounding landscape. The value of the site's landscape features and fabric are therefore considered to be **low**.
- 7.100 The site has a generally poor relationship to the published character assessment and the key characteristics of the 'Settled Plateau Farmlands'. This covers an extensive area within the district; including many hectares of agricultural land not connected to large scale industrial land uses or strongly influenced by transport corridors or energy

infrastructure. Therefore the site's landscape value, in terms of its contribution to the wider Settled Plateau Farmlands character area, and its sensitivity to the proposed development is assessed as being **low**.

- 7.101 In summary, it is considered, given the above, that the site has a lower landscape value and susceptibility to development than the surrounding countryside and its wider 'host' landscape character area.

Baseline Visual Analysis

Review of Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 7.102 This section provides an assessment of the 'baseline' (existing) views available to and from the site. The extent of the site's visibility was informed by producing a ZTV model, which was used to select a series of representative viewpoints agreed in consultation with landscape officers from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. However, in order to define the approximate 'visual envelope' of the site (the area from which views would be readily available to casual viewers) a field visit was undertaken to evaluate visibility from a range of distances and directions around the site.
- 7.103 The field visit was undertaken in December 2013 in clear conditions representative of 'winter views' before deciduous trees gained leaf coverage. Therefore, the site was visited and photographed under 'worst case' scenario visibility which complies with recommended best practice guidance.
- 7.104 A series of eight external viewpoints were selected to be formally assessed within the LVIA (see **Figure 7.1** for locations and **Figure 7.4** for photoviewpoints). The eight viewpoints were selected to represent a range of receptor types, distances and directions around the site from which views are available. The viewpoints are summarised in **Table 7.7**.

Table 7.7: Selected representative photoviewpoints

View no.	Location	Grid ref	Distance and direction to site	Reason for selection
Near Distance Views				
1	View from public footpath in front of the Rookery Farm	SJ 97510 38780	Approx. 300m to northeast	Representative of residential views from access drive approach only and views from public footpath to south of site
2	View north from public footpath in front of Leese House Farm	SJ 97770 38508	Approx. 300m to north	Representative of views from properties (partially restricted) and footpath on raised ground to south of site

View no.	Location	Grid ref	Distance and direction to site	Reason for selection
Medium Distance Views				
3	View north-west from public footpath at junction of track to West Paynsley	SJ 98286 38114	Approx. 650m to northwest	Representative of views from public footpath to southeast
5	View looking south-west from public footpath and access track between Cresswell Old Lane and Upper Newton Farm	SJ 98510 39234	Approx. 400m to the south	Representative of views from public footpath to the northeast of the site.
6	View looking west from field in front of Lower Newton Farm	SJ 98678 38878	Approx. 450m to the southwest.	Representative of views from public footpath and residential property.
Long Distance Views				
4	View south from public footpath, c.200m east of Orange Farm, above Draycott-on-the-Moors	SJ 98679 40372	Approx. 1.5km to the south	Representative of views from footpath on raised ground to the north.
7	View north-east from Sandon Road immediately to the north of 'The Limes'	SJ 96679 37868	Approx. 1.5km to the northeast	Representative of views from residential properties along public road on raised ground to the south.
8	View north-east from 'Stone Circles Challenge' long distance footpath	SJ 96566 36499	Approx. 2.5km to the northeast	Representative of views from the long distance footpath on high ground to the south

Baseline Visibility

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 7.105 The ZTV is shown on **Figure 7.2**. Although the model has been generated based on post-construction building heights it is useful in illustrating the broad extent of current visibility within the 5km study area.
- 7.106 The ZTV illustrates the influence of local topographical variation in affecting visibility. The site lies adjacent to the valley of the River Blithe with a corridor of predicted visibility extending along the flatter land of the valley corridor between Blythe Bridge and Lower Leigh. The majority of areas within 1km of the site are predicted to have views, with the exception of a small section below the 170m contour immediately north of Cresswell adjacent to the A50.

- 7.107 Theoretical views are predicted north and south of the valley to c.2km, beyond which intervening topography would screen the majority of the site from view. At distances of over 3km from the site, few areas are predicted to have views of the site; these being mainly confined to an area around Middleton Green to the southeast and areas of Blythe Bridge to the north and west.
- 7.108 As illustrated in **Figure 7.2**, the composite ZTV's of the proposed employment land (Area A) and housing (Area B) cover a broadly equivalent area, with the zone extending slightly further to the northwest towards Blythe Bridge for Area B and further to the east and south for Area A.
- 7.109 During the field survey, the influence of the localised built form and vegetation cover in restricting views towards the site was apparent. As a result, there are no views of the site from large areas predicted to have theoretical visibility by the ZTV. The nature of the current visibility is summarised below and an approximate primary 'visual envelope' (the area from which the site is visible) is defined.

Existing Views

- 7.110 Due to its smaller size and contained nature, Area B is visible over a much smaller area of the surrounding landscape than Area A which is formed from an open arable field where one boundary is currently undefined, given that it bisects the field.

Area B – Proposed Housing

- 7.111 **Photoviewpoint B** shows that there are currently direct close-range and unfiltered views from several residential properties adjacent to the south of the site around Rookery Crescent, with other adjacent properties having views filtered by a group of trees on the southwest boundary.
- 7.112 From Sandon Road, the site is visible over a c.300m section from near the entrance to Blythe Business Park (south of the railway crossing) to the group of houses along Sandon Close. As demonstrated by **Photoviewpoint H**, along this stretch of Sandon Road, the tall roadside hedge screens the majority of the site to passing pedestrians and motorists and views are limited to the upper story windows of residential houses directly opposite the western boundary.
- 7.113 The fact that the field is encircled by the tall buildings of Blythe Business Park to the north, residential housing to the south and west and a line of trees on its eastern boundary provides strong visual containment from the surrounding landscape. Only heavily filtered views are available to the east from the public footpath between Rookery Farm and Leese House Farm (Draycott in the Moors 19).
- 7.114 Views of the site from the north are predominantly restricted to a handful of residential properties opposite the entrance to the Business Park and sections of footpath (Draycott in the Moors 9) which occupies rising ground between the railway crossing and the A50. Views from further north are largely screened by the presence of tall buildings within the Blythe Business Park.

Area A – Proposed Employment Land

- 7.115 The site occupies a section of a large arable field with its southern boundary cutting across an open field lacking boundary vegetation. As a result, the site has a larger area of visibility particularly from the open countryside to the south.
- 7.116 Close-range views from the west are restricted to the edge of the existing business park with views beyond being screened by tall commercial warehouses. To the north, the line of vegetation along the River Blithe provides a degree of filtering and close views are limited to fleeting glimpses from passengers using the Crewe-Derby railway line which runs adjacent to the river. To the south, as illustrated in **Photoviewpoints 1 and 2**, there are open views into the site from the public footpath between Rookery Farm and Leese House Farm.
- 7.117 Medium-range and partially filtered/screened views extend across an area east towards Paynsley Hall and south towards Wastegate Farm until the land falls into a small stream valley which lies outside the ZTV. The majority of this land is private farmland with no public roads and few public rights of way. Although theoretical views are predicted from the ridge of higher ground along the course of the 'Stone Circles Challenge', as represented by **Photoviewpoint 8**, distant views of the site are typically obscured by tree cover.
- 7.118 Views of the site between the Crewe-Derby railway line and the A50 are illustrated by **Photoviewpoint 5 and 6** in which partially filtered views of the site are experienced against the existing business estate. Visual receptors in this area include users of two public rights of way between Cresswell Old Lane and Lower Newton Farm and several isolated farmsteads.
- 7.119 The A50 varies between sections of cutting and embankment but the strong line of tree planting along its course screens the majority of views from immediately north of the road, with only partial and filtered views available from the Draycott Road. The land rises north of this road; however theoretical visibility is largely confined to the ridge of higher land between Totmonslow and Forsbrook. This is represented by **Photoviewpoint 4**, which indicates that filtered views are available from sections of the public footpath to the east of Grange Farm through tree gaps.

Visual Receptors to be included in the Assessment

- 7.120 The testing of the ZTV enables visual receptors, which are not predicted to experience views of the proposals, to be scoped out of the assessment. This allows the assessment to focus on those receptors that would experience a clear change to the current view.
- 7.121 The assessment will concentrate on visual receptors located within a 2km radius from the site, within which all viewpoints are located and where it is judged that potentially significant effects would be confined. There are no nationally designated and important landscape assets over 2km that have predicted visibility and which would therefore justify inclusion in the assessment.

Development and Potential Landscape Effects

- 7.122 The details of the proposed development are taken from the Illustrative Masterplan (Drawing No: A-044-21 Rev D (**Appendix 11.4**)) and the Parameters Plans (**Appendix 1.2**). The aspects of the development that are of greatest relevance to the consideration

of landscape effects, and that have the potential to lead to significant effects, are summarised below and considered within the assessment.

Summary of Potential Landscape Effects

- 7.123 The key development parameters considered to have the greatest bearing for landscape are summarised below. They have been separated into constructional and operational effects which will be dealt with in the assessment.

Construction

- 7.124 Construction effects are short to medium-term in nature and considered unlikely to give rise to significant landscape effects. Construction impacts relating to the removal of the existing vegetation such as trees and hedgerows are considered to be permanent and will be assessed as operational effects.
- 7.125 Provisional details relating to the construction phase of the development are contained within the Demolition and Construction Methodology and Programme (Chapter 6 of the Environmental Statement). The construction phase of the development is expected to take around 7 years from commencement to completion. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) for the Development will be produced prior to the start of on-site works and will include all commitments to environmental protection; compliance with relevant planning conditions; detail on control measures and activities to minimise environmental impact; monitoring and record keeping requirements; point of contact details for dealing with any environmental enquiries; and a commitment to periodic review.
- 7.126 A review of likely construction effects associated with the proposed development was undertaken such as those arising from noise and vibration, traffic, lighting, air/water quality and waste. The majority of these construction impacts do not relate specifically to the landscape resource and, with the exception of temporary visual effects, it was not considered they had potential to cause significant effects on the landscape resource. The majority of construction impacts (such as vegetation removal and groundworks) are considered to be permanent changes to the landscape and therefore assessed as operational effects within the LVIA.

Operational

- 7.127 The majority of landscape effects arising from the development are considered as permanent changes included within the operational phase of the project. Within the assessment they have been clearly classified into effects on the existing landscape features/fabric (e.g. tree/hedgerow loss), effects on landscape character and visual effects. The main effects to be considered are:
- Loss of existing vegetation during the construction phase to accommodate buildings and new site access. These are covered in detail in the Arboricultural Assessment but are summarised briefly within the LVIA;
 - Landscape effects arising through the creation of new areas of public open space and planting along the site boundaries and within the residential area;

- Visual and landscape character effects arising from the change to the existing land use of Area B, the construction of a maximum of 168 residential units (1-3 story dwellings) and considerations relating to its location, scale and appearance;
- Visual and landscape character effects arising from the construction of c.33,480 sq. metres of employment units in Area A (ranging in height between 6 to 12m eave height) and considerations relating to its location, scale and appearance;
- Visual and landscape effects from new site access and roundabout from Sandon Road; and
- Visual receptors to be assessed include adjacent residential properties with clear views of the site, users of the local public footpath network, local road users (Sandon Road, A50 etc), passengers on the Crewe-Derby railway adjacent to the northern boundary and views from settlement edges.

Mitigation

- 7.128 Mitigation measures are outlined before the predicted landscape effects are considered in order to allow the effects to be fully assessed with mitigation included.
- 7.129 The mitigation measures associated with the scheme can be distinguished into the following elements:
- Primary measures, incorporated as integral elements of the scheme design and layout, which have been included to avoid landscape effects; and
 - Secondary measures designed to reduce the impact of residual landscape effects (e.g. new plating to mitigate visual effects).

Mitigation during Construction

- 7.130 A CEMP would be produced at the Reserved Matters stage to detail the protection of ecological and landscape features from potential risks such as physical damage, pollution and increased dust/sedimentation;
- 7.131 No development is proposed within 8m of the River Blithe. If the proposals changed then permission would need to be obtained from the Environment Agency and measures included to protect the watercourse from direct and indirect effects; and
- 7.132 The Arboricultural Method Statement, produced in accordance with best practice guidance set out in British Standard 5837: '2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction', would set out protective measures such as fencing and construction exclusion zones outside tree root protection areas.

Mitigation during Operation

Primary Mitigation

- 7.133 Any proposed development which entails a material change in land use type needs to be assessed on this basis. However, the scoping element of the Environmental Statement and the results of the baseline surveys have enabled the identification of the

most sensitive landscape features and receptors, which have subsequently been used to inform scheme design.

7.134 Those mitigation measures which can be regarded as embedded within the scheme design relate to retention of valuable site features through the scheme layout:

- The recognition of the ecological and landscape value of the River Blithe which flows through the site and the creation of a buffer of open space of at least eight metres between the watercourse and development footprint;
- Informed by the Arboricultural survey, which identified the presence of higher value (A and B grade) trees within the site, the scheme layout has been adjusted to allow a greater quantity of the existing tree stock to be retained. For example, the initial draft masterplan had proposed the removal of the boundary trees around the dance studio, which have now been predominantly retained following recommendations and the amendment of the layout; and
- Modification of the original proposed heights for buildings on the employment land to within broadly similar maximum heights as the existing structures within the adjacent business park.

Secondary Mitigation

7.135 Secondary mitigation refers to any measures which have been committed to and included within the development proposals designed to reduce the magnitude of change to those (residual) effects which cannot be avoided. In the case of landscape, these predominantly refer to those proposals for landscape treatment.

7.136 A Landscape Strategy plan has been produced (**Figure 7.6**) which illustrates the location and nature of both retained and newly created open space and new planting within the site. This strategy plan has incorporated mitigation measures from a range of disciplines including ecology, landscape and visual, arboriculture and drainage.

7.137 The plan is intended to be broad and illustrative, produced to demonstrate a commitment and appreciation of landscape. The details of landscape treatments, planting mixtures and public open space design would be agreed with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council at the Reserved Matters stage. Where possible, the landscape strategy has been designed to meet objectives in the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment relating to new planting.

7.138 The main features of the Landscape Strategy and secondary landscape mitigation are:

7.139 Area A (employment land)

- Dense planting of approximately 7.5 – 8m in width along the southern boundary of the currently open arable field. This would consist of an outer native hedgerow, planted in a staggered double row, and allowed to grow dense and tall (c.4m). Native broadleaved trees would be planted behind the hedgerow to give additional density; and

- Strengthening the northern boundary which acts as a corridor along the River Blithe. A buffer of open space of a minimum of 8m would be created between the river and hardstanding. Tussocky damp wildflower grassland would be established with scattered native trees and shrubs using species such as alder, willow and downy birch. This would enhance the existing level of screening and filtering in views of the site from the north and create a valuable ecological habitat to buffer the watercourse.

7.140 Area B (housing)

- A species-rich native hedgerow with trees would be established to replace the section of hedgerow which would be lost through the creation of the new access entrance from Sandon Road and the resulting need for a clear visibility splay; and
- Although not considered as strictly mitigation, the new residential layout would allow the opportunity to plant a range of trees within areas of public open space (such as around the community centre and along the River Blithe) and residential gardens. There would be a net increase in the diversity and quantity of trees which would replace any trees removed to facilitate construction.

Residual Effects

- 7.141 Residual effects are those that remain once the landscape mitigation measures have taken effect, and unless otherwise stated, all effects described within this assessment represent residual effects and are assessed in the following section.

Predicted Significant Effects

Construction

- 7.142 The majority of the potentially 'significant' landscape effects associated with this scheme have been classified as predominantly permanent changes to landscape fabric, landscape character and visual amenity and are considered under 'operational' impacts. Moreover, due to the outline nature of the proposals, information relating to the details of the construction such as timing, locations and working methods had not been agreed. Therefore, predicted construction impacts are considered generically and briefly.
- 7.143 It is inevitable that there would be some temporary effects during construction and prior to the operational phase of the proposed development. Excavations associated with foundation setting, construction of the buildings, new site access and erection of site fencing would result in a temporary change to the appearance of the local area, in particular in close proximity to it. Additionally, movement and machinery associated with these site operations would introduce additional, localised activity, including the movement of cranes and other heavy goods vehicles. Together, these operations would lead to an incremental increase in effects on the local landscape context as constructions draws to completion.
- 7.144 However, the susceptibility of the landscape resource to change is reduced by the fact that the site is located adjacent to the existing Blythe Business Park, where such construction operations, whilst not common, are certainly not uncommon or distinctly out of context. Such activity and movement is associated with operations and access by

vehicles accessing local industrial units, in close proximity to residential properties along Sandon Road.

- 7.145 It is recognised that residents of the adjacent properties in Cresswell would experience substantial changes to the local landscape and views from construction of residential housing and access facilities. However, as discussed these would be temporary and not entirely out of character with existing light industrial activity and traffic movements in the adjacent business park. It is assessed that landscape effects during construction would be temporary and localised. This would result in a high magnitude of change to views from adjacent properties and **significant** overall effects ranging between **substantial** and **major**. This would reduce to **major/moderate** after the establishment of the replacement hedgerow with trees planted behind the visibility splay.

Operation

Effects on Landscape Character

- 7.146 The site lies within the 'Settled Plateau Farmlands' landscape type (LT) as defined within the Staffordshire LCA and the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. The key characteristics of this landscape type are outlined in **Table 7.7**, their relevance considered against the site's characteristics and the predicted impact of the development on them assessed.
- 7.147 The 'Settled Plateau Farmlands' LT describes a mixed agricultural landscape of rolling hedged fields with open views. The LCA notes there has been significant erosion in the quality of the landscape character in some areas as a result of agricultural intensification (field enlargement), decline in field boundary management (poor quality hedgerows or the erection of fence lines) and influences from urban/industrial areas and transport routes (which have reduced the tranquil rural character and introduced detracting elements).
- 7.148 The effect of these latter elements on the formerly rural landscape character of the surrounding area are apparent around the site, where the presence of the Blythe Business Park (employment and light industry), residential properties, transport routes and pylons exert urbanising influences on the immediate landscape context, such that the adjacent land in which the site lies, has a weak relationship with the wider character area and a resultant low susceptibility to the type of development proposed.
- 7.149 The most apparent effect on the landscape character of the site would be the change in land use through the loss of arable and improved pasture, and its replacement by residential and employment uses. This is the only key characteristic of the 'Settled Plateau Farmlands' LT which would be substantially affected by the development. However, this effect would be experienced over a very localised geographic extent (confined to the site) in comparison with the extensive area of total arable/pasture land within the wider LCT. Given the presence of existing residential housing and employment land directly adjacent to the site, the change in use would represent an extension of the neighbouring land uses and therefore not be out of keeping with local landscape character.
- 7.150 It is predicted that the development would not have any other substantial effects on key characteristics of the landscape type such as the settlement/field pattern, the rolling

topography with open views (the site is located within a small valley), or the higher quality elements such as heathland, parkland and woodland which are absent from the site and local landscape context. The effects of the development on landscape fabric/features is covered later; however the built form would be contained within existing field boundaries and not affect the underlying landscape pattern.

- 7.151 It is therefore assessed that the magnitude of change on the landscape character of the 'Settled Plateau Farmlands' LT would be low and that, given its low overall sensitivity, the resulting effect would be **minor/negligible** and **not significant**. The development would marginally extend the area of housing and employment land thereby reinforcing the characteristics of these land use types already present.

Table 7.8: Impact of development on key landscape characteristics of Settled Plateau Farmlands LT

Key Characteristic	Relationship to site	Predicted impact
Mixed arable and dairy farming land use	Area A consists of a section of arable field and Area B an improved pasture field.	Change to existing land use type through loss of (low-grade) arable/pasture.
Open views from rolling plateaux	Weak relationship to site – which is not located on rolling ground but in valley.	No physical or perceptual impact to rolling character of topography. No loss to openness of views from slopes due to position in valley against other development which already foreshortens views.
Semi-regular pattern of hedged fields	Area A has more open character with single hedge on one boundary. Area B has stronger fit to character attribute	Development would be contained within existing field pattern on both sites. No loss of boundary features in Area A – planting of southern boundary would create new hedge. Loss of roadside hedge in Area B, partially offset by replacement planting
Dispersed settlement pattern	Weak relationship to site which lies in area more influenced by the urban edge and industrial/transport development.	No effect predicted on dispersed settlement character. Development would extend residential edge of Cresswell
Urbanising influence on landscape and presence of detractors	Dominant presence of existing business park and strong influence of adjacent transport networks and pylons on landscape character	The proposed development would contribute towards a limited change to the underlying character of the local area however it results in a re-enforcement of the existing land-uses.
Busy road networks surround the area and railway line	As above – the site lies adjacent to the Crewe-Derby railway and close to the A50	Underlying character and influence of transport networks on character would not change. Some local increases in traffic and a new site access entrance.
Other landscape features such as heathland, woodland, parkland	These are not present within the site or the surrounding area	None predicted

Effect on Non-Host Landscape Types

- 7.152 Due to the geographical separation between the site and Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes LT (north of the A50), the landscape fabric, landform, field/hedgerow pattern which form its key characteristics would be unaffected. Given that the development would be partially screened or filtered from all but a small section of the landscape type,

there would be no notable diminution in tranquillity or the aesthetic quality of views outward. In all views, the site would be seen adjacent to both existing residential housing and the Blythe Business Park and across the Blithe valley containing the A50, railway line and pylons. It can therefore be concluded that there would be negligible effects to the landscape character of non-host landscape types (i.e. those which lie outside the Settled Plateau Farmlands LT).

Effects on Landscape Designations

- 7.153 There are no statutory designated landscapes which are located within the 5km study area (the Green Belt being a planning not landscape designation), or notable landscape features such as Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest with predicted visibility which fall into the study area. Furthermore, the Staffordshire Moorlands SLA has been superseded by recent adopted policy and no longer contributes towards the 'value' of the landscape in designation terms. Therefore, it is concluded that there are no effects on statutory landscapes.

Effects on Landscape Features

- 7.154 The most notable landscape feature within the site is the River Blithe, which is tributary of the River Trent and an important ecological and drainage corridor. The masterplan (**Appendix 11.4**) has achieved retention of the majority of the trees and vegetation along its course and allocated public open space (proposed for naturalistic planting) between it and the footprint of the housing and employment land. Appropriate protection measures would be implemented during the construction phase and outlined within a Construction Method Statement. If implemented, the effects on the river are therefore considered to be **negligible**.
- 7.155 The fields themselves consist of improved pasture grassland and arable crop (winter wheat at the time of the site visit) which would be permanently replaced by built structures, areas of hardstanding and open space.
- 7.156 Although trees have been retained wherever possible, inevitably with a development of this scale there is a need for localised tree removal to facilitate access, hard standing and buildings. Full details are contained in the Arboricultural Assessment which accompanies the Environmental Statement. A summary of the landscape features which would be removed and added within the site is listed below.

Summary of landscape features to be removed:

- 7.157 The amount of tree loss would be minimised by the fact that the majority of development would be contained within the existing field boundaries. Notable features which require removal include a section of the hedgerow along Sandon Road and a group of roadside trees would be removed in order to facilitate the new roundabout access to the residential area and a visibility splay.
- 7.158 Within the residential area, a number of trees would require removal to facilitate construction of residential plots and internal means of access including several B-grade trees along the boundary around the existing Dance Studio (where a community centre is proposed).

- 7.159 A group of several B and C-grade trees would need to be removed to accommodate the proposed access route between the existing business park and the proposed area of employment land to the east of the site.
- 7.160 In total, out of the 124 individual trees, 46 tree groups and 10 hedgerows surveyed within the site boundaries (total of 169 items), it is advised that 27 would require removal. No A-grade items would be affected, and the losses amount to 13 B-grade and 14 C-grade items. The proposals would result in a significantly greater quantity of new trees being planted which, once they establish, would provide adequate compensation and enhancement for those scheduled to be removed.
- 7.161 Although some of the trees to be removed have value at the level of the site, the overall value and sensitivity of the site's landscape features is assessed as **low**. There are no notable, veterans or TPO designated trees although they do provide local visual and amenity benefits. The improved grassland and arable land has not been found to be ecologically important, and although typical of land use in the surrounding area, is not valuable in itself to the wider landscape character. The magnitude of change without mitigation is considered to be high which would result in a **moderate/minor** effect on the site's landscape features, and is therefore not significant in EIA terms.

Summary of landscape features to be added:

- 7.162 The implementation of the Landscape Strategy would result in a net increase in the quantity and diversity of trees and shrubs within the site. Some of this would be created as direct compensation for the lost vegetation, such as a species-rich native hedgerow with trees which would be planted within the scheme to replace the section requiring removal to facilitate site access.
- 7.163 Additional trees, shrubs and hedgerows would be created within the areas of public open space within both the residential and employment areas. This provides an opportunity to enhance the currently open landscape structure (particularly within Area A where a dense native hedgerow would be planted along the currently open southern boundary) and contribute to ecological enhancement.
- 7.164 With the proposals for additional planting included within the scheme, and given that the River Blithe corridor would be protected and buffered with open space, it is assessed that with mitigation there would be a low magnitude of change to the site's landscape features which would result in a **minor/negligible** and **positive** overall effect.

Effects on Visual Amenity

- 7.165 The following analysis of the visual effect of the development proposals is broken down into main receptor groups such as transport, residential and public rights of way. Where representative, the eight photoviewpoints in **Figure 7.4** have been referenced in addition to the detailed visual analysis for these viewpoints contained in **Appendix 7.3**.

Transport

- 7.166 A review of **Figure 7.2** indicates users of key transport routes that may have theoretical visibility of the proposals. Analysis of predicted visibility taking into account intervening tree and woodland cover and built development has been carried out by review on site

and reference to relevant viewpoint visualisations. The sensitivity of road and rail receptors is low unless otherwise stated.

Roads

- 7.167 The A50 dual carriageway is the only major (A) road within the ZTV which is predicted to have the potential for views of the development between the settlements of Blythe Bridge and Lower Tean. From Blythe Bridge to Sandon Road, the road is contained within a deep cutting which screens views, thereafter it is embanked but with dense roadside tree planting preventing views of the site, with the exception of a short stretch to the west of Cresswell Old Lane where fleeting glimpses of the development may be possible. The magnitude of change is assessed as being low resulting in a **minor/negligible** effect.
- 7.168 Relatively few other roads are located within close vicinity to the site and those with predicted views of the development are restricted to sections of minor (C) roads.
- 7.169 Sandon Road lies adjacent to the western boundary of Area B. Representative views from the road are illustrated by **Photoviewpoint H** in **Figure 7.3**. The roadside hedgerow currently provides a good level of screening of the majority of the site; something that would be reduced by the removal of the hedgerow to facilitate access and the construction of housing. This would enable close-range and unfiltered views resulting in a very high magnitude of change and a **moderate** level of effect which is considered **significant** for a section of c.250m of the road. In the medium to long term, this would diminish to **moderate/minor** and **not significant** once the replacement hedgerow (planted behind the visibility splay) has matured.
- 7.170 In addition, there are predicted to be brief glimpses between hedgerow gaps for users of short stretches of Sandon Road south of Cresswell, such as illustrated in **Photoviewpoint 7** in **Figure 7.4**). Very low magnitudes of change would arise and the overall effect would be **negligible**.
- 7.171 Cresswell Old Road runs from the level crossing north of the Blythe Business Park entrance before crossing under the A50. Between these points, visibility of the houses in Area B would be screened by the existing business park and only small sections, which have gaps in the roadside hedgerow, would experience heavily filtered views of Area A resulting in a low magnitude of change and **minor/negligible** effects.
- 7.172 Uttoxeter Road and Draycott Road, a minor road running between Blythe Bridge and Draycott in the Moors, is predicted to have very limited potential for views of the development due to it being on the similar level to the site but screened and heavily filtered by roadside vegetation, the A50 (either on an embankment or flanked by dense tree planting), vegetation along the railway and the existing buildings in Blythe Business Park. The effects would be **minor/negligible** and **not significant**.

Railways

- 7.173 The Crewe-Derby railway runs adjacent to the northern boundary of Area A. The line runs on level terrain alongside the site and has scattered bushes and low trees along its sides. Passengers would experience extremely brief glimpses of Area A heading east past the existing business park and occasional filtered glimpses for a c.1km section

heading west. The magnitude of change is judged to be low and the overall effect **minor/negligible** and **not significant**.

Public Rights of Way

- 7.174 The assessment of the impact on public rights of way (PRoW) focuses on those within 2km of the site where any significant effects would be concentrated. However, due to the effect of distance and intervening vegetation/built form, views from sections of PRoW beyond 1km are considered as too low to be significant.
- 7.175 As shown in **Figure 7.1** there are no public rights of way within the site boundaries. The majority of routes in the surrounding area are situated in the open countryside to the south, east and northeast; the most notable of which is the semi-circular route which runs to the south of the site to Paynsley Hall and then north to Cresswell Old Road via Lower and Upper Newton Farms.
- 7.176 The views from the public footpath (ref. Draycott in the Moors 19) located to the south of the site which extends from Creswell village to Paynsley Hall are represented in **Photoviewpoints 1, 2, and 3** which illustrate the range of views heading progressively further east.
- 7.177 From the footpath, the majority of the proposed houses in Area B would be filtered behind the line of trees along its eastern boundary. However, there is currently no boundary vegetation along the southern boundary of Area A which cuts across an arable field. Therefore, there would be open and unfiltered views of the proposed employment units to the north which range in height from 6-12m to eaves. From Rookery Farm (**Photoviewpoint 1**) and Leese House Farm (**Photoviewpoint 2**) at distances of 150 - 400m from Area A, the development would result in **major/moderate** to **moderate** and **significant** visual effects. An illustration of the footprint and heights of the proposed employment units is shown by the block montage model of **Viewpoint 1 (Figure 7.5)**. The level of effect would be reduced to some extent by the maturation of the planted native tree and hedgerow belt along the southern boundary but would still be regarded as significant.
- 7.178 Between Leese House Farm, Paynsley Hall and the footbridge over the Crewe-Derby railway, views of the development would become more oblique and heavily filtered by successive lines of field boundary vegetation as illustrated in **Photoviewpoint 3 in Figure 7.4**. Effects would be **moderate** and **significant**.
- 7.179 **Photoviewpoints 5 and 6** were taken from different sections of public footpath (ref. Draycott in the Moors 17) between Lower Newton Farm and Creswell Old Lane to the northeast of the site. Users of the right of way would experience partially filtered views of the proposed employment units in Area A with the proposed residential housing being screened by structures within the existing business park. Therefore, no effects would be experienced.
- 7.180 **Photoviewpoint 5** illustrates the most direct and 'worst case' view from the right of way network to the north of the railway. The block montage in **Figure 7.5** provides a visual indication of the change to the existing view from the construction of the employment units. The new structures would represent an easterly extension of the exiting business park into open countryside with their massing reducing open views of the fields to the

south. The upper sections would not rise above the skyline formed by the ridge of higher ground along the Stone Circles Challenge path (see **Photoviewpoint 8**). The magnitude of change would be high and the effects would range between **major/moderate** and **moderate** and therefore significant. After establishment of the planting at Year 15, effects would be reduced to **moderate/minor** to **moderate** and **significant**.

- 7.181 Further east along the footpath, as represented by **Photoviewpoint 6**, users would experience more oblique and filtered views of the employment units with a slightly lower magnitude of change and **significant** effects ranging from **moderate/minor** to **moderate** (reducing to **moderate/minor** and **not significant** at Year 15 due to the influence of the planting).
- 7.182 Theoretical views are predicted from the public footpath (ref.Fulford 24 and 25) between Sandon Road and Saverley Green (c.200-700m to the southwest of Area B). It is assessed that views from lower sections of the path adjacent to Sandon Road would be screened or heavily filtered but with more potential for oblique partially filtered views of some of the proposed housing and employment land closer to Saverley Green. The level of effect would be **moderate/minor** and **not significant**.
- 7.183 Small sections of the public footpath (ref. Draycott-in-the-Moors 9) running from Sandon Road to the footbridge over the A50 are situated on raised ground c.400m to the north of the Area B would have elevated views of the proposed housing seen against the backdrop of the existing housing within Cresswell. As a consequence of the presence of existing housing, and the fact that the development would represent infill, the susceptibility to change is considered to be low. The magnitude of change would be high and the overall effect **moderate** and **significant**.

Residential views

- 7.184 The assessment of residential receptors is separated into settlements (which contain aggregations of individual residential properties) and those from properties which can be individually identified and which are scattered or isolated (e.g. farmsteads). Due to the large number of residential properties with theoretical views, only those properties which lie within 1km of the site and with clear predicted views of the development have been included in the assessment.
- 7.185 Views from residential properties are typically valued as either very high (primary living space) or high (secondary living space). However, the susceptibility of views to development proposals is affected by whether there is existing development of a similar type and scale in the view. In this case, the majority of properties already have either residential housing or employment units within the existing view which reduces their sensitivity to the proposed development.

Cresswell

- 7.186 Within the village of Cresswell, a row of approximately 10 semi-detached houses along Sandon Road opposite the boundary of Area B would have direct and close-range views of the proposed new housing – particularly following removal of approximately 150-200m of roadside hedgerow – as well as several properties along Rookery Crescent adjacent to the southern boundary. These properties would experience a very high magnitude of change resulting in **significant** effects of between **major/moderate** to **major**.

- 7.187 This would reduce to a **moderate** and **significant** effect at Year 15 after the establishment of the replacement hedgerow with trees planted behind the visibility splay. The majority of residential properties around Sandon Close are predicted to have heavily filtered views due to the cluster of mature trees along the southwest site corner.
- 7.188 Views of the proposed housing would be screened by the business park from the properties north of the railway along Cresswell Old Road. However, there is the potential for several of these to have filtered and oblique views of the proposed employment units. It is predicted that ground floor views from several individual properties to the west of Sandon Road, the opposite side of the railway crossing to the site, would be screened or heavily filtered with some potential for upper storey views. The potential magnitude of change would range from medium to high resulting in **moderate** to **major/moderate** and **significant** effects.

Other settlements

- 7.189 With the exception of a cluster of houses in the small hamlet of Saverlely Green c.800m to the southwest that are predicted to be either screened or heavily filtered, there are no other settlements within 1km of the site. The settlements listed below are located within the study area and predicted by the ZTV as having theoretical views. The potential for views of the development from them is briefly summarised; however due to their distance from the site none are predicted to experience significant effects.
- Blythe Bridge (c.2km to northwest) – within ZTV but views highly unlikely even from southern and eastern edges due to screening from embanked and densely planted A50 corridor. No effects predicted;
 - Stonehouses (c.1.3km to northwest) - no theoretical visibility predicted from southern edge of the settlement. More elevated theoretical views predicted from houses along Draycott Old Road but considered unlikely due to screening from trees and built form. Visual effects would not exceed moderate/minor; and
 - Draycott-in-the-Moors (c.1.2km to north) – majority of settlement within ZTV but filtered views only considered likely from upper stories of properties along the southern edge of Draycott Road. The intervening A50 which is embanked and well-treed is likely to screen the majority of potential views. Visual effects would not exceed **moderate/minor**.

Individual properties

- 7.190 It is an established planning principle that there is no private 'right to a view'. However, it is recognised that, in extreme cases where structures directly impinge upon neighbouring properties, there is the potential for development to have an unacceptable impact upon residential visual amenity. In this case, the proposed buildings are sufficiently distant from neighbouring properties to ensure that there is no likelihood of unacceptable visual effects being experienced to any of the surrounding dwellings.
- 7.191 Those isolated residential properties located within 1km of the site, inside the ZTV, which would have actual visibility of the development are briefly considered below. Ordinarily, views from within residential properties would be ascribed a very high (primary living space) or high (secondary living space) susceptibility. However, where there is existing development of a similar type to that being proposed within the current

view, the overall sensitivity rating has been reduced to a level in accordance with its proximity and scale.

- 7.192 There are two individual properties around Leese House Farm (c.350m south of Area A). Both dwellings are aligned north-south with aspects facing away from the site. Views of the upper sections of the employment units are predicted from side windows and partially filtered views from the gardens. **Photoviewpoint 2** was taken from the footpath in front of Leese House and is broadly illustrative of potential views from a small side window on an extension to the main property. The magnitude of change is predicted to be high leading to a **moderate** to **major/moderate** and **significant** effect. This would reduce to **moderate/minor** to **moderate** following establishment of the southern boundary planting in Year 15.
- 7.193 There are several individual dwellings located around Wastegate Farm c.300m south of Leese House Farm. Due to their lower position, it is anticipated that views of the majority of the employment land would be screened or heavily filtered by vegetation around Leese House Farm and a pond between the two properties. The predicted visual effects are assessed as ranging from **minor** to **moderate/minor** and **not significant**.
- 7.194 There is a single two-storey dwelling c.200m south of the track between Leese House Farm and Paynsley Hall. Views from this property are predicted to be predominantly screened or very heavily filtered by the young trees within a planted woodland block to the immediate northwest. The magnitude of change is assessed as being very low and the effects no more than **minor** and **not significant**.
- 7.195 Paynsley Hall contains a Scheduled Monument designated for its moated earthwork. The development would be screened from the main property due to its position behind several large agricultural barns. A more modern two storey detached dwelling has been constructed to the west of the barns which is predicted to have filtered and partial views of the employment units resulting in a low magnitude of change and moderate and significant effects, which would reduce to **moderate/minor** after Year 15.
- 7.196 Oblique and filtered views of Area A would be experienced by the cottage adjacent to the railway between Paynsley Hall and Lower Newton Farm with effects not exceeding **minor**. **Moderate/minor** effects are predicted from upper stories of the two residential properties around Lower and Upper Newton Farm with the majority of views screened by adjacent farm buildings and only filtered and oblique views available. The worst case views from in front of the buildings are represented by **Photoviewpoint 6** which would result in **minor** to **moderate/minor** at Year 15.

Cumulative Effects

- 7.197 Cumulative effects generally occur where there may be simultaneous or sequential visibility of two or more developments of the same type and scale, or where the consideration of other schemes would increase an effect identified. Where other similar schemes are in the planning system and made known to the applicant, or are under construction, these are considered in conjunction with the proposed scheme.
- 7.198 SMDC requested that the EIA consider one development for potential cumulative effects. The site is located at the former Indesit Work, Grindley Lane. Blythe Bridge

(reference 09/11860/FUL) and the application, now permitted, was to alter conditions allowing the change of use on existing factory buildings. The reason for assessing for potential cumulative effects relates to highways and traffic flows. It is judged that there is no potential for significant cumulative landscape effects given the physical separation between the sites and the lack of intervisibility.

Summary

- 7.199 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been carried out for the proposed development to the east and west of Blythe Business Park. The assessment was carried out in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition (2013).
- 7.200 In order to inform the assessment, a review was undertaken of relevant local policy and landscape studies, a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) produced and a site visit undertaken in December 2013 to take photography from eight representative photoviewpoints. The viewpoints were agreed in consultation with landscape officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. Illustrative block montages were produced for the proposed employment units from three of the viewpoints. The study area extended to a 5km radius around the site; however any significant effects were considered to be confined to within 2km.
- 7.201 The site does not lie within, or in close proximity to, any designated landscape recognised in adopted national and local policy or statutory legislation. The site lies within the Settled Plateau Farmlands Landscape Type which is described as being a rolling mixed farmland landscape with open and extensive views. However, the site has a weak relationship to this landscape type due to its position within a valley which serves to enclose views and because its close proximity to light industry, major transport routes and pylon lines along the valley corridor has introduced urban fringe pressures which have fundamentally altered the formerly rural, tranquil landscape character.
- 7.202 The site for the proposed housing is an improved grassland field adjacent to Sandon Road which is surrounded by residential housing in Cresswell and the Blythe Business Park. The presence of tall buildings around its edges means that the development would be well screened from the majority of the surrounding area. Significant visual effects would be confined to the adjacent residential properties in Cresswell, something which is typical for any settlement extension or infill development.
- 7.203 The proposed employment units range in height from 6-12m to eaves and would form an eastern extension of the Blythe Business Park, the tall structures of which would largely screen the development from the west. Due to the open nature of the southern arable boundary, significant visual effects would be experienced from the public footpath to the south. However, the proposed planting along this boundary would serve to reduce the magnitude of change by filtering views and breaking up the visual mass of the structures.
- 7.204 Significant visual effects would be experienced by users of a limited number of local rights of way and roads, several individual properties and residential dwellings along Sandon Road and Cresswell Old Road adjacent to the site. A summary of significant landscape effects is outlined in **Table 7.9**. It is considered that the geographic extent of

significant effects would not extend beyond c.700m from the site and that the majority of views from the wider area would be heavily filtered or screened by topography and vegetation.

- 7.205 In all views, the proposed development would be seen within the context of existing residential housing and employment units of a similar type and scale which would reduce receptor sensitivity to change. As a consequence, no significant effects are predicted on local landscape character or landscape designations.
- 7.206 The development would result in the removal of a small quantity of existing vegetation including a section of hedgerow and trees along the western boundary adjacent to Sandon Road. However, the River Blithe corridor would be protected and buffered and the development layout has achieved retention of the majority of trees. The implementation of the landscape strategy would result in a net increase in the quantity and diversity of vegetation which are predicted to have positive overall effects on the site's landscape fabric and features.

Table 7.9: Summary of Significant Effects

Description of Likely Significant Effects	(Major, Moderate, Minor Negligible)	Significance of impacts					Summary of Enhancement Measures	Significance of Residual Effects					Relevant Policy	Relevant Legislation
		Positive / Negative	(P/T)	(D/I)	ST/ MT/ LT)	(Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible)		Positive / Negative	(P/T)	(D/I)	ST/ MT/ LT)			
Demolition and Construction Phase														
Visual effects on residential properties along Sandon Road, Cresswell opposite site	Major	Negative	T	I	ST	A replacement hedgerow with trees to be planted behind visibility splay	Major/ Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a	
Operational Phase														
Visual effects to road users along c.250m of Sandon Road	Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	A replacement hedgerow with trees to be planted behind visibility splay	Moderate/ Minor and not significant	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a	
Visual effects on users of public footpath between Rookery Farm and Paynsley Hall (PVP 1-3)	Major to Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Dense planting along southern boundary would break up visual massing of buildings and filter views of lower sections of the employment units	Major/Moderate to Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a	

Description of Likely Significant Effects	Significance of impacts					Summary of Mitigation / Enhancement Measures	Significance of Residual Effects					Relevant Policy	Relevant Legislation
	(Major, Moderate, Minor Negligible)	Positive / Negative	(P/T)	(D/I)	ST/ MT/ LT)		(Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible)	Positive / Negative	(P/T)	(D/I)	ST/ MT/ LT)		
Visual effects on users of public footpath between Rookery Farm and Paynsley Hall (PVP 5 and 6)	Major/ Moderate to Moderate/ Minor	Negative	P	I	LT	Reinforcement tree planting along the northern boundary adjacent to the River Blithe would break up visual massing of buildings and filter views of lower sections of the employment units	Moderate to Minor	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a
Visual effects on users of public footpath between Sandon Road and A50	Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	No specific mitigation considered suitable	Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a
Visual effects to c.23 residential properties along Sandon Road opposite site entrance	Major to Major/ Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	A replacement hedgerow with trees to be planted behind visibility splay	Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a
Visual effects on several residential properties along Cresswell Old Road	Major/ Moderate to Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	No specific mitigation considered suitable	Major/Moderate to Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a
Visual effects on residential property at Leese House Farm	Major/ Moderate to Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Dense planting along southern boundary would break up visual massing of buildings and filter views of lower sections of the employment units	Moderate to Moderate/Minor	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a

Description of Likely Significant Effects	Significance of impacts					Summary of Mitigation / Enhancement Measures	Significance of Residual Effects					Relevant Policy	Relevant Legislation
	(Major, Moderate, Minor Negligible)	Positive / Negative	(P/T)	(D/I)	ST/ MT/ LT)		(Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible)	Positive / Negative	(P/T)	(D/I)	ST/ MT/ LT)		
Visual effects on residential property adjacent to Paynsley Hall	Moderate	Negative	P	I	LT	Reinforcement planting along the eastern boundary would help filter views of the employment units	Moderate/Mi nor	Negative	P	I	LT	Policy DC3	n/a

P/T = Permanent or Temporary, D/I = Direct or Indirect, ST/MT/LT – short Term, Medium Term or Long Term, N/A = Not Applicable