38.1.2

Highsted Park (Northern Site and Southern Site)

Proof of Evidence of Kate Ahern CMLI on behalf of Swale Borough Council

Landscape and Visual Effects

Main Text

PINS Reference: APP/V2255/V/24/3355313 and APP/V2255/V/24/3355314
Swale Borough Council Planning Application Reference: 21/503906/EIOUT and 21/530914/EIOUT

February 2025

Kate Ahern
February 2025

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Witness qualifications and experience

1.1 My name is Kate Ahern. I am a landscape architect and Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute.

1.2 I hold a Post Graduate MSc in Landscape Ecology, Design and Management (LEDM) from the University of London, Wye College (1986).

1.3 I am a Director of LUC and have been employed as a landscape manager and landscape planner by LUC since 1988. My experience includes development of methodologies in, and application of, landscape character assessment, landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA), landscape sensitivity assessment, reviews of designated landscapes, including assessment of natural beauty and landscape research. My recent research for Natural England has involved looking at the need for future landscape designations, and preparation of guidance for protected landscape bodies on implementing the requirements of the Government's Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework, as set out in the Environmental improvement Plan. I regularly provide landscape advice to planning authorities and training on landscape and visual issues on behalf of the Landscape Institute and Natural England. I provided input to the revision of the current Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2014) and was Director of charge of work for Natural England, in 2024, to update this guidance. I worked with Natural England to develop a method for assessing landscape sensitivity and have undertaken many studies to assess landscape sensitivity to different types of development. I have undertaken Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA) and reviews of LVIA for a wider range of sites including residential, employment and energy developments, highways, and linear infrastructure. I provide landscape and seascape advice to Natural England for high-risk case work in relation to NSIP Projects including representing Natural England as an expert witness at examination. I regularly act as landscape expert witness in local plan examinations, planning appeals and NSIP examinations.

1.4 Further detail on my relevant experience is provided in Appendix 1 of my Proof of Evidence.

Statement of truth

1.5 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this inquiry is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution, the Landscape Institute. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Background

1.6 I was first involved in this project in 2018, when I was Director of a team at LUC, commissioned by Swale Brough Council, to undertake a Borough-wide landscape sensitivity study [CD 18.29]. This study formed part of the evidence preparation for the Local Plan Review. It assessed the landscape implications of possible residential and employment extensions to Swales' main settlement, including larger villages. This included an overview and initial 'Landscape Opinion' of the landscape context and sensitivities of the land wrapping around the south-east Sittingbourne being promoted by Quinn Estates as a new Garden Village for Swale, associated with a new strategic relief road linking the A2 with the M2 (Southern site). This work was updated in 2019, following enlargement of the site boundaries to include land north of the A2, identified as Land to the west of Teynham. The additional land included the connection of the proposed link road with the A2 and the existing Sittingbourne northern relief road (Northern site). My team subsequently reviewed the Landscape and Visual impact Assessment (LVIA) chapters in the Environmental Statement submitted with the planning applications in 2019, and the subsequent updates (October 2022, February 2024 and August 2024) and prepared a corresponding 'Landscape Opinion' on the development proposals. Through this work, I visited the sites and reviewed landscape and visual effects. I have detailed knowledge of the baseline landscape and visual receptors, the evolution of both schemes and their landscape and visual impacts.

1.7 I was commissioned by Swale Borough Council to provide landscape and visual expert witness services following the SoS decision to call in the planning application in November 2024. All views expressed in this proof of evidence are my own.

Chapter 2
Scope of evidence

2.1 I am commissioned by Swale Borough Council to provide expert evidence in this case, based on my own professional judgement. My evidence addresses the impacts of the proposed developments on landscape character and visual amenity. I provide the Inquiry (and the Secretary of State) with an assessment of the key landscape and visual effects of the proposal based on my assessment of the Applicants' materials provided in their LVIA, and my own knowledge of the landscape. My evidence shows that the effects on landscape and visual amenity of each scheme individually and in combination is greater than judged by the Applicants. This will then inform those charged with weighing the planning balance.

2.2 My evidence should be read in conjunction with the other proofs prepared by:

- Mr Duigan of Swale Borough Council who is the Council's main planning witness and will give evidence assessing the planning balance. The effect of the development on the Important Local Countryside Gaps (ILCG), which is included in the Applicants' LVIA, is covered in Mr Duigan's evidence.
- Ms Miller of the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL) gives evidence on how the application for the Southern site effects the special qualities, character and value of the KDNL. My evidence covers how the national landscape is dealt with in the Applicants' LVIA and assesses the effect on the relevant landscape and visual receptors, showing where in my opinion effects are greater than judged by the Applicants.
- Ms Sones of Place Services gives evidence on heritage impacts.

2.3 There will inevitably be a degree of overlap between my evidence and that presented by Ms Miller, as effects on the special qualities of the KDNL largely arise from landscape and visual effects. The main focus of my evidence is on matters relating to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, while Ms Miller's evidence is directed to the implications of those effects in terms of the special characteristics, qualities and purposes of the KDNL and assessment against the KDNL Management Plan. My evidence does not address whether the Southern Application would be major development, or whether there are exceptional circumstances justifying the grant of permission. These are planning matters covered by my colleague Mr Duigan.

2.4 My evidence addresses the landscape and visual effects in relation to the character of the Rural Lanes and Protected Trees. My colleague Mr Duigan's evidence covers the wider policy implications in relation to DM26 and DM29.

Approach to my evidence

2.5 I have visited the sites since 2021 during the evolution of the schemes and LUC's preparation of Landscape Opinions [CD 4.15, CD 4.16, CD 4.17] and my reviews of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments.

2.6 In the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG), I agree that the LVIA is based on the approach set out in the Landscape Institute's and IEMA's 3rd edition Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) [CD 18.41], but I recognise that these guidelines allow interpretation by the assessor.

2.7 In my evidence, I show how in differences in the judgement of both sensitivity of receptor and the magnitude of effect results in the underestimation of Significant effects in the Applicants' LVIAs for both sites I illustrate how the Applicants have taken a broad-brush approach to their LVIA's which is intent of highlighting the benefits of the scheme and the positive effects of landscaping and screening rather than providing a realistic assessment of a reasonable maximum scenario. I show how the Applicants' approach to the LVIAs has concentrated on the beneficial outcomes shown on the Illustrated Masterplan [CD 2.2] and does not always recognise the full implications of the development at a sufficiently detailed level, including the requirements to manage flood risk and the engineering and design implications of the relief roads and associated infrastructure, including major new junctions. I show examples where the LVIAs appear to have been undertaken in isolation from other chapters in the ES. This approach results in an overly positive response to the scheme, based on vegetative screening, and an underestimation of the effects of the development. I provide a more realistic assessment in order to highlight the range of Significant and Adverse landscape and visual effects at construction, year 1 and residual effects at year 15, that must be taken forward into the planning balance.

2.8 The approach in my evidence is proportionate and I concentrate on those effects which I judge to be Significant. I do not cover all the effects that do not or are unlikely to breach the threshold of significance. For each scheme there are collectively a wide range of effects of below Moderate (Northern Application ES) and below Moderate Substantial (Southern Application ES) which are considered to not be Significant. I have not undertaken a detailed assessment of these. However,

I note that some may be greater than indicated in the respective LVIAs. My conclusion is that collectively, the extent and number of effects identified in the LVIA as not Significant may also be greater and should also be taken into account in the planning balance. I acknowledge that all impacts are relevant to the planning balance, which is not a matter for me.

2.9 My evidence shows that the planned mitigation of green infrastructure and landscaping as shown on the Composite Illustrated Masterplan [CD 2.2] would not mitigate the Significant effects of the scheme and does not meet the standards expected of a landscape-led development. The development proposal for the Scheme overall all does not meet the landscape-led objectives for the Thames Gateway.

2.10 In this proof of evidence, I shall:

- outline the policy context relevant to my evidence (chapter 3).
- describe the baseline landscape and visual context of the site (chapter 4.
- assess the landscape and visual effects of the proposal for the Northern Site (chapter 5).
- assess the landscape and visual effects of the proposal for the Southern Site (chapter 6).
- critique the overall approach to the provision of green infrastructure (GI) as part of the outline landscape strategy shown on the Illustrated Masterplans.
- conclude on the overall landscape and visual effects of the proposals individually and combination (chapter 6).

2.11 The Appendices cover:

1. My relevant experience
2. The Landscape and Visual baseline (mapping)
3. Extracts from the ES documents illustrating the effects of the scheme

Key points of my evidence

2.12 In summary, the key points of my evidence cover the extent and magnitude of:

- Harmful effects on the intrinsic character and beauty of the landscape.
- Harmful effects on the hierarchy of valued landscapes including the Kent Downs National Landscape and the Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) – Southern Site only.

- Harmful effects on the visual amenity of the large number of receptors, including people using the rights of way network and recreation sites, local residents and people travelling through the area on the local road networks.

Chapter 3
Policy

3.1 This section of my evidence identifies the key policies that are relevant to the landscape and visual evidence.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [CD 16.1]

3.2 **Section 12: Achieving well-designed places** is relevant to this evidence, in particular paragraph 135 which states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments (inter alia) "*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting*"…

3.3 **Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment** of the NPPF is relevant to this evidence, in particular:

Para.187(a) which refers to *"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes"* which applies to the KDNL and the Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) relevant to the development for the Southern Site.

Para. 187 (b) which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (inter alia) … "*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*".

3.4 My colleague Ms Miller of the KDNL covers polies in para. 189-190 in relation to the great weight to be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes and refusal of permissions for major development other than exceptional circumstances.

3.5 Section **12: Achieving well-designed places** is relevant to this evidence, in particular para. 135 which states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments "*are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*" and "*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting*"…

3.6 In relation to 135, my evidence covers effects on local character and landscape setting. I do not cover the master planning and design aspects of the scheme, other than the landscape strategy.

Swale Borough Council, Adopted Local Plan 2017, 'Bearing Fruits 2031' [CD 13.1]

3.7 Relevant policies can be summarised as follows:

Strategic polices and core planning policies

3.8 ST1 Delivering sustainable development in Swale requires proposals to (point 4) accord with the Local Plan Settlement Strategy settlement strategy which is set out ST3. Under point 11 it requires development proposals to conserve and enhance the natural environment by protecting areas designated for their landscape importance and to protect, and where possible enhance the intrinsic character, beauty and tranquillity of the countryside

3.9 ST3 sets out the Swale settlement strategy by using previously developed land within built up areas, and sites allocated by the plan development will be permitted in accordance with the settlement strategy. Part 5 of this Policy advises that at locations in the open countryside, outside the built-up area boundaries shown on the Proposals Map, development will not be permitted, unless it would contribute to protecting and, where appropriate enhancing the intrinsic value, landscape setting, tranquillity and beauty of the countryside.

3.10 ST5 sets out the Sittingbourne area strategy which describes the town as the principal focus for the concentration of development, and under point 10 requires development to improve the condition and quality of landscapes in the area, especially those in poor condition and ensure that development is appropriate to landscape character and quality, especially within landscape designations and areas with low or moderate capacity to accommodate change.

3.11 CP7: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment- providing for green infrastructure, particular point 7 to ensure development proposals will make the enhancement of biodiversity and landscape as their primary purpose. A CP7 Strategic Green Corridor is shown for the area south of Sittingbourne on the Key Diagram 3.1.1. This is also shown on picture 5.6.2 of the Local Plan extending south of Sittingbourne.

Development management polices

3.12 DM14 relates to general development criteria, and requires development to reflect the positive characteristics and features of the site and locality, conserve and enhance the natural and/or built environments taking in to account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets

3.13 DM24: Conserving and Enhancing Valued Landscapes requires the Borough's landscapes to be protected and enhanced. It sets out policies for designated landscapes (Part A) relevant to the

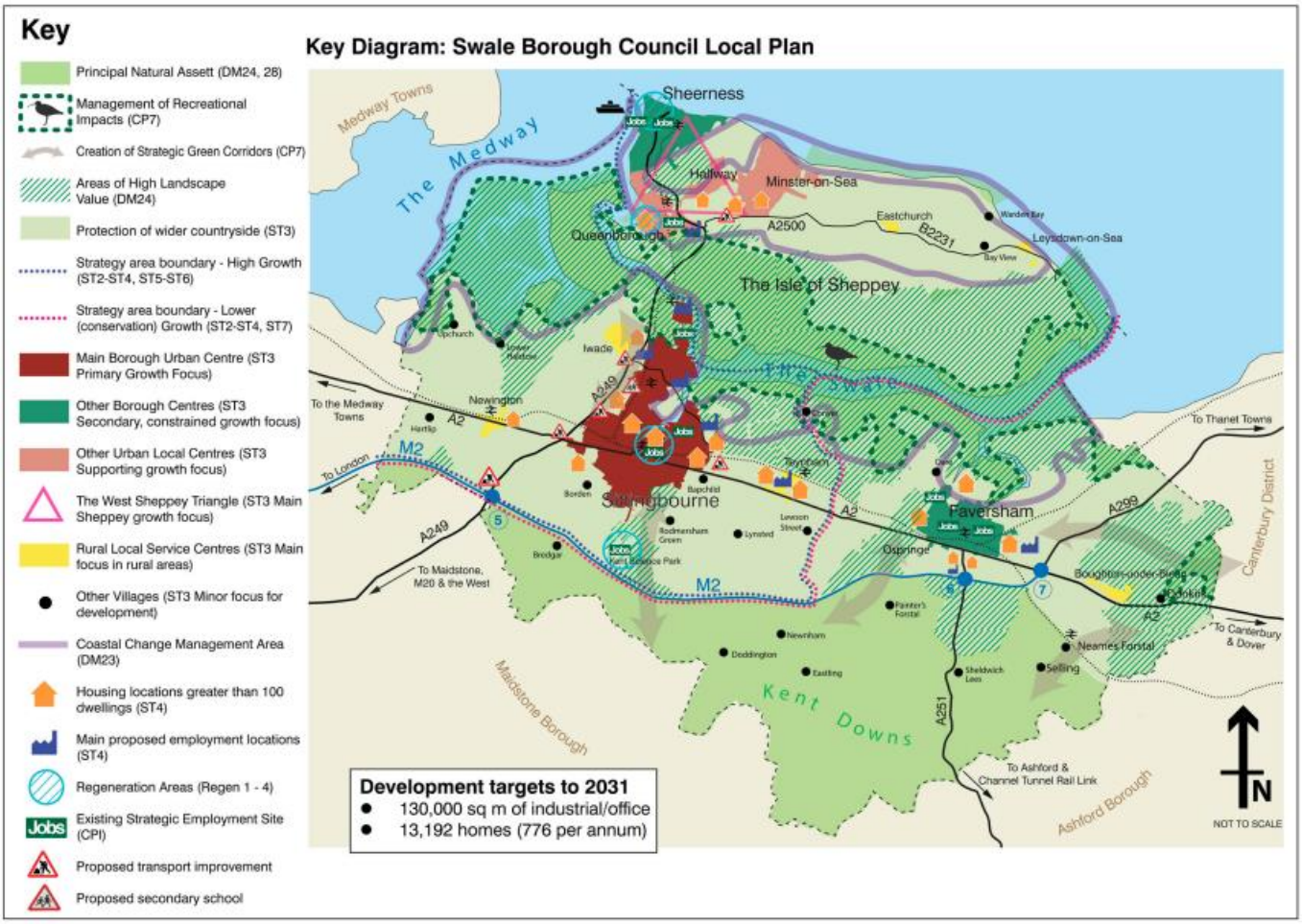
KDNL and AHLV for the Southern Site, for non-designated landscapes (Part B), and for all landscapes (Part C).

3.14 DM26 relates to rural lanes and states that planning permission will not be granted for development that would either physically, or as a result of traffic levels, significantly harm the character of rural lanes. (My evidence covers the effects on character. My colleague Mr Duigan in his planning evidence considers traffic levels and the overall effects in relation to DM26.)

3.15 DM29: Woodlands, Trees and Hedges which promotes the protection, enhancement and sustainable management of woodlands, orchards, trees and hedges, including at point 1, the refusal of planning permission where there is a loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland.

3.16 The strategic **Thames Gateway initiative** has informed the Local Plan (e.g. para. 4.3.2) and notably the settlement strategy. Para. 3.07 of the Local Plan states that "*our vision and objectives require a tailored and strategic distribution of growth set by two planning areas intended to highlight the variances in their respective strategic approaches, notably the greater share of development within the Swale part of the Thames Gateway growth area (Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey) than those areas beyond it. Our vision also requires a settlement strategy that will direct the greatest scales of growth to the most sustainable locations as represented by the main urban areas and most accessible villages with a range of local services."*

Map extract 3.1: Swale Local Plan Key Diagram, pg.22 [CD 13.1]



3.17 The key diagram 3.1.1 (from CD 13.1, reproduced above) shows that the proposed development area of the Site lies within the strategy area for higher growth. This map also clearly shows the National Landscape, the AHLV and a strategic green corridor (CP7) and the area for protection of wider countryside under policy ST3. The key requirement is for development to be sustainable located. The whole of the Thames Gateway is not implied to be unconstrained or undesignated 'white' land.

Chapter 4
Landscape and visual baseline

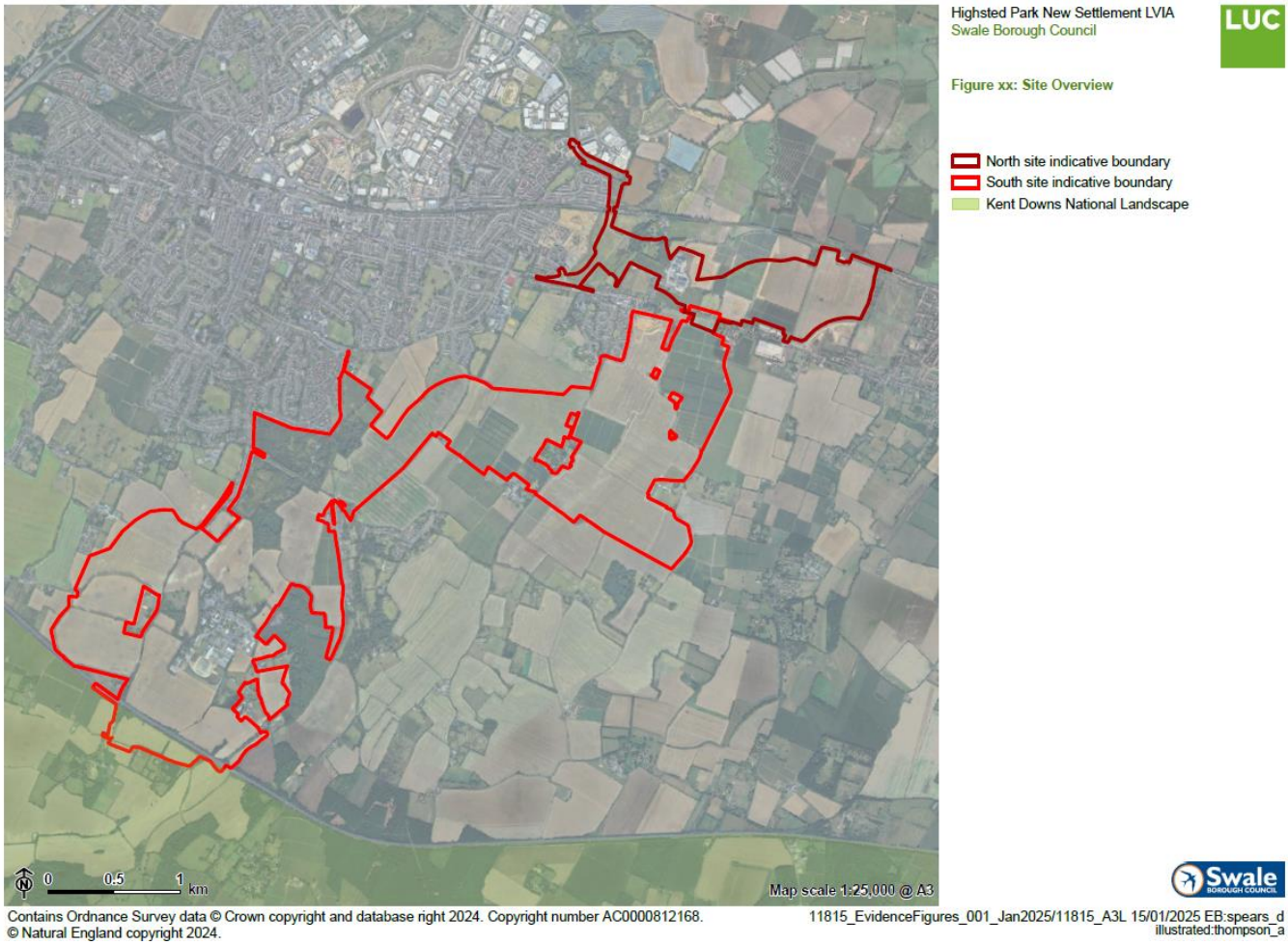
4.1 My evidence sets out the landscape and visual context for the Northern and Southern Applications. It provides a baseline for my evidence on effects contained in the following chapters 5 (Northern Scheme) and 6 (Southern Scheme). Here, I describe the:

- Landscape context and the landscape receptors covering character, landscape value, site features and elements, other policy designations indicative of landscape value.
- Visual context and visual receptors including people living in local residences, people using the rights of way network and people using the local road network.

4.2 The Site (combined Northern Site and Southern Site) covers 675ha (c. 98ha Northern Site and 577ha Southern Site). At the national level, the proposals cross two of Natural England's National Character Areas (NCA), extending from the edge of NCA: 81 Greater Thames Estuary, across NCA 113: North Kent Plain, climbing the dip slope and in the dry valleys of NCA 119: North Kent Downs into the Kent Downs National Landscape. The location of the two Applications is shown on the map extract below.

4.3 Appendix 2 of my proof contains maps showing the landscape and visual context for the Northern and Southern Sites. Extracts of these maps are included in this chapter for illustrative purposes. The full figures in the Appendix should be used for further reference.

Map extract 4.1: Site context



4.4 In my evidence I use the Local Landscape Character Areas (LCA) in the Swale Landscape and Biodiversity Assessment [CD 18.27] as the most appropriate unit for assessment. These character areas are at the Borough scale and offer a finer local scale of detail for an application of this scale than the broader Kent-wide landscape assessment. For this reason, I do not refer to the Kent Assessment since the use of both assessment duplicates the assessment over the same landscape. For the Southern Site, I also refer to the more recent assessment of the Kent Downs National Landscape, Update 2020 [CD 18.19].

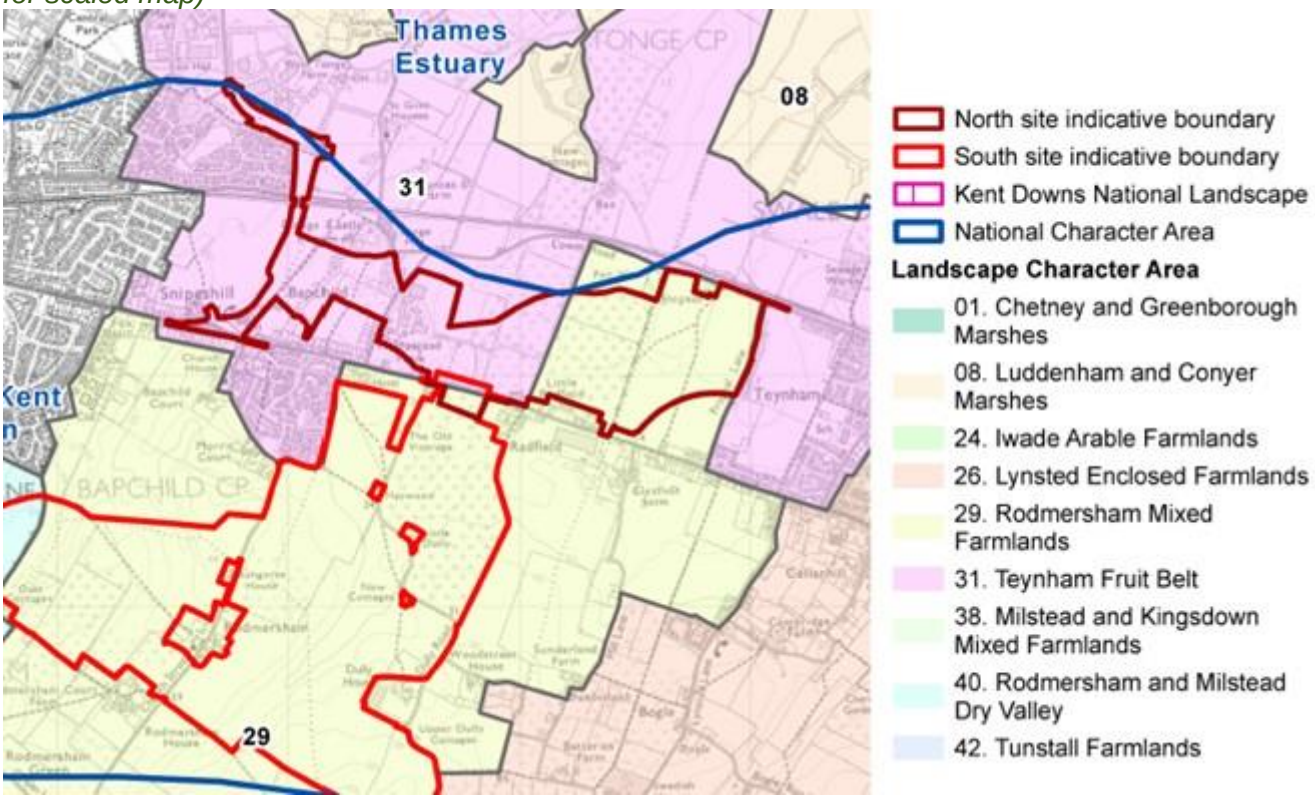
Northern Site

Landscape character and context

4.5 The Northern Site is located on the gently sloping topography at the base of the north downs dip slope where it meets the coastal marshes to the north. Topography is variable including a more gently rolling area of chalk to the west of Teynham. The landscape character baseline is set out in

SBC's Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal SPD, 2011 [CD 18.27 & CD 18.28]. It is illustrated on Figure 1 in my Appendix 2.

Map Extract 4.2: Landscape Character Baseline – Northern site [CD 18.27 & CD 18.28] (see Appendix 2 for scaled map)

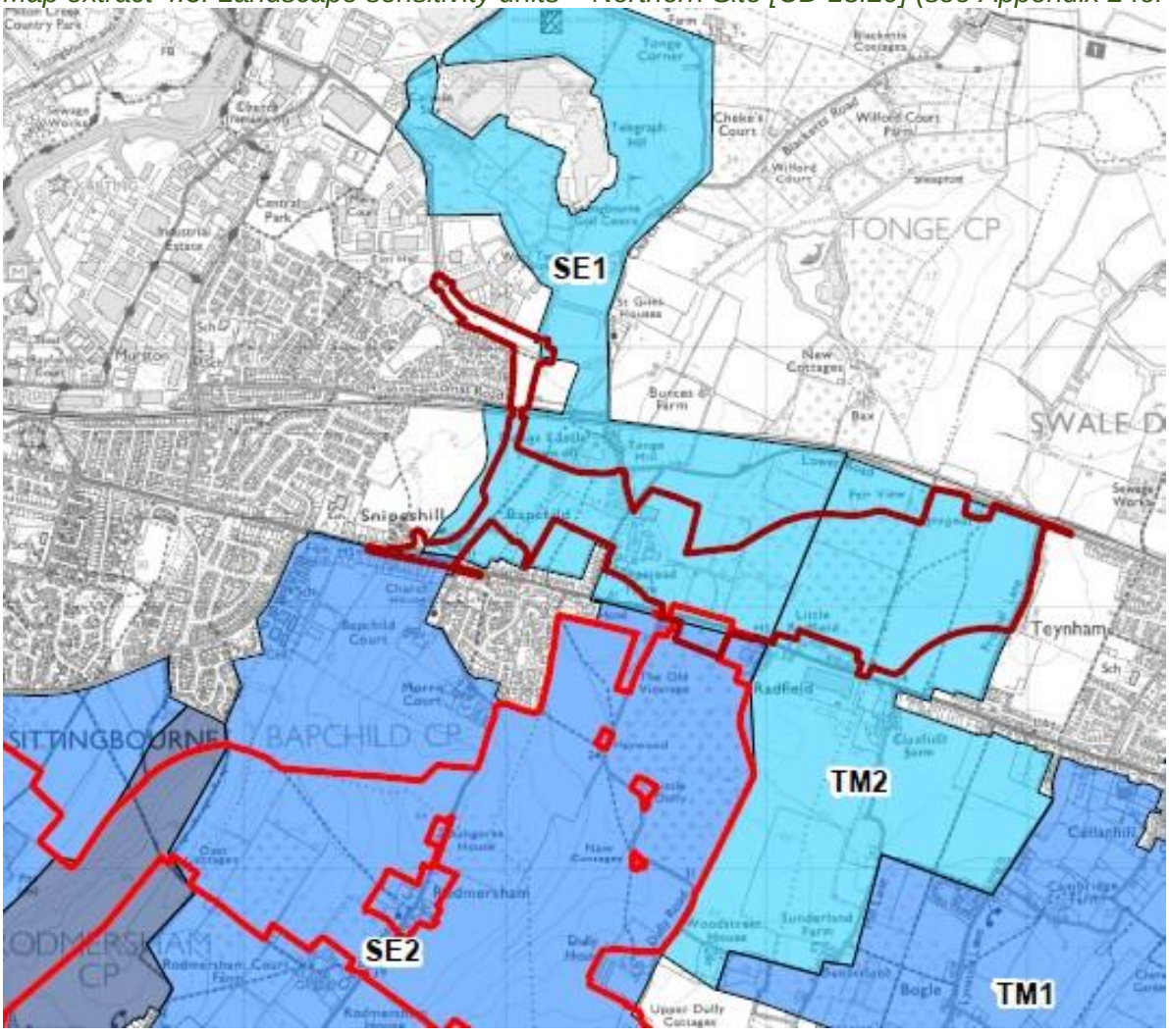


4.6 The LCA of most interest for this development is LCA 31: Teynham Fruit Belt [CD 18.8]. This landscape is characterised by rural agricultural landscapes, complex landscape patterns, small commercial orchards and a gently rolling landform. Main transport routes, the A2 and railway run east west. Within the Northern Site, Tonge Mill and its associated pond and stream are described as "*a popular local landmark and visitor destination, with the mill chimney and the English Elms around the pond visible in the wider landscape. The trees, spring, ponds and connecting stream are important in terms of their wildlife interest and the remains of Tonge Castle, to the rear of Tonge Mill, provide an important historic reference".* The LCA describes the condition as Moderate and sensitivity as Moderate, with an overall strategy to conserve the rural environment and create an improved urban edge.

4.7 The development area also includes a small part of LCA 29: Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands, extending north of the A2. I do not identify Significant effects for this LCA from the Northern Site Proposed Development and do not cover this further in the baseline.

4.8 The Applicants' LVIA for the Northern Site also assesses the scheme in relation to the smaller scale Landscape Sensitivity Units (TM2, SE1, SE2) identified in SBC's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment [CD 18.29] prepared in 2019 as part of the evidence preparation for the Local Plan Review. The most relevant ones for this inquiry are TM2 and SE1, which are both assessed as having a Moderate Sensitivity to residential and employment development. For SE1 the assessment notes that spatially the area south of the railway line around Tonge, within the Northern Site, has a higher sensitivity due its smaller scale, higher scenic quality and greater prevalence of valued historic and natural features.

Map extract 4.3: Landscape sensitivity units – Northern Site [CD 18.29] (see Appendix 2 for scaled map)



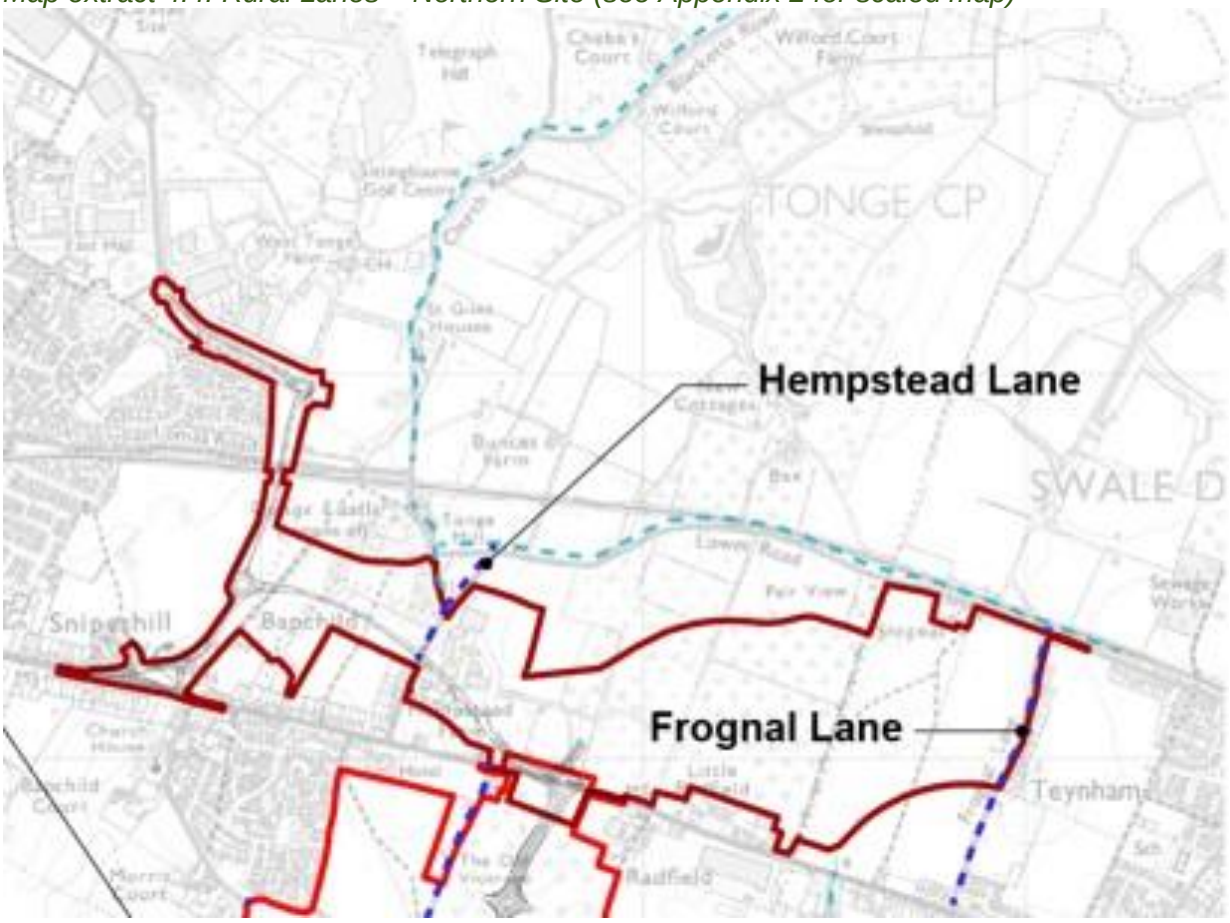
Landscape value

4.9 There are no national or local areas designated for their landscape value within the Northern Site. Adjacent designations Tonge and Luddenham Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) (Swale Level) and the South Swale Marshes Area of High Landscape Value (Kent Level) indicating

landscape value are shown on Figure 2 in my Appendix 2. I do not identify any Significant effects on landscape value designations for the Northern Site and do not cover them further here.

4.10 **Rural Lanes** designations exist for Frognal Lane, Lower Road, and Hempstead Lane. These are identified in SBC Local Plan Policy DM26 [shown on CD 13.8], and on Figure 3 of my Appendix 2.

Map extract 4.4: Rural Lanes – Northern Site (see Appendix 2 for scaled map)



Visual context

4.11 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) shown in Figure 10.10 of the Applicants' LVIA in ES Vol 2, Appendix 10.1 [CD 3.2.8] shows extensive theoretical visibility in all directions within 2km of the Northern Site Proposed Development. Exceptions within 2km, where there would be no theoretical visibility, are Tonge Corner, the north of Blacketts Road leading to Blacketts Farm, the sewage works west of Barrow Green, the village of Rodmersham to the south, and properties north of Swan Avenue, Sittingbourne. Longer-distance theoretical visibility is shown up to 3.5km to the north-east to the south-east covers the small settlements of Tickham. Theoretical visibility to the south extends to the north of Lynsted, while to the south-west it covers Upper

Rodmersham, Rodmersham Green and Highsted. To the west theoretical visibility stops around 2km and then is shown again from 3km on the western edge of Sittingbourne.

4.12 Although not explicitly stated, the ZTV is a bare earth plan, which was then further refined through fieldwork (as set out in the Environmental Statement 10.403). A plan showing a ZTV with visual barriers has not been produced**.**

Visual receptors

4.13 The key visual receptors of most concern to SBC are set out below and illustrated on Figures 4 and 5 in Appendix 2 of my proof.

- People walking on the public rights of way within or close to the site or using Tonge Country Park (Public footpaths ZR189, ZR190, ZR191, ZR192, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256 and ZR257).
- Local residents along the surrounding roads and rural lanes.

4.14 These receptors are represented by key viewpoints included in the Applicants' LVIA, shown in Table 4.1. These are the viewpoints that I have chosen to illustrate Significant Adverse effects in my evidence. I have not undertaken a detailed assessment of every viewpoint

Table 4.1 Key viewpoints illustrating Significant Adverse effects for main visual receptor groups

Receptor group	Applicants' viewpoint
People using public footpath ZR189	VP18 South from ZR189.
People using public footpath ZR190	VP16 South-west from ZR190 adjacent to the railway line
People using public footpath ZR191 (people using Tonge Country Park)	N/A
People using public footpath ZR192 (people using Tonge Country Park)	VP11 South from ZR192 close to the pond at Tonge Mill VP12 Near view south from ZR192 close to the orchard boundary tree belt VP13 Near view north from ZR192 within area of orchard

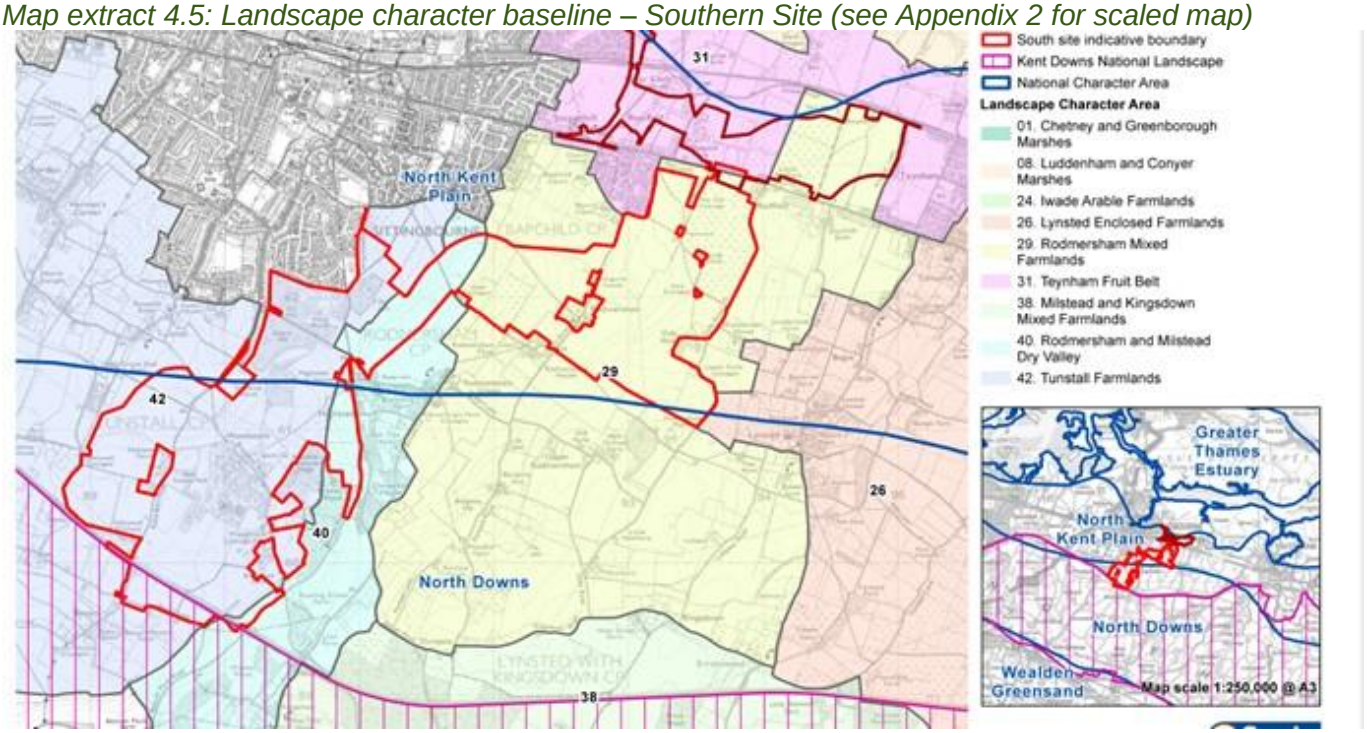
Receptor group	Applicants' viewpoint
	VP15 North from ZR192 approximately 100m north of London Road (VIS)
People using public footpath ZR193	VP3 East from ZR193
People using public footpath ZR195	VP5 and 6 from ZR195
People using public footpath ZR256 and ZR257	VP4 North from ZR256 (VIS 4) VP7 South from ZR256
Local residents, notably at Frognal Lane, and the A2	VP 42 Frognal Lane VP 44 Residents on the A2

Southern Site

Landscape character and context

4.15 The Southern Site is located on the chalk dip slope of the North Downs, as it descends towards the marshes to the north. It is a gently undulating to rolling landscape cut by dry valleys. It has a strong rural character with small villages, and isolated farms and houses. The landscape character baseline set out in SBC's Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal SPD, 2011 [CD 18.27 & 18.28]. See Figure 1 in my Appendix 2.

Map extract 4.5: Landscape character baseline – Southern Site (see Appendix 2 for scaled map)



4.16 LCA 29: Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands [CD 18.28] is characterised by a rolling landscape with steep sloping rounded dry chalk valleys cutting north south. It is rural agricultural land with grazing, arable production and orchards. Settlement is limited to isolated farms and cottages, small historic villages with some linear development in the north along the A2. The dry valleys are described as having a more intimate character, with historic features, while there are isolated long views from open land. The LCA describes the condition as Poor and sensitivity as Moderate, with an overall strategy to restore and create features to strengthen landscape character.

4.17 LCA 40: Rodmersham and Milstead Dry Valley [CD 18.28] is a distinctive dry chalk valley with slopes rising steeply to either side to form rounded ridgelines. Blocks of woodland, some ancient, are scattered across the valley sides, combined with occasional orchards and enlarged arable fields. Settlement is generally small scale with a strong historic vernacular building style to the core. and scattered development on steep and narrow lanes. An orchard lies west of Highsted Valley, and ancient woodland is found at Cromer's Wood which is also a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). It is an enclosed landscape with isolated long views from strategic high points The LCA describes the condition as Moderate and sensitivity as Moderate, although it is noted that there are some areas with an exceptionally strong sense of remoteness. The overall strategy is to conserve the important landscape elements and create features where traditional elements have been lost.

4.18 LCA 42: Tunstall Farmlands [CD 18.28] is a rural landscape on the gently rising North Downs dip slope extending into the Kent Downs National Landscape in the south. It is characterised by arable fields contained within mature hedgerows, although there has been some fragmentation and loss creating a more open landscape with some long views across the dip slope to Sheppey. Kent Science Park is located within a former deer park; it contains distinctive with ancient parkland trees. Cromer Wood is an important ancient woodland. The LCA describes the condition as Moderate and sensitivity as High, and the area is noted as having a strong sense of place. The overall strategy to conserve and restore the distinctive features and improve the general landscape.

4.19 LCA Mid Kent Downs: Bicknor: The area is within the Bicknor sub-area of the Mid Kent Downs Character Area of the KDNL LCA [CD 18.15]. This landscape comprises the dip slope of the North Downs and is a gently rolling chalk plateaux that is intersected by a "*series of narrow, steep-sided dry valleys"* that *"carve their way down the gentle northern dip-slope of the downs to the flatter land of the north Kent fruit belt, around Sittingbourne and Faversham"* (para. 3.1.1). Land use is predominantly arable farmland and woodland, with significant pockets of parkland and orchards. It is a relatively sparsely settled part of the KDNL, with a scattering of villages, hamlets and isolated farms where brick and flint buildings are common. The Mid Kent Downs Character Area is identified as having a sense of openness, particularly on the plateaux and ridge tops. Despite the area's proximity to urban areas, it is noted to have a strongly rural and peaceful feel, and a sense of isolation from larger nearby settlements and that the urban fringe influences experienced in adjacent Bredhurst sub-area are less apparent here (paragraph 3.2.7).

4.20 Landscape sensitivity units are not assessed in the LVIA for the Southern Scheme and not considered further as part of the baseline.

Landscape value

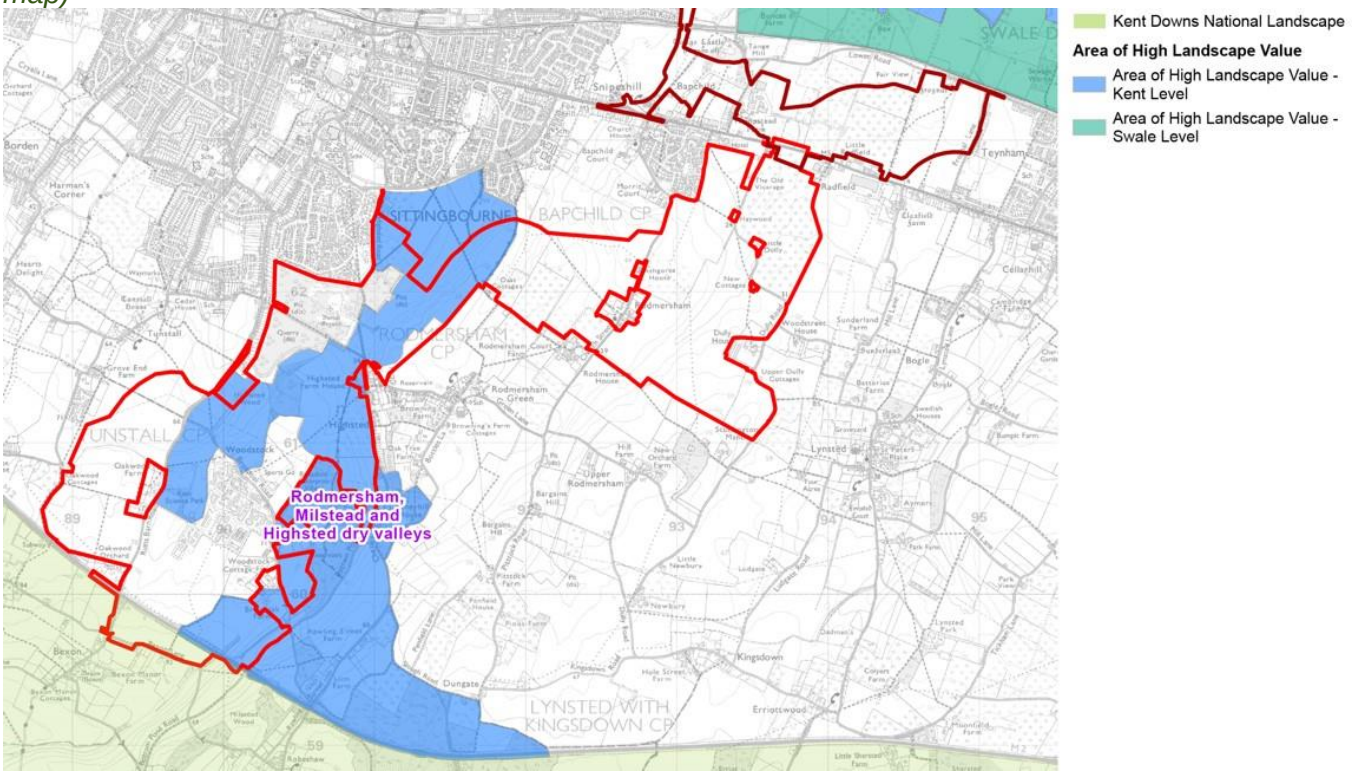
4.21 **National Landscape**: Development extends into the KDNL. The new M2 junction is created within the KDNL boundary south of the M2. The land north of the M2 has visual continuity as part of the dip slope, and integrity with the KDNL as part of its setting. The character and special qualities of this area are covered by my colleague, Ms Miller.

4.22 **Local Landscape Designation:** The northern site also runs across an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) (Kent Level) as illustrated on CD 13.4. This local designation has a Statement of Significance [CD 9.2.17] prepared as part of a recent review of Local Landscape Designations in Swale [CD 18.46], which included some small additions to the AHLV. For, this proof of evidence

the boundaries of the AHLV are taken as those in the Adopted Local Plan. It is referred to in this evidence as 'Rodmersham, Milstead and Highsted dry valley'. The local landscape value designation covers the distinctive dry chalk valleys which extend north of the National Landscape. It is described in the Statement of Significance [CD 9.2.17] as "*A dry valley system contiguous with the AONB enclosed by steep slopes rising to open arable ridges. It is a topographically distinct landscape with a strong sense of place and rural character in close proximity to the urban edge of Sittingbourne. Features of interest include the ancient and semi-natural woodlands which occur across the valley, narrow sunken rural lanes, intact hedgerows, orchards and areas of remnant parkland, plus the extensive network of public rights of way. Views range from panoramas on higher land encompassing the Swale and Thames Estuary to contained linear views within the valley*". The statement goes on to describe the qualities of the area which include a distinctive landcover, ancient and semi-natural woodlands, a network of sunken rural lanes, visually coherent, relatively tranquil, recreational access highly valued by stakeholders.

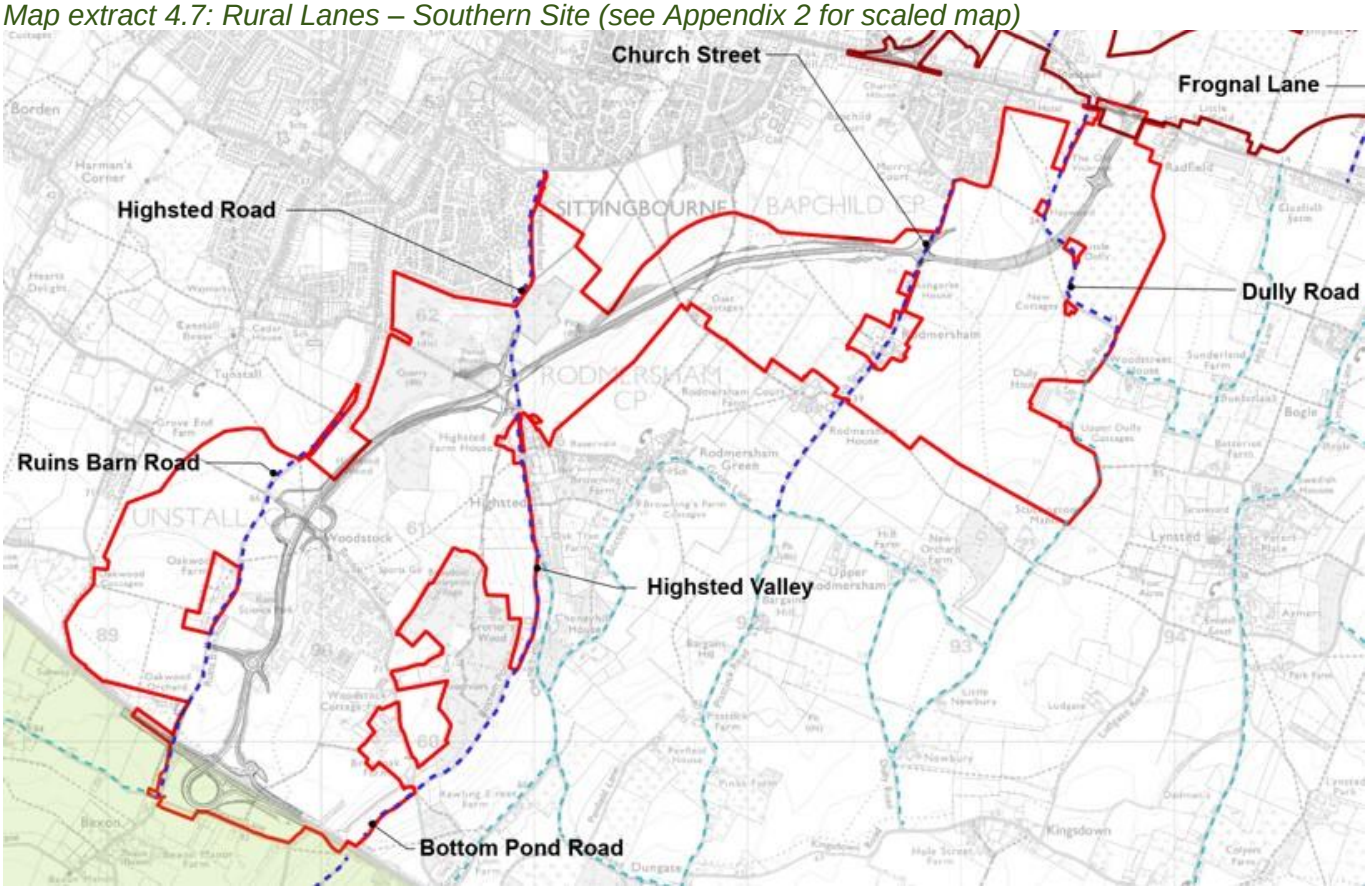
4.23 The National and Local landscape designations are shown on Figure 2 in my Appendix 2.

Map extract 4.6: National and Local landscape designations – Southern Site (see Appendix 2 for scaled map)



4.24 **Rural Lanes** designations exist for Ruins Barn Road, Church Street, Dulley Road, Highsted Road and Highsted Valley. These are identified in SBC Local Plan Policy DM26 [shown in CD 13.7].

Map extract 4.7: Rural Lanes – Southern Site (see Appendix 2 for scaled map)



Visual context

4.25 The Applicants' LVIA, ES Vol 2, Appendix 10.14, Figure 10.6 [CD 9.2.27] shows a screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), with visual barrier assumed heights set at 15m for woodland areas, 12m for tree belts, 9m for residential buildings and 14m for industrial buildings. Theoretical visibility of the Southern Site Proposed Development is shown as up to 25km away, including much of the south and east of the Isle of Sheppey. Theoretical visibility is shown within the site itself. Screened areas, with no theoretical visibility, are shown within the Kent Science Park, Cromer Wood, Highsted Quarries and around Rodmersham Court Farm and Rodmersham House. Beyond the site, visibility extends between the edge of Sittingbourne and Bapchild to the north-east, extending to the new Stones Farm development and over the railway line to Tonge Corner and Kemsley Down. To the north-east visibility is shown along Frognal Lane and up to Conyer. Visibility to the east is more limited adjacent to the site. To the south-east visibility is shown adjacent to the site and then at Dunsgate to Kingsdown. To the south visibility is shown adjacent to the site around Bexon and further into the Kent Downs AONB around Wormshill and

Frinsted. To the west visibility is shown from Oad Street to Tunstall and the settlement edge of Sittingbourne. There is limited visibility shown in the north-west.

4.26 The site lies within an area of open countryside comprising large arable fields. The ZTV indicates an extensive area from which the Southern Site Proposed Development could be visible. My site visit indicates that landform, vegetation and existing development may limit views to an extent from more distant areas, although the rolling open nature of the landscape allows extensive views.

Visual receptors

4.27 The key visual receptors of most concern to SBC are set out below and illustrated on Figures 4 and 5 in Appendix 2 of my proof of evidence.

- People using local rights of way within and close to the site (Public footpaths ZR147, ZR150, ZR156, ZR157, ZR158, ZR159, ZR194, ZR196, ZR197, ZR199, ZR203, ZR208, ZU30, ZR219 and ZR682). I have chosen these PRoW to illustrate the effects for people on rights of way within, alongside and with views to the Proposed Development. I note that there are also others which there are likely to be Significant effects
- People using local rights of way and local roads within the KDNL (Bexon Lane and public footpaths e.g. ZR185).
- People using local roads within and close to the site, both as pedestrians and motorists (the A2 London Road, Primrose Lane, Church Street Rodmersham, Dully Road, Highsted Road/Stockers Hill and Deans Hill).
- Local residents on Dully Road, Church Street Rodmersham, Doves Croft, Highsted Road/Stockers Hill, Ruins Barn Road, Bexon Lane and in the west of Highsted.

4.28 These receptors are represented by key viewpoints included in the Applicants' LVIA and shown in Table 4.2. These are the viewpoints that I have chosen to illustrate the range of Significant Adverse effects in my evidence. I have not undertaken a detailed assessment of every viewpoint and recognise that there may be further Significant effects, not identified in my evidence.

Table 4.2 Key viewpoints illustrating Adverse effects for selected visual receptor groups

Receptor group	Applicants' viewpoint
People using public footpath ZR147	VP40 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR147 looking south east (VIS 4) VP52 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR147 looking south / west
People using public footpath ZR150	VP27 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR150 looking east
People using public footpath ZR156	VP25 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR156 looking north
People using public footpath ZR157	VP26 View taken from Public Footpath No.157 looking south VP28 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR157 looking north
People using public footpath ZR158	VP24 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR158 looking east
People using public footpath ZR159	VP21 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR159 looking north east (similar views are obtained from the edge of Cromer's Wood) VP22 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR159 looking north east
People using public footpath ZR194	VP1 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR194 looking south east
People using public footpath ZR196	VP3 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR196 looking north west VP4 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR196 looking south west

Receptor group	Applicants' viewpoint
People using public footpath ZR197	VP5 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR197 looking north VP6 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR197 looking west VP7 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR197 looking south
People using public footpath ZR199	VP35 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR199 looking north (also VP36 and VIS2)
People using public footpath ZR203	VP34 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR203 looking west
People using public footpath ZR208	VP11 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR208 looking south west
People using public footpath ZR682	VP2 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR682 looking east
People using public footpath ZU31, and restricted byway	VP13 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZU31 and restricted byway
People using public footpath ZU30	VP43 View taken for Public Footpath No. ZU30 (VIS 1)
People using public footpath ZR209	VP14 View taken from Public Footpath No. ZR209
People using public footpaths, access within the KDNL	VP29 View taken from Bexon Lane looking north east (VIS 5) VP30 View taken from Bexon Lane and junction of Public Footpath No.ZR185 looking north VP31 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR185 looking north

Receptor group	Applicants' viewpoint
	VP54 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR184 looking north VP55 View taken from Bashford Barn Lane / Public Footpath No.ZR184 looking north VP68 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR219 near The Larches and Pinetrees Farm looking north west VP73 View taken from Deans Hill looking north (VIS 7)
Local residents on Dully Road	VP8 View taken from Dully Road looking west
Local residents on Church Street, Rodmersham	VP15 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR199 near Church Street, Rodmersham looking east
Local residents at Doves Croft, off Primrose Lane	VP38 View taken from Bottom Pond Road / Bexon Lane looking north
Local residents at Highsted Road/Stockers Hill	VP18 View taken from Junction of Highsted Road and Stockers Hill looking north (VIS 3)
Local residents at Ruins Barn Road	VP24 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR158 looking east
Local residents on Bexon Lane	VP29 View taken from Bexon Lane looking north east (VIS 5) VP30 View taken from Bexon Lane and junction of Public Footpath No.ZR185 looking north
Local residents in the west of Highsted	VP18 View taken from Junction of Highsted Road and Stockers Hill looking north (VIS 3) VP19

Receptor group	Applicants' viewpoint
Pedestrians and motorists on the A2 / London Road	VP32 View taken from A2 / London Road looking south
Pedestrians and motorists on Primrose Lane	VP39 View taken from Primrose Lane / Doves Croft looking east
Pedestrians and motorists on Bexon Lane (KDNL)	VP29 View taken from Bexon Lane looking north east (VIS 5) VP30 View taken from Bexon Lane and junction of Public Footpath No.ZR185 looking north
Pedestrians and motorists on Church Street, Rodmersham	VP14 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR209 looking north VP15 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR199 near Church Street, Rodmersham looking east
Pedestrians and motorists on Dully Road	VP5 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR197 looking north VP6 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR197 looking west VP7 View taken from Public Footpath No.ZR197 looking south VP8 View taken from Dully Road looking west
Pedestrians and motorists on Highsted Road/Stockers Hill	VP18 View taken from Junction of Highsted Road and Stockers Hill looking north (VIS 3)

4.29 In Chapters 5 and 6, I assess the landscape and visual effects of the proposed Development in relation to the above baseline receptors for the Northern and Southern schemes.

Chapter 5
Northern Site – landscape and visual effects

5.1 In the Statement of Common Ground [CD 34.9] in Appendix 2, table 3, I set out where I agree with the Applicants on some effects judged to be not Significant, and some where I agree with the Applicants' assessment of effects. However, the information in Appendix 2 of the SoCG has not been agreed by the Applicants. There is disagreement between the Applicants and the Council as to the level of effects, and the number of Significant effects reported in the LVIA [CD 3.1]. The reasons for the disagreement have been raised by LUC through the course of reviewing the versions of the LVIA and preparation of a corresponding Landscape Opinion in 2021, 2022, 2024. [CD 4.15, CD 4.16, CD 4.17]

5.2 In this chapter of my evidence, I provide my own assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the development on the Northern Site for selected receptors of most concern to the Council. I have not undertaken a complete LVIA; I have adopted a proportionate approach so that my evidence focusses where I judge that effects would be Significant and should be highlighted for the inquiry. I show the reasons why I judge that the effects would be greater than indicated by the Applicants and I show how the Applicants' LVIA underestimates the effects of the Southern Scheme Proposed Development. I acknowledge, of course, that these matters involve questions of judgement.

Northern Site Proposed Development

5.3 The Northern Site forms part of a wider landscape of a gently sloping topography at the base of the North Downs dip slope where it meets the coastal marshes to the north. The west of the Northern Site has a variable topography towards Sittingbourne and Bapchild with a more level, although slightly rolling, terrain in the east towards Teynham.

5.4 The Parameter Plans [CD 2.11], Illustrative Masterplans [CD 2.5 & CD 2.6, and Framework Plans [CD 2.8] illustrate the Proposed Development. Green infrastructure is shown on the Greenspace Structuring Plan [CD 2.9]. The main components, which are relevant to likely landscape and visual effects are described here.

5.5 The plans show 97.94ha development comprising up to 1,250 residential dwellings, commercial and employment use, primary school and associated infrastructure, and the route for the Northern

Relief Road (NRR). Just under half of the proposed development site (45.9ha) is re-allocated for open green space notably along the Northern Relief Road (NRR). In the west of the Site green space would contain 11.88ha of 'Parkland' that would form the new Tonge Country Park. This would be dissected by a stretch of the NRR which has 11.07ha of 'Sustainable Movement Corridor Greenspace' running along its length on either side. The NRR cuts across the Tonge Conservation Area where it would bridge the minor watercourse, in the south, leading to the mill pond. Landscape buffers and planting are indicated around existing settlements and development, and on the boundaries of the Site. The NRR would connect the Swale Way/Eurolink V roundabout in the north and the new development at land west of Church Road. It crosses the railway line on a bridge, connecting to the A2 by the new Stone Farm development, and west of Radfield. The NRR would also need to bridge the minor valley in the Conservation Area and cross above Hempstead Lane.

5.6 Sports and recreation uses are centred around Bapchild cricket ground which lies between Bapchild and Radfield. Most of the built part of the Proposed Development (excluding the NRR) is in the eastern part of the Site forming an extension to Teynham. This comprises 29.81ha of residential with maximum heights varying from 10-13.5m, 0.67ha of commercial (up to 13.5m heights), 0.61ha of mixed use, and 2.5ha for schools (up to 12m for heights). This area of the Proposed Development also includes 8.43ha of amenity greenspace, 9.64ha of semi-natural green space and 4.71ha of 'highway greenspace'.

The LVIA methodology

5.7 In the LVIA method (para.10.66) the Applicants state that effects of Moderate and above are Significant for the Northern Site. It also states that although minor Adverse or beneficial and neutral effects are not considered Significant, they remain worthy of consideration throughout the decision-making process. A five-point scale ranging from negligible through to major is used is used to record the significance of landscape and visual effects. I agree with the approach, although I note that it is different to the LVIA for the Southern Application.

5.8 The LVIA contained in Chapter 1 0 of the Applicants' Environmental Statement [CD 3.1] indicates a single Major residual Significant effect (at year 15) on one small landscape sensitivity compartment (Teynham Area TM2). A Moderate Adverse residual Significant effect (at year 15) is recorded for site features, landscape pattern, land cover and management. My most recent Landscape Opinion, September 2024 [CD 4.15] issued in response to the revised ES, concluded (para. 2.43) "*The LVIA for the scheme identifies a large number of moderate adverse effects and*

a very few major adverse effects (….). In our opinion, for a mixed-use development and road scheme of this scale, the effects could be greater and significant for local landscape character and some visual receptors." The report goes on to identify the relevant receptors. The word *'could'* is used as this is my professional judgement as part of the high-level review and not as a result of undertaking a detailed or full LVIA. The review was intended to inform the Council of the issues that will need to be considered in the planning balance. I conclude (para. 2.45 and 2.46) that *"The above is not an exhaustive list of the receptors which we believe could have a greater significance of effect from the proposed development. Often this is due to an under-estimation of the sensitivity of the receptor". …"The collection of moderate and greater landscape and visual effects will need to be considered as part of the overall planning balance."*

5.9 In this chapter, I set out my differences in relation to the significance of effect showing how my judgement on the sensitivity of receptors and magnitude of effect are different. I follow the Applicants' methodology in the LVIA, and use the same terms for describing sensitivity, magnitude and significance. I note that these are different to the Southern Application, however, this is not an issue in understanding overall judgment and effects.

5.10 I draw on the following evidence in making my judgements:

References - Landscape receptors

- Swale Landscape Character Areas [CD 18.27 & CD 18.28] and Figure 1 in Appendix 2 of my proof).
- ES Vol 1, 2025, Chapter 10 LVIA [CD 3.1]
- ES Vol 2 Appendices Appendix 10.1 Figures 10.1-10.18 Rev F [CD 3.2]
  - Figure10.4 Landscape Character Areas*.
  - Figure 10.7 Public Rights of Way.

*I note that the shading of the LCA in the Applicants' Appendix Figure 10.4 [CD 3.2] appears to show LCA 31 as a much larger area as it merges with LCA 08 Luddenham and Conyer Marshes.

- Tonge Country Park Bridge Crossing [CD 2.22]

References – Visual receptors

5.11 I refer the information contained in the following:

- ES Vol 1 – Highsted Park North (Feb 2025 ES Addendum), Chapter 10 LVIA [CD 3.1]

- Table 10.12 Representative viewpoints.

- ES Volume 2 Appendices, 10.1 LVIA Figures [CD 3.2]
  - Figure 10.7 Public Rights of Way [CD 3.2.59].
  - Figure 10.9 Viewpoint – photo record [CD 3.2.60].
  - Figure 10.11 Near Distance Viewpoint Plan [CD 3.2.60].
  - Figure 10.17 – Visualisations – these are reproduced in my evidence for illustrative purpose only and they should be zoomed to the correct scale on screen or printed at A1 for making judgements [CD 3.2.61].

Other references

- Transport Assessment. 16-023 R5005revA TA Vol 6, Appendix A [CD 1.19.9].

Northern Site: Assessment of landscape effects and reasons for difference to the Applicants' LVIA

Areas of Agreement

5.12 I agree with the Applicants' assessment that there would be no Significant effects for the following receptors:

- Kent Downs National Landscape, NCA 113: North Kent Plain, NCA 81: Greater Thames Estuary, Thames Gateway Fruit Belts, LCA 29: Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands, Sittingbourne Area SE2, Tonge and Luddenham Area of High Landscape Value (Swale Level) and the South Swale Marshes Area of High Landscape Value (Kent Level).

5.13 I agree with the Applicants' assessment that there would be Significant effects for the following receptors:

- Teynham Area TM2 - the level of effect would be Major Adverse at construction, year 1, and year 15.
- Landscape pattern, land use, landcover and management of the Site.

Areas of Disagreement

5.14 Landscape receptors where I judge that effects would be greater and Significant are set out in the tables below.

Receptor: LCA 31 Teynham Fruit Belt

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium	Low	Minor Adverse	Low	Minor Adverse	Very Low	Negligible
My Assessment	Medium	High	Major Adverse	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Medium	Moderate Adverse

Reasons for difference

5.15 The LCA is characterised by a rural agricultural landscape, with complex landscape patterns landform. The Proposed Development would cover approximately 54ha of the south-eastern part of the LCA. The NRR involves approximately 4.32ha along its length, leading to permanent loss and severance of the open rural landscape and pattern of arable fields and modern orchards. The road would require engineering including altering the landform and creation of an elevated carriageway to cross Hempstead Lane, the mill stream and the railway. There would be loss of rural land to create the new sports area (3.64ha minus the existing cricket ground), a school (2.5ha) and commercial and residential development with building heights of up to 13.5m proposed at the eastern edge of this LCA. The LCA [CD 18.7] describes Tonge Mill and its associated pond and stream as "*a popular local landmark and visitor destination, with the mill chimney and the English Elms around the pond visible in the wider landscape. The trees, spring, ponds and connecting stream are important in terms of their wildlife interest and the remains of Tonge Castle, to the rear of Tonge Mill, provide an important historic reference".* Tonge Country Park is proposed as a substantial new area of open space in the west, although this would be dissected by the NRR which would sever the connecting stream from the mill. The rural Fruit Belt character would be permanently changed.

5.16 I judge that the Magnitude of impact would be greater in all years. As the LVIA states (para. 10.258) *"the construction activity will introduce changes to the landform associated with ground re profiling to accommodate the road, vehicle movements vehicle movements, use of machinery including cranes, materials, storage and depot/office facilities, noise and lighting. It is anticipated that there will be some disruption to views as a consequence of construction infrastructure and*

cranes. There will inevitably be temporary loss of access to public rights of way and the Tonge Country Park". As a result, I conclude that effects during construction would be Major Adverse.

5.17 I agree that advance planting and landscape effects would soften overall character as planting matures. The Applicants state in the LVIA, para. 10.257 [CD 3.1]: "*The construction of the proposed Northern Relief Road, the proposed new school and commercial development, and the proximity of a 391 block of residential development to the east will inevitably alter the overall character of the area from a largely rural/agricultural landscape to a more suburban type of settlement."* For these reasons I judge that the Magnitude would remain Medium (according to the Applicants' methodology Table 10.2, page 336 [CD 3.1] "*Proposal results in medium scale changes or partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristic which contribute to local landscape character …*" and that effects would remain as Moderate Adverse and Significant, at year 1 and 15.

Receptor: Landscape Sensitivity compartment SE1

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Low	Minor Adverse	Low	Minor Adverse
My Assessment	High	High	Major Adverse	High	Major Adverse	Medium	Moderate Adverse

Reasons for difference

5.18 I judge area SE1 to be of High sensitivity, as it includes high value landscape features associated with Tonge Conservation Area, as recognised in the in SBC's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, 2019, page A1.8 [CD 18.29] "*The area south of the railway line around Tonge, within the Northern Site, has a higher sensitivity due its smaller scale, higher scenic quality and greater prevalence of valued historic and natural features*".

5.19 The construction site would occupy a relatively large part of this area, resulting in a High Magnitude and a Major Adverse effect. Development would include the NRR and associated junctions, over bridges, a large block of commercial development to the east up to 13.5m height, and a smaller area of residential development. The proposed Tonge Country Park and associated

planting is positive. However, in my opinion, the effect of the NRR dividing and being a dominant feature within this scenic, smaller scale and more sensitive area means that Magnitude would remain High in year 1 and reduce to Medium in year 15. I judge that the effect would remain as Moderate Adverse and Significant in year 15.

Receptor: Landscape features within the Application Site boundary: Hedgerows, trees and woodland, grassland, ponds and watercourses, agricultural land

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low/Medium	Low	Negligible / Minor Adverse	Medium	Minor / Moderate Adverse	Low	Negligible / Minor Adverse
My Assessment	Medium	High	Major Adverse	High	Major Adverse	Medium	Moderate Adverse

Reasons for difference

5.20 The proposals would introduce residential, commercial development and a new road and associated infrastructure plus greenspace/country park across the Site which is currently in agricultural use. Farmland and the pattern of arable fields and commercial orchards would be permanently lost including the boundary hedgerows. There is no certainty from the Applicants' ES para. 10.74 [CD 3.1] on how this pattern would be enhanced – boundary hedgerows '*may be retained'* and boundaries are *'likely to be enhanced'*. In my opinion, such judgements should be made on a worst-case scenario. The sports area, community gardens and semi-natural greenspace also change the current arable pattern of farmland to a more managed landscape. The construction of the NRR would interrupt the linear nature of the historic Roman road, forming the existing boundary. During construction, hedgerows would be lost to facilitate access.

5.21 My judgement is that the Magnitude of impact would be greater at all years, being High at construction and year 1, and reducing to Medium at year 15. At year 15 new planting would have matured but would not compensate for the change in pattern and land use involving loss of arable farmland, hedgerows and orchards.

Receptor: Site features: PRoW on site and Tonge Country Park (ZR189, ZR192, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256) Note that these judgements also apply to ZR191 and ZR257 which are not assessed in the LVIA.

5.22 The Applicants' LVIA assesses PRoW as a site feature and also as a visual receptor for the people using the PRoWs.

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low (ZR189, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256) Medium (ZR192)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (ZR192) Minor Adverse (ZR189, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256)	High	Major Adverse (ZR192) Moderate Adverse (ZR189, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (ZR192) Minor Adverse (ZR189, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256)
My Assessment	Medium	High	Major Adverse (All plus ZR191, ZR257)	High	Major Adverse (All plus ZR191)	Medium / High	Moderate Adverse (All plus ZR191, ZR257)

Reasons for difference

5.23 In my opinion the sensitivity of receptors and the magnitude of effect would be greater than in the Applicants' ES.

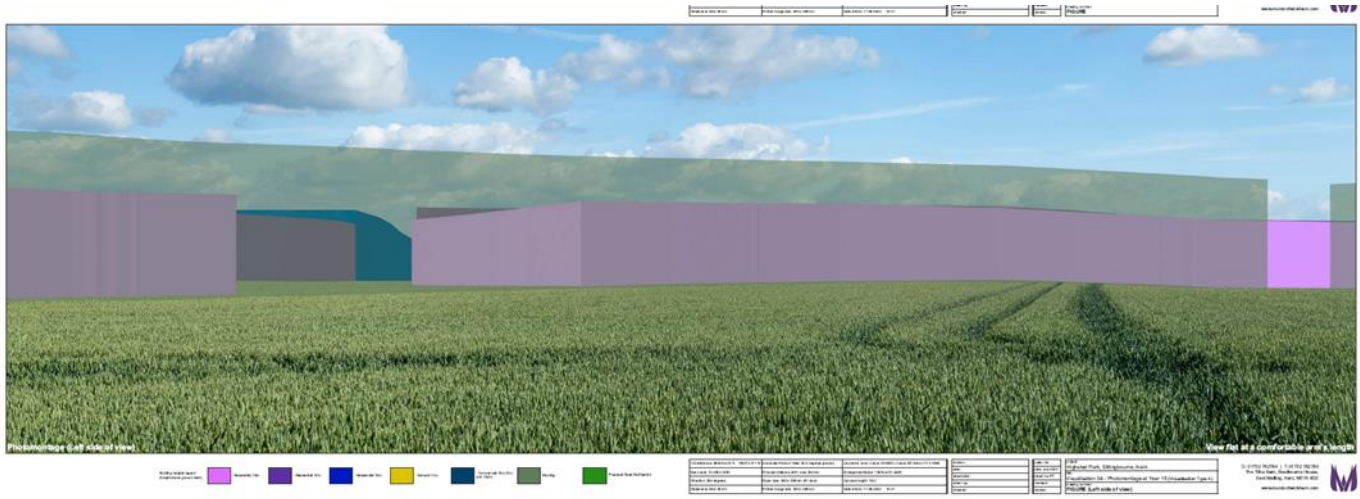
5.24 I judge that the sensitivity of users of all these rights of way would be at least Medium. I agree the PRoW are not in a designated landscape, however users experience an open agricultural landscape, despite some views to development or rural houses on adjacent roads. Their susceptibility is therefore greater. GLVIA3 [CD 18.41] states (para. 6.33) that visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include people engaged in outdoor recreation, including users of public rights of way. Medium is the second level of Magnitude in the Applicants' method (and it accords with High in the methodology for the Southern Site).

Rights of way in the east of the Site (housing development):

5.25 For footpath users (ZR256, ZR257 and ZR195) in the east of the Site the experience is noted in the LVIA [CD 3.1] at para. 10.290 as "*permanently changing from that of a large open arable field to a suburban built up residential area*". The LVIA does not give detail on construction. For these routes I judge that the Magnitude of effect would be High at construction (which would either require temporary stopping up, diversion or being channelled through the construction site) and would continue to be High at year 1, and at least Medium in year 15 being a permanent change in the rights of way from rural to urban. For these reasons I judge that effect would be Major and at least Moderate at year 15.

5.26 VIS4 in the LVIA is from viewpoint 4 on ZR256 and shows the extent of change at year 15. This shows some screening around the development in the view. The footpath would continue south through the development.

Map extract 5.1: VIS 4: Viewpoint 4 on ZR256 [CD 3.2.61 Figure 10.17]



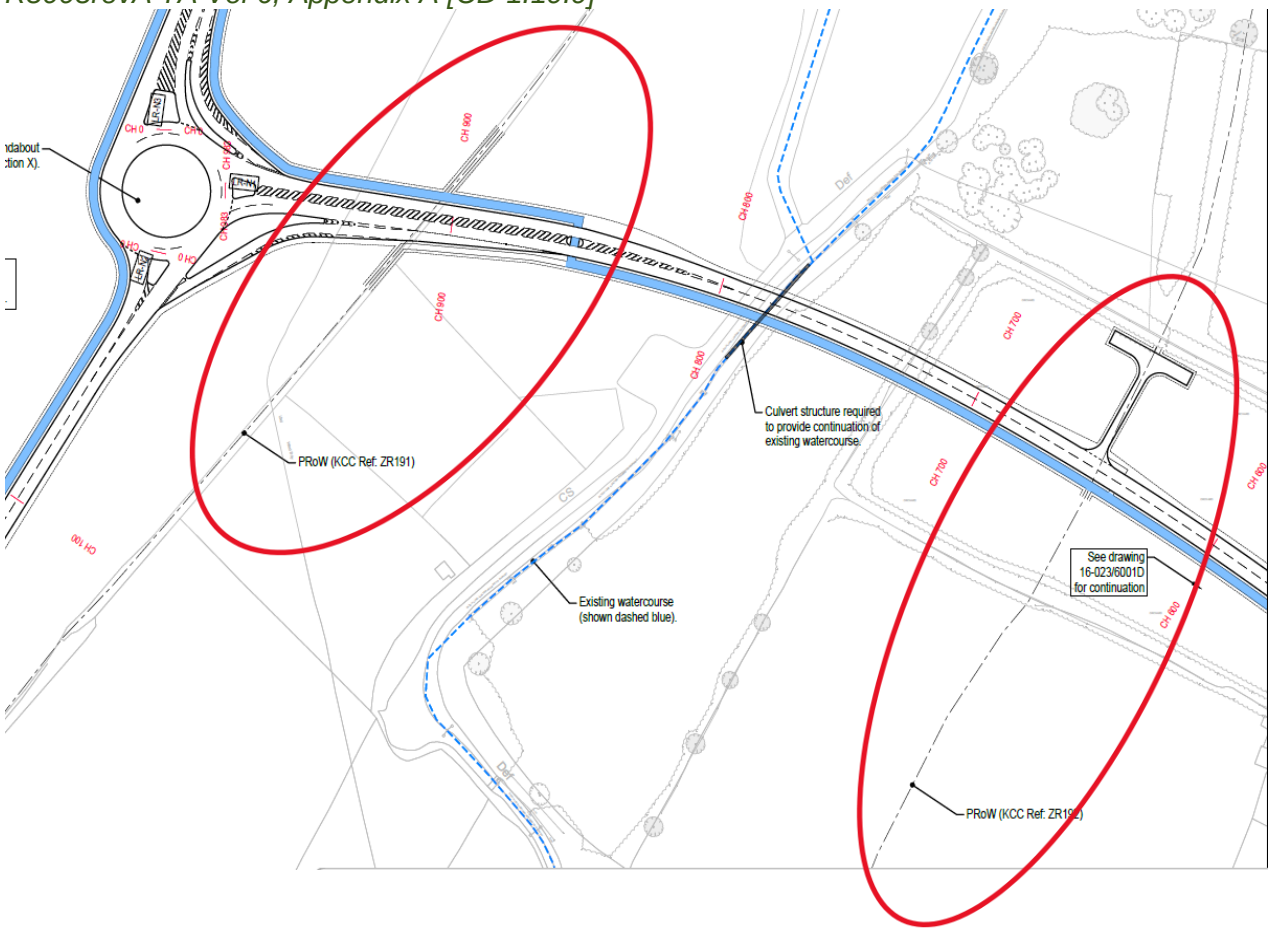
Rights of way in the west of the Site (NRR)

5.27 The LVIA (para. 10.291) states that the NRR is likely to have permanent effects on the footpaths on or near its route, ZR192 and ZR189. I also include ZR191 which would be crossed by the NRR but was not included in the Applicants' assessment.

5.28 Rights of way in the west of the site (ZR191, ZR192) would be affected by the construction of the NRR. As noted in the LVIA's (para. 10.258) description of effects on the character area (LCA 31: Teynham Fruit Belt) "*the construction activity will introduce changes to the landform associated with ground re proofing to accommodate the road, vehicle movements, use of machinery including cranes, materials, storage and depot/office facilities, noise and lighting. …. There will*

inevitably be temporary loss of access to public rights of way and the Tonge Country Park". In the longer term these rights of way would benefit from the new parkland. However, as the LVIA states (para 10.292), the NRR would include an open span bridge across the watercourse which would be a dominant feature and would diminish the experience of users of these rights of way. ZR191 and ZR192 would be severed by the NRR requiring users to cross over the road to access Tonge. The Illustrative Masterplan [CD 2.5], although reserved, does not show how this access would work in practice. Vignette 37 Tonge Country Park Bridge (CD 2.22] reproduced below shows one crossing at grade and footpath dog leg each side of the NRR to access the crossing point. I judge that the Magnitude of effect would be High at construction, remaining High at year 1 and at least Medium in year 15, resulting in a residual Significant Moderate Adverse effect, based on the information available.

Map extract 5.2:The NRR showing relation with ZR191 and ZR192, from Transport Assessment. 16-023 R5005revA TA Vol 6, Appendix A [CD 1.19.9]



Map extract 5.3: Tonge Bridge Crossing [CD 2.22]

Receptor: Rural Lanes (Lower Road, Church Road, Scraps Hill, Hempstead Lane, Frognal Lane, roads south of A2)

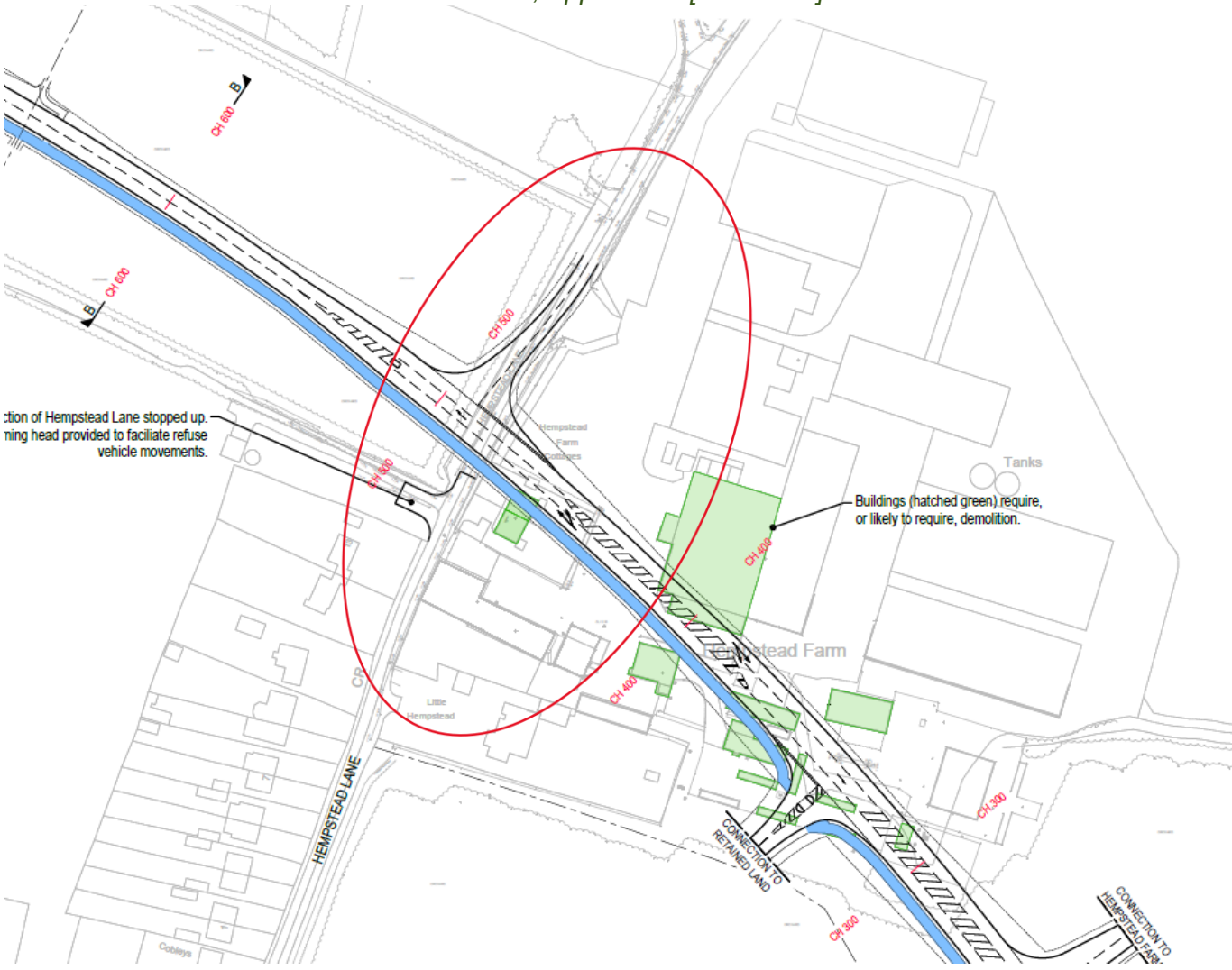
		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium	Low (Lower Road, Hempstead Lane, Church Road, Scraps Hill, Frognal Lane)	Minor Adverse Negligible (South of A2)	Medium (Hempstead) Low (others) (Negligible Roads to the South of A2	Moderate Adverse	Low Very Low (South of A2)	Minor Adverse
My Assessment	Medium	High (Hempstead Lane only)	Major Adverse	High (Hempstead Lane only)	Major Adverse	Medium (Hempstead Lane only)	Moderate Adverse (Hempstead Lane)

Reasons for difference

5.29 I generally agree with the Applicants' assessment for Rural Lanes, that effects would not be Significant by year 15, with the exception of Hempstead Lane.

5.30 As noted in the LVIA (para.10.299) *"Hempstead Lane would be traversed by the proposed Northern Relief Road, which would likely have an urbanising influence on character and visual amenity".* For this reason, I judge that the Magnitude of change would be greater resulting in a Major Adverse effect at construction and year 1 and remaining Moderate Adverse and Significant at year 15.

Map extract 5.4: The NRR showing relation with Hempstead Rural Lane, and proposed overbridge from Transport Assessment. 16-023 R5005revA TA Vol 6, Appendix A [CD 1.19.9]



Northern Site: Assessment of visual effects and reasons for difference to the Applicants' LVIA

5.31 In order to take a proportionate approach, I have grouped the viewpoints to cover the main visual receptor groups, rather than an individual assessment of 47 viewpoints. I have illustrated this on Figure 4 and 5, in Appendix 2 to my proof showing rights of way and relevant VPs.

5.32 For my assessment of users of the public rights of way I have classified receptor sensitivity as Medium (and not Low as by the Applicants). Medium is the second highest category in the Applicants' assessment. A different approach is used in the LVIA for the Southern Site, where users of public rights of way not in a designated landscape are classified as High (which is also the second highest category). A receptor sensitivity of Medium for the Northern Site and High for the Southern Site is therefore consistent in terms of the hierarchy of judgements.

Areas of Agreement

5.33 I agree with the Applicants' assessment of a year 15 Moderate Adverse Significant effect at:

- VP43 View from A2, west of Teynham representing local residents on the A2.
- VP44 View from Dully Road.
- Users of PRoW 192, 195, 256, (although I judge a greater level of effect for these rights of way).

5.34 I agree that there would be a Major Adverse effect at construction, year 1 and year 15 for local residents on Frognal Lane, as represented by viewpoint 42.

5.35 I agree effects would not be Significant in middle and longer distance views for receptors on PRoW such as:

- VP31 and 32 on the Saxon Shoreway, although the longer distance viewpoint and visualisation form VP31 indicates the extent of development, even at this location rising up below the wooded skyline backdrop [CD 3.2.6.1, Figure10.17].

5.36 I agree there would be no residual Significant effects at year 15 effects for motorists on the local road network.

Areas of Disagreement

5.37 The following parts of my evidence focuses on the main points where I disagree with the Applicants' assessment in the LVIA.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PROW ZR193 (VP 3) and PROW ZR189 (VP 18)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low	High	Moderate Adverse	High	Moderate Adverse	Medium	Minor Adverse
My Assessment	Medium	High	Major Adverse	High	Major Adverse	Medium	Moderate Adverse

Reasons for difference

5.38 I judge that the sensitivity of users of these rights of way would be at least Medium because they are people experiencing or focussing on the landscape.

5.39 I judge that the Magnitude would be greater for these viewpoints. For ZR193 the rural view in much of the foreground would be replaced by the NRR. For ZR189, the viewpoint is located alongside the NRR looks to the south at the point where the road would need to be elevated to cross the railway and would therefore be visually prominent. I understand that the bridge has been considered in the most recent ES assessment, however the assessment for VP 18 states that Lomas Road and the railway line would screen some views of the development, Table 10.12, VP18 [CD 3.1]. At this viewpoint people on this right of way would also have views north, west and the NRR would be the dominant feature running alongside the route of the right of way.

5.40 I judge that effect would be an order higher (Major) at construction and year 1 and remain at least Moderate and Significant at year 15.

5.41 The map extracts below show how viewpoint 18 describes the view to the south, omits views to the north and west noting that the viewpoint is directly alongside the route of the NRR.

Extract 5.5: VP 18, location and Illustrative Master Plan [2.2]

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR192 (VPs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). I judge these also apply to ZR191 (no assessment in the LVIA). These are also representative of users of Tonge Country Park

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low/Medium	High (VP 13,14) Neutral/Very Low (VP 11, 12, 15)	Major Adverse (VP 14) Moderate Adverse (VP 13) Neutral/ Negligible (VP11, 12, 15)	Medium (VP 13, 14) Neutral/Very Low (11, 12, 15)	Moderate Adverse (VP 14) Minor Adverse (VP 13) Neutral/ Negligible (VP 11, 12, 15)	Medium (13) Low (14) Very Low (15) Neutral (11,12)	Minor Adverse (13, 14) Negligible / Minor Beneficial (15) Neutral (11, 12)
My Assessment	Medium	High (all)	Major Adverse (at least VP 13, 14, 15)	High	Major Adverse (at least VP13,14,15)	Medium (13, 14, 15)	Moderate Adverse (at least VP 13, 14, 15)

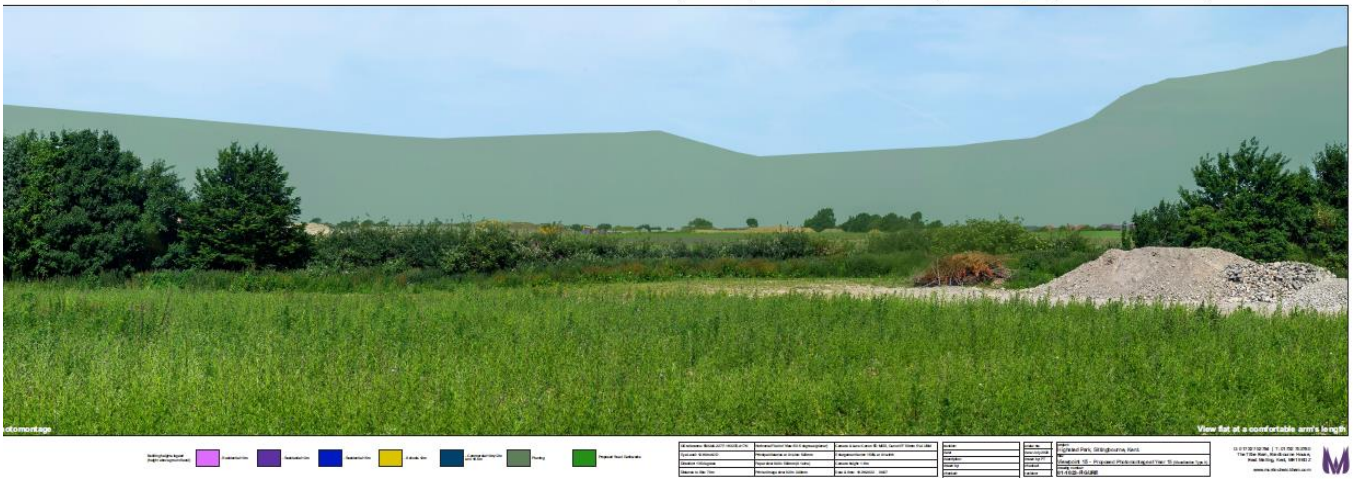
Reasons for difference

5.42 As evidenced in my tables above, I judge sensitivity as higher (Medium) for users of right of way within this area where the rights of way would be part of Tonge Country Park. In table 10.9 of the LVIA the Applicants indicate that "*users of Tonge Country Park are likely to be more focused on their surroundings as part of the visitor experience*" and record that views from within the country park are higher value. This would suggest that sensitivity should be at least Medium or even High, and not Low as recorded by the Applicants.

5.43 I judge that the Magnitude of effect has been underestimated in the ES. As an example, for VP 15 a visualisation has been provided from this point, in the ES Vol2. Appendix Figure 10.18 [CD 3.2.61] looking north which clearly shows the earthworks created for the NRR in year 1, and I note that construction activity in this area (as evidenced in other parts of the LVIA (see para. 10.258) would likely involve temporary loss of access along PRoW. This cannot result in an overall judgement of Magnitude as being Neutral or Very Low. The year 15 visualisation (extract

below) shows that major tree planting could obscure all views of the NRR, at this point on PRoW 192, at least when in leaf. However, other parts of the LVIA also reference an open span bridge to allow the NRR to cross the watercourse which would be a prominent feature and would diminish the experience of users of these rights of way. ZR191 and ZR192 would be severed by the NRR requiring users to cross over the road to access Tonge. For VP 13 and 14 the LVIA states in para. 10.313 [CD 3.1] that these would be the subject of greatest impact, with orchard replaced by the NRR, and that the road would remain a detractor.

Extract 5.6: VIS from VP 15 on ZR192 [CD 3.2.6.1, Figure10.17]



5.44 I agree that the orientation of some views and existing and new planting could obscure the development from some VPs such as 11, 12, however overall, in my opinion the Magnitude of change for the users of PROW 191 and 192 is greater, and I judge would be High at construction and year 1 and at least Medium in year 15, resulting in Significant effect of Major (construction and year 1) and Moderate (year 15) Adverse.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR190 (VP 16)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low	Low	Negligible	Low	Negligible	Low	Negligible / Minor Beneficial
My Assessment	Medium	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Medium	Moderate Adverse

Reasons for difference

5.45 I judge sensitivity as higher (Medium) for users of right of way, and not Low. In the Applicants' assessment of VP16 which is elevated, it states that the NRR would traverse the parkland and could be visible and could potentially alter the rural character. It notes the beneficial effects of strategic planting to integrate the road into the landscape. However, although I understand the impact of the elevated bridge crossing over the railway has been included in the ES, it remains unclear how it has been assessed from this viewpoint. While oblique within this particular view, it is an element of the scheme which would be prominent visually and would not be integrated by planting, and therefore in my opinion cannot be Minor Beneficial. Adopting this scenario, I judge the Magnitude of effect to be higher and overall effect to be Moderate and Significant at construction, year 1 and year 15.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR195 and ZR256 (VP 4,5,6,7), and ZR257 not assessed in the LVIA

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low	High	Moderate Adverse	High	Moderate Adverse	High	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	Medium	High	Major Adverse	High	Major Adverse	High	Major Adverse

Reasons for difference

5.46 I agree with the Applicants that the effect would be Significant at these viewpoints on these rights of way, although I judge that it would be a higher level of effect. Note that my judgements also apply to ZR257 which is not assessed in the LVIA and would be contained within the housing development.

5.47 As evidenced in my tables above, I judge sensitivity as higher (Medium) for users of right of way. The effects here would be of a greater Magnitude at construction and year 15, as the LVIA at para 10.290 states "*permanently changing from that of a large open arable field to a suburban built up residential area".* Para. 10.3.09 notes how development would bring built form much closer to viewpoints 4, 5, 6 and 7. However, the masterplan indicates that for much of the lengths of these rights of way people would be on a linear greenway surrounded by an urban area. For

these reasons I judge that the Magnitude is higher and overall, the effects remain Major Adverse at year 15.

Summary and conclusions for the Northern site

5.48 In my opinion the Northern Site Proposed Development would have Significant Adverse effects at construction year 1 and year 15 for a range of landscape and visual receptors, at the site and wider landscape level. The reason my differences to the Applicants is due, in my opinion, to the fact that sensitivity, particularly for users of the PRoW has been underestimated, as has the magnitude of change arising from the construction and operation of the Northern Relief Road (NRR), particularly where it passes through the most sensitive parts of the landscape around Tonge Mill. I note the planting proposed as part of the parkland or natural greenspace and agree that this landscape infrastructure would have a beneficial effect over time, albeit the 'country park' would be severed by the NRR. However, I do not agree that this would be sufficient to render effects not Significant for the key landscape and visual receptors at character area and local site level. To the west of the site, rights of way are affected by the NRR, and to the east are routed through the residential development at Teynham West.

Chapter 6
Southern Site – landscape and visual effects

6.1 In the Statement of Common Ground [CD 34.9] I set out (in Appendix 2, table 4) where I agree with the Applicants on some effects judged to be not Significant, and some where I agree with the Applicants' assessment of effects. However, Appendix 2 is not agreed by the Applicants. There is disagreement between the Applicants and the Council as to the level of effects, and the number of Significant effects reported. The reasons for the disagreement have been raised by LUC through the course of reviewing the versions of the LVIAs [CD 10.86, CD 10.87, CD 10.88, CD 10.89] and preparation of corresponding Landscape Opinions in 2021, 2022 [CD 4.17] and 2024 [CD 4.15 and CD 4.16].

6.2 In this chapter of my evidence, I provide my own assessment of the landscape and visual effects of Southern Site Proposed Development for selected receptors of most concern to the Council. I have not undertaken a full LVIA; I have adopted a proportionate approach so that my evidence focusses where I judge that effects would be Significant and should be highlighted for this inquiry. I show the reasons why I judge that the effects would be greater than indicated by the Applicants and show how the Applicants' LVIA underestimates the effects of the development. I acknowledge, of course, that these matters involve questions of judgement.

6.3 My evidence shows that that the development would result in Significant and harmful effects on landscape character and visual appearance that should be weighed in the planning balance. I show the reasons and rationale for why I disagree with the conclusion in the Applicants' LVIA (para. 10.389) [CD 9.1] that "*the Proposed Development would result in some local adverse impacts but the effects of the development on the character and visual appearance of the wider open countryside will not be significant or harmful".*

Southern Site: Proposed development

6.4 The southern site is located on the chalk dip slope of the North Downs, as it descends towards the fruit belt marshes to the north. It is a gently undulating to rolling landscape cut by dry valleys. It has a strong rural character with small villages, and isolated farms and houses, and, in places, a strong sense of remoteness. A distinctive steep-sided dry valley, designated as an Area of High

Landscape Value (AHLV), runs through the Southern Site linking to the Kent Downs National Landscape to the south.

6.5 The Parameter Plans [CD 8.2 to CD 8.7], Illustrative Masterplan [CD 8.32 and CD 8.33, and Framework Plans [CD 8.15 to 8.29] illustrate the Proposed Development. Green infrastructure is shown on the Greenspace Structuring Plan [CD 8.18]. The main components of the Proposed Development with a potential effect on landscape and visual receptors are described here.

6.6 The Southern Application proposes a development covering 557.48ha to the south-east of Sittingbourne and Bapchild, between the A2 to the north and M2 to the south. The development includes 7,150 residential units covering 164.93ha at a mix of densities, in buildings of up to 15m in height spread across two new centres, 17.05ha for schools (with heights up to 12m), and a 33ha commercial extension to the Kent Science Park in the south (with heights from 10-16.5m). There is 30.3ha of amenity greenspace, 52.54ha for parkland, and 9.1ha for sports. It contains 58.56ha of semi-natural green space, 36.6ha of nature park and 34.31ha for new woodland.

6.7 The Proposed Development is comprised of two new centres, Oakwood Village in the north-east and Highsted Village in the south-west. These two new ‘villages’ are linked by the proposed Southern Relief Road (SRR) forming a new route around the east of Sittingbourne from the A2, at a new junction east of Bapchild, to the M2 in the south via a new junction (5a). The SRR cuts through an undulating landscape including parts designated as an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) (Kent level) and includes 5 junctions to provide access to the areas of new housing. The SRR is flanked by 34.46ha of ‘sustainable movement corridor greenspace’ and would include planted mitigation along its embankments and cuttings. The proposed connection to the M2, junction 5a, is on the south side of the motorway in the KDNL.

6.8 The new centre of Oakwood Village forms the northeast part of the development, within a gently rolling landscape ranging from 70m AOD in the south-west to 20m AOD in the north-east. This development extends across up the lower dip slope of arable fields and orchards on the undulating topography south of Bapchild, involving housing and schools with building heights ranging from 10-15m. Settlement is currently limited to small, isolated houses such as Dully House and the small historic village at Rodmersham.

6.9 To the south of the Site, the proposed Highsted Village would be divided by the SRR and contains two village centres, with heights up to 15m. The Kent Science Park would be expanded to provide an additional 33ha of commercial land use. This development is within a gently rolling

and undulating landscape, this is cut by the distinctive dry valley (AHLV) and is part of the immediate setting of the KDNL.

6.10 A further small (5.76ha) area of residential (Highsted Village North) is proposed on the edge of Sittingbourne, along Highsted Road, which would have maximum building heights of 12m at a medium density.

The LVIA methodology

6.11 The LVIA method set out in the Applicants' Appendix 10.2 [CD 9.2.15] states that effects of Moderate Substantial and above are Significant for the Southern Site. This is different to the Northern Site where effects of Moderate and above are recorded as Significant. The method for the Southern Site uses a 7-point scale ranging from Negligible through to Major Substantial.

6.12 The LVIA contained in chapter 10 of the ES [CD 9.1] and judgements in the Appendix 10.13.3 [CD 9.2.26] records a single Significant Adverse (Substantial to Moderate/Substantial) effect at year 15 at one viewpoint (30) within the KDNL, which is in very close proximity to the new M2 junction. A large number of Significant Adverse effects are recorded at construction and year 1, all of which reduce to not Significant by year 15, as a result of the maturation of planting which would screen the development at the edges.

6.13 My most recent Landscape Opinion, September 2024 [CD 10.58] prepared in response to the latest version of the ES, concluded (para 2.85) "*The LVIA for the scheme identifies a large number of moderate adverse effects and a very few major adverse effects (…..). In our opinion, for a mixed-use development and road scheme of this scale, the effects could be greater and significant for local landscape character and some visual receptors."* In the report I list a range of landscape and visual receptors where I judge effects could be higher due to an underestimation of magnitude of change and sensitivity The word 'could' is used here as this is my professional judgement as part of the high-level review and not as a result of undertaking a detailed LVIA. The review was undertaken to inform the Council of the issues that would need to be considered in the planning balance.

6.14 In this chapter of my evidence, I set out my differences in relation to the significance of effects showing how my judgements on the Sensitivity of receptors and Magnitude of effect are greater to those of the Applicants. As context to this detailed analysis, I first provide summary points on why this difference of opinion has occurred. The points in my summary overview below are supported by my evidence.

6.15 The key difference is the consistent underestimation of the Magnitude of change, involving:

1) Over ambitious interpretation of the benefits and effects of screening/vegetation. As an example, for rural roads being routed through developed residential areas, albeit as part of a linear green grid, are described in year 15 having an eclosed rural 'sylvan' character, and Magnitude of change as Medium to Low. This is for pedestrians, walkers, cyclists and local residents whose experience would completely change from that of a rural road through open countryside with far reaching views to a route passing through residential development, with new junctions and connections to the relief road, primary of secondary access routes. In this open rural context where there are often long views from the roads across the dip slope or northwards to the Thames Estuary, screening would not always be beneficial and would block views.
2) A consistent underestimation of the Magnitude of change at year 1 and year 15. The LVIA frequently states that the main change in these years would be the maturing of vegetation and management of open spaces. This approach appears to be assessing subsequent years against a baseline of the development already being present, rather than the actual landscape or visual receptor baseline. This not the approach advocated in GLVIA3 [CD 18.41].
3) A consistent underestimation of the effects at construction. For example, for rights of way which are routed through an area of development, the statement is frequently made that hoarding alongside footpaths would screen views of construction, apart from the taller cranes. This fails to take into account that security fencing or hoarding along a right of way would itself have severe detrimental effect on the experience of the receptor who would perceive the hoarding itself as part of the construction. Within the LVIA the assumption is that all rights of way would broadly remain and be in use through the construction period. Insufficient account is taken of the need for diversions, stopping up of rights of way and this effect on visual receptors. Similarly in years 1 and 15, the LVIA does not include any judgements on how the visual experience of users of rights of way would change based on the need to cross new roads including the SRR.
4) In some judgements the Magnitude of change is reduced because receptors would be screened from most of the Proposed Development by new development in the foreground. This is not an appropriate approach as unless viewing a development from a very elevated location or seeing it an aerial view, visual receptors would almost always only see the foreground edge, and this should not be sufficient to reduce effects.
5) An overemphasis on localised effects – for example how much (quantum) of a much larger character area or designation would be affected. It is rare for any development to completely fill a

whole character area. The more important judgement is how the key sensitivities and characteristic of that area would be affected. The assessor should not reduce the Magnitude of change simply because not all of the receptor (character area/National Landscape etc) would be affected. An example of this approach is for the AHLV where the LVIA states that portions of the AHLV would not be affected. However, the AHLV is designated and important as an entity – it would not be designated in portions.

6) The identification of a wide range of Magnitude of effects for any one receptor 'Very High to Medium' (three scales of effect) or 'Medium to Low' (two scales of effect) makes it difficult to draw a conclusion on the actual effect. While LVIA is not a precise science, the assessor should aim to come to a clear judgement.

7) The ranges of Magnitude recorded results in unclear judgments on Significance of effect which include statements such as 'Moderate/Slight Adverse to Negligible' or 'Moderate Substantial to Moderate/Slight Adverse'. Having this wide range avoids reaching a definite judgement and makes it more difficult for the decision-maker to understand what are and are not Significant effects, for who and for what reason.

8) In some cases, not taking a realistic view of the Proposed Development as presented for example in the transport or flood risk assessments. This may include limitations on planting along road carriageways/junctions, or recognition of the full scale of engineering requirements of the SRR and junctions, including need for elevation to cross the dry valleys to maintain flood flows.

6.16 In my opinion is that the analysis in the LVIA takes a mechanistic approach and seems intent on highlighting the benefits of the scheme and associated landscaping. It is optimistic in judgements rather than presenting a realistic scenario that can be used with confidence by decision-makers to weigh in the planning balance. The conclusions in the LVIA, (para 10.370) [CD 9.1], rely on a ZTV of screening to indicate that the development would not be seen by year 15 as a result of landscape mitigation and residual Significant effects therefore be reduced.

References – Landscape receptors

6.17 I draw on the following evidence in making my judgements:

- ES Vol 1: Main Text Highsted Park South [CD 9.1]
- ES Vol 2 Appendix 10.10 Photographic Appendices [CD 9.2.23]
- ES Vol 2 Appendix 10.13 Assessment tables [CD 9.2.26]. I note that the ordering and numbering of the tables in this appendix is not consistent with the cover sheet.

- Table 10.13.1: Landscape Effects at construction
- Table 10.13.2: Landscape Effects at year 1
- Table 10.13.4: Landscape Effects at year 15

- Appendix 10.17 Visualisations [CD 9.2.30]
- The Framework Access and Strategic Vehicle Routes [CD 8.24 and 8.25]
- Figure 1 (LCA) in Appendix 2 of my proof.

References – Visual receptors

6.18 I draw on the following evidence in making my judgements:

- ES Vol 1: Main Text Highsted Park South [CD 9.1]
- ES Vol 2: Appendix 10.10 Photographic Appendices [CD 9.2.23]
- ES Vol 2: Appendix 10.12 Key Viewpoints [CD 9.2.25]
- ES Vol 2: Appendix 10.13 Assessment tables [CD 9.2.26]
  - Appendix 10.13.3 Visual Effects and Evaluation of Significance for Selected Viewpoints/Receptors.
- ES Vol 2: Appendix 10.17 Visualisations [CD 9.2.30]. Where visualisations are reproduced in my evidence, they are provided for illustrative purpose only. They should be zoomed to the correct scale on screen or printed at A1 for making judgements.
- Figures 4 and 5 in Appendix 2 of my proof which show the viewpoints in relation to visual receptor groups

Other references

- Transport Assessment [CD 7.31.6].
- Flood Risk Assessment [CD 9.2.40]

6.19 Where I have quoted or used the Applicants' LVIA this is from the column headed reasoning/rationale in the LVIA tables in ES Vol 2 Appendix 10.13 [CD 9.26]. This text is not numbered.

Southern Site: Assessment of landscape effects and reasons for difference to the Applicants' LVIA

6.20 I cover effects on the KDNL as a section on its own at the end of this chapter, bringing together all the relevant landscape and visual receptors.

Areas of Agreement

6.21 While I agree with some of the Applicants' judgements of Significant effects at construction and year 1, I do not agree that a scheme of this scale and size would have no Significant effects on landscape receptors at year 15.

Areas of Disagreement

6.22 Landscape receptors where I judge that effects would be greater and Significant are set out in the tables below.

Receptor: LCA 29 Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium to Low	Medium to High	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Medium to High	Moderate Adverse to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Low to Medium	Slight Adverse to Neutral
My Assessment	Medium	High	Substantial Adverse	Medium to High	Substantial Adverse	Medium	Moderate/ Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.23 LCA 29 [CD 18.27] is a rolling agricultural landscape which has high degree of openness with long views, particularly to the north. It is currently an area where settlement is limited to isolated farms and cottages, The dry valleys are described as having a more intimate character, with historic features. The proposed development would involve the residential and mixed-uses at Oakwood Village North and Oakwood Village East comprising development of 10-15m height. It contains the primary gateway to the Southern Relief Road (SRR) at a new junction to the existing

A2, with the proposed road curving up the dip slope through the northern part of the character area, including two intermediary junctions providing access into the proposed development areas. Areas of sport and recreation are located to the eastern part of the character area in association with the SRR. Major residential development and infrastructure would cover a large part of the LCA extending from existing residential at Bapchild at the A2 up the more open rolling dip slope to Rodmersham and Dully House/Scuttington Manor. I assess sensitivity as Medium. It is an example of a rural, undeveloped landscape, although not locally designated.

6.24 At construction, given the extent of the work and engineering, creation of new landform to create the road and the large residential development areas, I judge that the Magnitude would be High (and not Medium to High). The Applicants record variations in construction effects ranging from Moderate/Substantial to Moderate/Slight Adverse. In my opinion, the purpose of the assessment is to draw a conclusion for the whole character area. I judge that effects on the character area at construction would be Substantial (Adverse), and Significant.

6.25 At year 1, I judge the Magnitude of change would remain High, given the complete change in the landscape from one of open countryside comprising farmland and isolated houses to one involving a country park, major road and large blocks of residential development. I do not consider the new 'natural' greenspace, buffers adjoining boundaries, country park etc. would compensate for loss of sections of hedgerows, individual and groups of trees to such an extent that character would not be adversely affected. For this reason, I judge that effects would remain Substantial Adverse and Significant at year 1.

6.26 I do not agree that Magnitude of change would reduce to Low to Medium at year 15. The assessment states that the main effect would be maturing of vegetation. This is assessing the development against a baseline of the LCA at construction/year 1. This is not an appropriate approach. It should be assessed against the agreed baseline which would indicate a Magnitude of at least Medium. Much of the LCA would be a completely new landscape, with limited rural character remaining at year 15. Many of the characteristics of the LCA would be changed including the settlement pattern of isolated farms, cottage and small historic villages, the intimate character of the minor valley that runs through Oakwood village (which would be bridged by the SRR). This is shown in the illustrations in my proof Appendix 3. It would block the long dip slope from the more elevated areas. For this reason, I judge that effects on LCA 29: Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands would remain at least Moderate Substantial Adverse and Significant at year 15.

Receptor: LCA 40: Rodmersham & Milstead Dry Valley

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium to High	Medium to Low	Moderate/ Substantial Adverse to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Medium	Moderate/ Substantial Adverse to Moderate Adverse	Low to Medium	Slight Adverse to Neutral
My Assessment	Medium to High	High	Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	Medium to High	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.27 [See also extracts in my proof Appendix 3 which illustrate the impacts of the scheme.]

6.28 LCA 40 Rodmersham and Milstead Dry Valley is a distinctive dry chalk valley with slopes rising steeply to either side to form rounded ridgelines. Blocks of woodland, some ancient, are scattered across the valley sides, combined with occasional orchards and enlarged arable fields. Settlement is generally small scale with a strong historic vernacular building style to the core and scattered development on steep and narrow lanes. Parts of the valley are described in the LCA as having an exceptionally strong sense of remoteness.

6.29 The proposed SRR would run through the north of this LCA between Highsted and Sittingbourne. It would cross the valley north of Highsted village (Highsted Road and Stockers Road) with a multi-lane junction at this location, requiring extensive engineering, cut and fill. It would be elevated 4.1m above the valley floor to maintain flow routes (as outlined in para 5.1.6 and 5.1.9 of the flood risk assessment in ES Vol 2, Appendix 12.1 [CD 9.2.40]. The road would continue north along the upper valley side where it would form the centre piece of the proposed new country park extending to the border of LCA 29: Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands. The country park landscape comprising open space, woodland and tree belts would replace the current area of arable and pasture and farmland.

6.30 At construction, given the extent of the work and engineering and creation of new landform to accommodate the road and country park, I judge that the Magnitude would be High. The

Applicants record variations in effect ranging from Moderate/Substantial to Moderate/Slight Adverse. In my opinion, the purpose of the assessment is to draw a conclusion for the character area. I judge that effects on the character area at construction would be Substantial Adverse and Significant.

6.31 I judge that the Magnitude at year 1 would remain High due to the extent of change along the SRR and access junctions resulting in large-scale changes to this rural, valued landscape. I judge that effects would remain Substantial for the character area. I do not agree that the Magnitude of change should be judged in relation to the size of the character area as a whole. It is an ambitious and ambiguous statement in the LVIA rationale to indicate that the layout / arrangement of the development parcels, creating a series of smaller scale of spaces reflecting to a degree the existing pattern of hedgerows, trees and field boundaries and new natural greenspace, would help mitigate effects.

6.32 By year 15, I do not agree with the Applicants that Magnitude of change would reduce to Low to Medium. The assessment states that the main change would be maturing of soft landscape areas and management of open spaces. This appears to be assessing the development against a baseline of the LCA at construction/year 1. The LCA would be a new landscape, largely a managed country park with significant and dominant road infrastructure. Any *exceptional sense of remoteness* on this part of the valley would be severely impacted by the SRR. For this reason, I judge that effects on LCA 40 would remain at least Moderate Substantial Adverse and Significant.

Receptor: LCA 42: Tunstall Farmlands

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium to High	Medium to Low	Moderate/ substantial Adverse to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate/ substantial Adverse to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Medium to Low	Slight Adverse to Neutral
My Assessment	High	High	Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	Medium to High	Substantial to Moderate

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
							Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.33 LCA 42: Tunstall Farmlands is characterised by large arable fields with remnant hedgerows, narrow winding lanes and rising dip slope to the North Downs. South of the M2 the LCA is designated as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL). It is my view that the Applicants should have used the more recent KDNL Character Assessment, 2020 [CD 18.15] for this part of the assessment.

6.34 The Proposed Development covers part of the LCA at its eastern edge. The two new village centres of Highsted Park East and Highsted Park West cover approximately 340ha, made up of 75.76ha of residential development and 2.18ha mixed used development. An additional 3.71ha is proposed for sports and 5.05ha for schools. A 33.18ha extension to the Kent Science Park with building heights up to 16.5m is also proposed to the south of the development area at the edge of the M2 and KDNL. The LCA includes the new junction and over bridge to link the SRR to the M2 (within the KDNL), with the SRR continuing northwards through the character area including a large multi arm junction and overbridge at Broad Oak giving access to Kent Science Park (as shown in CD 7.3.16, page 46 and 47). The proposals result in a large quantum of development (residential, commercial, highway infrastructure). It would form a new pattern of settlement in Swale extending higher up on the dip slope in the setting and within the National Landscape.

6.35 The value of this area being partly within and forming the immediate setting of the KDNL means that sensitivity should be recorded as High for this part of the wider character area.

6.36 The extent of the construction for the housing development, science park, SRR with associated major junctions and overbridges would result in loss or landscape features and changes to character over a large area, I judge that Magnitude would be High, despite LVIA rationale that this would involve the retention of trees and hedgerows where possible and provision of tree protection fencing and buffer zones. The area of LCA affected at c.400ha would not be small. Construction also includes proposals for ground lowering in the Science Park to create a development platform. The Applicants record variations in effect ranging from Moderate/Substantial to Moderate/Slight Adverse. I judge that effects on the character area at construction would be Substantial Adverse. This level of effect would continue in year 1. At year

15, the Applicants' LVIA rationale describes a noticeable change to a small part of LCA 42, and a localised effect. Given the High sensitivity of this area and its relationship to the KDNL I judge that effects would remain Substantial to Moderate Substantial and Adverse. The Proposed Development would result in a complete change to the strong sense of place described for this LCA (CD 18.27).

Receptor: Northern Area, Central and Southern Area Landscape features

6.37 The LVIA [CD 9.2.26] provides a detailed breakdown and judgements for individual landscape elements covering land use, openness, hedgerows/trees/orchards and woodlands, water bodies and topography. These are each assessed separately for the northern, central and southern areas of the development at construction, year 1 and year 15. I note that there are slight differences in judgements for the Northern Area between Option1 and 2 for water bodies and ditches and topography.

6.38 It is difficult to understand what this very detailed breakdown of landscape features achieves, as no Significant effects are identified at any stage of the development, with at the most Moderate Adverse (not significant) effects for land use at construction and year 1 and Moderate effects for openness continuing through to year 15.

6.39 This is an unrealistic assessment given the scale of the road, infrastructure, commercial and residential development proposed and the fact there would be a complete change to the landscape features. The existing rural agricultural land use would change to one of largely housing and infrastructure, with a change in the current openness and topography of the landscape, with earthworks to create development platforms, bunding and cuttings to support the road. Even in the central part of the scheme which is dominated by the SRR and associated country park, the landscape elements and features would change, with the road a dominant feature. The rationale in the assessment tables [CD 9.2.26] does not provide any reasoning to support the Applicants' judgement of no Significant effects. I judge that at all stages there would be Substantial Adverse effects to landscape elements, which by year 15 would reduce to Moderate Substantial Adverse and remain Significant.

Receptor: Landscape pattern / character

Northern Area		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low	Very High/ High	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Very High/ High	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Medium	Slight Adverse to Neutral
Central Area		**Construction**		**Operation (year 1)**		**Residual (year 15)**	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium	High/ Medium	Moderate to Moderate / Slight Adverse	Medium/ Low	Moderate to Moderate / Slight Adverse	Medium/ Low	Moderate / Slight beneficial
Southern Area		**Construction**		**Operation (year 1)**		**Residual (year 15)**	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	Effect
Applicants (ES)	Medium/ High	Very High/ High	Major substantial to moderate/Substantial Adverse	Very High/ High	Major substantial to moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Medium/ Low	Slight Adverse to Neutral

Reasons for difference

6.40 As for the assessment of landscape features, the Applicants undertake a detailed assessment of the landscape pattern. The Sensitivity of the pattern varies between the parts of the site from Low in the north to High in the south. Given that the existing landscape pattern would entirely change to one dominated by housing, employment and relief road, I cannot understand the reasoning behind the judgement of no Significant residual effect in this assessment. The accompanying tables discuss changes and state that the layout/arrangement of the development parcels would reflect the existing pattern of hedgerows and with trees being assimilated into the Site. In my

opinion, while the retention of field boundaries is positive, replication of an arable field pattern is not a strong design principle for a new development requiring its own sense of place. While I agree with the LVIA that new landscape planting within the open spaces and housing parcels would provide the opportunity to improve and enhance the character and visual appearance of the Site, I do not agree that this would counterbalance the Adverse impacts. It is my opinion that a clear assessment should have been made on the existing landscape pattern and Significant Adverse effects recorded through to year 15.

Receptor: Rural Lanes

		Construction		**Operation (year 1)**		**Residual (year 15)**	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Low to Very low	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse to Negligible	Low to negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Low to negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
My Assessment	High	Very High - High	Major substantial to Substantial	Very High - High	Major substantial to Substantial	High	Substantial

Reasons for difference

6.41 My assessment concludes that the combined scheme would have significant Adverse residual effects on the character and amenity of the four Rural Lanes on the Southern site. I do not agree with the Applicants that effects would be moderated by mitigation measures. It is an ambitious assertation that planting would create a 'sylvan' character to the roads, which would be mostly routed through development areas, and often contain multiple primary and secondary access routes into development or include major transport infrastructure in the form of new junctions.

6.42 My evidence below is drawn from the Framework Access and Strategic Vehicle Routes [CD 8.24 and 8.25] and information in the Transport Assessment [CD 7.3.1.6].

6.43 **Ruins Barns Road** – would largely run through the centre of the new residential development of Highsted West and East. It would be crossed by two primary access routes linking to junction with the SRR and would include at least 2 roundabouts and junctions at these points to provide routes into the housing parcels. It would no longer have the character or appearance of a rural lane

being largely within a developed area. The southern part of Ruins Barn Road would be upgraded and realigned, with existing roadside trees and vegetation removed.

6.44 **Church Street** – the rural landscape to the east of Church Street would form Oakwood village East. The housing development would require access routes onto Church Street at several new junctions. The Plan of Access and Strategic Vehicle Routes for Oakwood [CD 8.26] shows that Church Street would have an interchange with the SRR just north of Rodmersham village, with a primary access route from the development at this point and a secondary access to Church Street south of the village. The landscape buffer alongside Church Street would provide some screening but would also block the currently long rural views over the undulating landscape that can presently be obtained from Church Street, such that it would not be perceived as a rural lane. The illustration in my Appendix 3 shows the scheme close to Church Street.

6.45 **Dully Road** – currently there are panoramic rural views from Dully Road across the undulating arable landscape towards Sittingbourne. The church tower at Rodmersham forms part of the horizon. The rural view would change to one containing substantial areas of residential development forming Oakwood village. The Plan of Access and Strategic Vehicle Routes for Oakwood [CD 8.26] shows that current access along Dully Road to rural properties at New Cottage and Little Dully would be by the new Primary Access Routes through the development, with the existing road upgraded and stopping up at the SRR, with the northern part of Dully Road no longer existing. The Applicants' assessment that by year 15 the road would have an enclosed rural 'sylvan' character seems to be an overstatement for a road running through a housing development and being demolished for the route of the SRR.

6.46 **Highsted Road/Highsted Valley** – the northern part of Highsted road would be realigned and upgraded at the junction with Highsted Valley – a major new intersection and overbridge for the SRR. This would form a new primary access junction to the development. The existing Highsted Valley road would be routed onto a slip road to join Stockers Road and up onto a major elevated junction to cross the SRR before descending onto a slip to rejoin the existing Highsted Road. This major infrastructure means that it would no longer function as a rural lane. I have reproduced the plan for this junction at in my proof below (para. 6.52) in relation to effect on the AHLV.

Receptor: Protected Trees and Ancient Woodland

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High to Very High	High to Low	Major Substantial Adverse to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Negligible	Moderate Adverse to Slight Adverse	Low to Medium	Moderate/ Slight Beneficial
My Assessment	High to Very High	High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Major Substantial Adverse	Medium	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.47 Construction of the scheme would involve loss of one TPO tree and an area of ancient woodland at Highsted Wood to accommodate the SRR. The LVIA rationale states that the Proposed Development would have unavoidable impacts of trees, wooded areas and hedgerows and would remove 13No. category A trees, 19No. category B trees, 3No. category B groups and parts of 19No. category B groups, 18No. category C trees, 11No. category C groups and parts of 5No. category B groups and 7No. category C hedgerows and parts of 14No. hedgerows and 13No. orchards or parts of orchards which are protected which would need to be removed.

6.48 The LVIA gives a wide range of judgements of Magnitude at construction from High to Low, and a similar range of effects of Major Substantial to Moderate/Slight Adverse. I judge that the Magnitude would be High and effects Substantial.

6.49 The LVIA identifies the Magnitude of change at year 1 would be Negligible, presumably because at this point any important trees and woodland would have already been removed. I judge that effects would be the same as at year 1. By year 15 the LVIA identifies a Low Medium Magnitude and Moderate/Slight Beneficial effects due to in the introduction of new planting and access to parts of the ancient woodland. While I agree that the landscape would have more trees which would be under management, it does not comply with the policy objectives (DM29) [CD 13.1] which relating to avoiding loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland, old orchards or hedges, and loss of trees that make an important contribution to the

amenity, historic, landscape value of the site or surrounding area. I also note that introduction of public access to the ancient woodland may not be beneficial for this habitat.

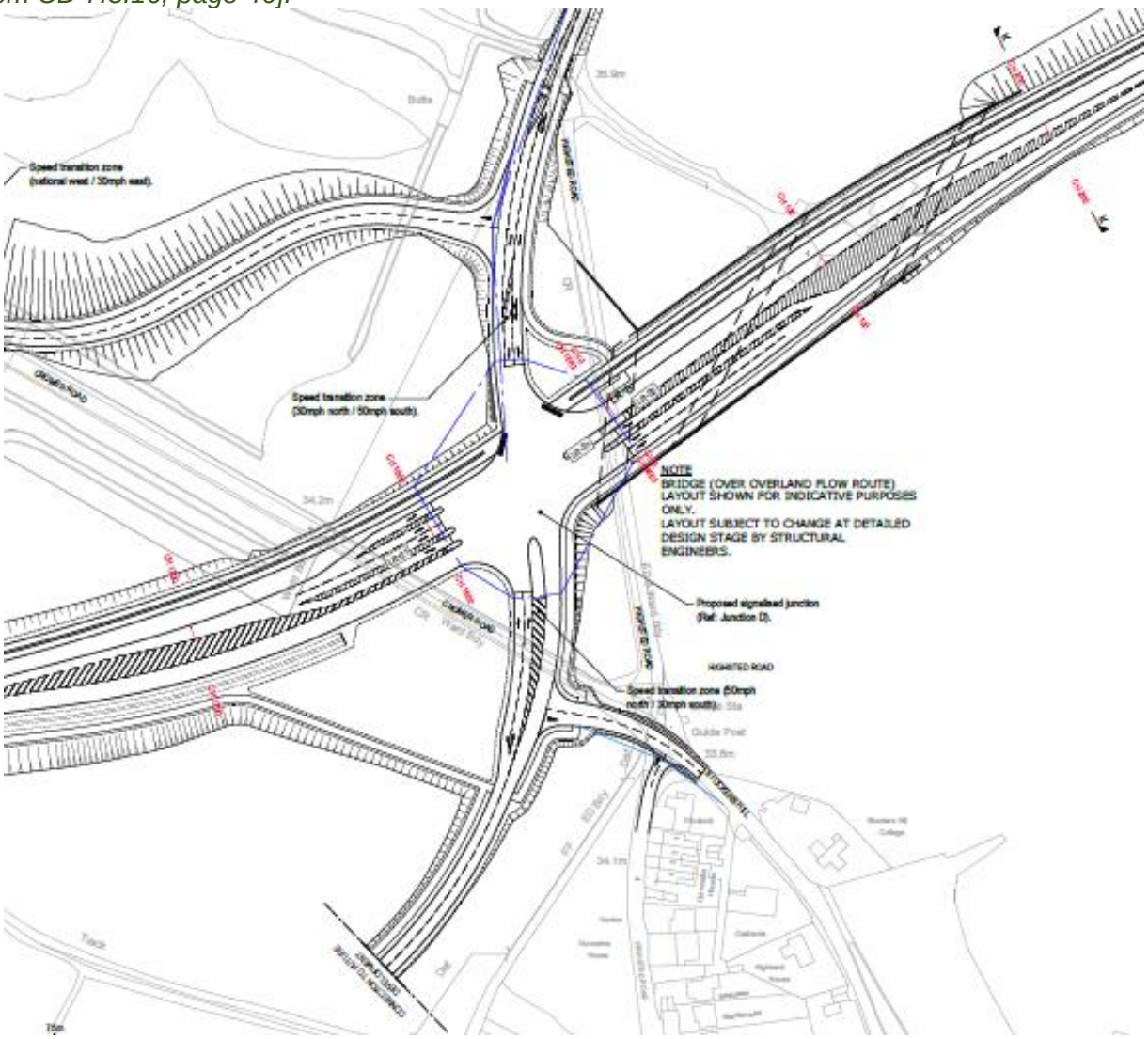
Receptor: Rodmersham, Milstead and Highsted dry valleys AHLV

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium to High	Medium to Very High	Major Substantial Adverse to Moderate Adverse	Medium to High	Substantial Adverse to Moderate Adverse	Low to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
My Assessment	High	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.50 The Statement of Significance [CD 9.2.17] describes "*A dry valley system contiguous with the AONB enclosed by steep slopes rising to open arable ridges. It is a topographically distinct landscape with a strong sense of place and rural character in close proximity to the urban edge of Sittingbourne. Features of interest include the ancient and semi-natural woodlands which occur across the valley, narrow sunken rural lanes, intact hedgerows, orchards and areas of remnant parkland, plus the extensive network of public rights of way. Views range from panoramas on higher land encompassing the Swale and Thames Estuary to contained linear views within the valley".* The AHLV would be cut by the route of the SRR, crossing the valley as an elevated route, with a major junction over the valley at Highsted Valley/Stockers Hill, and continuing both in cutting and on embankment along the crest of the valley (AHLV) to the north. See Appendix 3 of my proof of evidence which illustrates effects at this location. As this is an area designated in the Local Plan for its high landscape value, I record sensitivity as High, rather than Medium to High.

Extract 6.1: The junction and part of the route of the SRR at the junction of Highsted Road and Stockers Hill (from CD 7.3.16, page 46].



6.51 Construction would have a direct effect on these the landscape qualities and values of parts of the AHLV due to the scale of the development proposed and its construction over 20 years. I agree the effects would be Major Substantial and Substantial at construction and year 1. I do not agree that the Magnitude of change would diminish by year 15 such that effects would be only Negligible to Slight Adverse. I judge that the Magnitude of change would remain at least High, and effects would be Substantial Adverse, due to the scale of the transport infrastructure imposed in the valley and the length of the SRR cutting across the valley crest. In my opinion this would not be mitigated by the country park planting. In the Applicants' LVIA method presented in ES Appendix Vol 10.2, it records on page 10 that a Slight Adverse to Negligible effect would be "*Typically, the landscape receptor has low sensitivity with the proposals representing a very low*

magnitude of change that may be adverse or beneficial … and would not be significant". This judgement would not therefore apply to this AHLV. The development would harm the qualities and significance of the AHLV, relating to its strong sense of place, topography and contained rural character.

6.52 The impact of the SRR is also shown in the visualisation at VP 43 which is taken from the land to the west and shows the road cutting across the valley crest, as illustrated on the extract below with the green line indicating SRR earthworks. (Extract from Vol 2, Appendix 10.17 [CD 9.2.30] VP 43 at year 1)

Southern Site: Assessment of visual effects and reasons for difference to the Applicants' LVIA

Areas of Agreement

6.53 I agree that effects would be Significant for receptors at Bexon Lane VP 30 but judge that this would be greater order than identified by the Applicants.

Areas of Disagreement

6.54 In the tables below, I set out where I judge effects are greater and Significant for visual receptors.

Recreational receptors – Users of PRoW

6.55 Note: For my assessment of users of the public rights of way I have followed the method in the Applicants' assessment classifying sensitivity as High as typically users on public rights of way whose attention or interest may be focussed on the landscape. This is the second highest category in the Applicants' assessment and is appropriate. It is different to the approach in the Northern Site.

6.56 For users of PRoW, the emphasis in the Applicants' visual assessment is on the static effect from one viewpoint rather than the kinetic effects of a receptor moving through the landscape on the right of way and experiencing a range of sequential views of the development. This emphasis on a single VP analysis means that for those rights of way where there is no viewpoint, effects are not assessed e.g. PRoW ZR155, ZU38. The assessment does not take account of how the wider visual experience might change for receptors for example on rights of way required to cross the SRR or other local access roads, and how this would be achieved in practice.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR194 (VP 1)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate / Substantial Adverse effects	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate / Substantial Adverse effects	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse Effects
My Assessment	High	Very High	Major Substantial	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.57 The view is taken from the footpath near Panteny Lane. It is an open panoramic view across a large open arable field to a horizon where the land rises near Scuttington Manor. Footpath ZR194

runs diagonally across the field. This field would comprise residential development as part of Oakwood Park with a grid of green space within which the route of the footpath is included.

6.58 Construction would include the SRR to the east, with the area between the road and the viewpoint the location for housing development and the school. The Illustrative Masterplan indicates the route of the right of way may be retained as part of the green grid, although no indication is given if construction would require closure or diversion of the right of way. The LVIA states that hoarding would screen construction except for taller cranes and scaffolding – in my view the hoarding is part of the construction. Similarly, the fact the newly constructed development would screen later stages of construction behind them is not justified. I agree with the Applicant's Magnitude of Very High (but not Medium). I agree with the Applicants that effects would be Major Substantial (but not also Moderate/Substantial).

6.59 The housing, school, local centre etc would result in a complete change in this view at year 1 from rural with an open, panoramic aspect to the countryside horizon to one that is contained by housing in close proximity to the view. Despite the pocket park and linear open space along the footpath, it would be in an urban context and the view contained. I agree with the Applicants' Magnitude of Very High (but not Medium). I agree with the Applicants that effects would be Major Substantial (but not also Moderate/Substantial).

6.60 At year 15, I do not agree with the Applicants' reasoning or rationale that the Magnitude would reduce to Medium to Low and there would only be Moderate effects due to the establishment and maturing of landscape planting within the park and linear planting along the footpath that would screen some parts of the development. In my opinion the Applicants should assess the change at year 15 from the open rural baseline. The Magnitude would remain High, and effects would be Substantial Adverse because the user of the footpath would not be viewing/experiencing a rural landscape and long views but be contained within a housing development, despite some local planting/ screening.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR682 (VP 2)

		Construction		**Operation (year 1)**		**Residual (year 15)**	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial	Very High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
			to Moderate / Substantial Adverse effects		/ Substantial Adverse (Option 1) Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse (Option 2)0		
My Assessment	High	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.61 The view is taken from the footpath near Panteny Lane. The view is an open view across undulating fields with long distance views to the north and open rural views to rising land around Scuttington. This field to the north would comprise residential development as part of Oakwood Park, with a secondary school and a further housing parcel to the south. I agree with the Applicants' assessment of sensitivity as High for people using the right of way (and local residents).

6.62 Construction would include the SRR to the east, with the area between the road and the viewpoint the location for housing development forming part of Oakwood village. The Illustrative Masterplan indicates the route of the right of way may be retained as part of the green grid, although no indication is given if construction would require closure or diversion of the right of way. While hoarding would screen low level views of construction, I judge that hoarding along a footpath would be perceived as part of the construction. I agree with the Applicants' Magnitude of Very High (but not Medium). I agree with the Applicants that effects would be Major Substantial (but not also Moderate/Substantial).

6.63 At year 1, the housing, school, local centre etc would result in a complete change in this view from rural with an open, panoramic aspect to the countryside horizon to one that is contained by housing and or boundaries in close proximity to the view. The school playing field may provide a

degree of a buffer, but this would need to be securely bounded and would remain a substantial change to an agricultural field. I do not agree with the Applicants' rationale that the development closest to the view would screen development/dwellings within the remaining western parts of the application site – in my opinion this is not a reason to reduce the Magnitude of change. I agree with the Applicants' Magnitude of Very High (but not Medium). I agree with the Applicants that effects would be Major Substantial (but not also Moderate/Substantial).

6.64 I do not agree with the Applicants' reasoning or rationale that by year 15, the Magnitude would reduce to Medium to Low and there would only be Moderate effects due to the establishment and maturing of landscape planting within the linear open space and greenway. The LVIA notes that planting once established would screen some parts of the built development, however, the Applicants should assess the change at year 15 from the open rural baseline. In my opinion the Magnitude of effect would remain High, and the effect would be Substantial Adverse.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR196 (VP 3, 4)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate / Substantial Adverse	High to Medium	Moderate / Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	Medium	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.65 ZR196 runs south from Radfield on the A2 south along the lower part of the dip slope between an orchard and arable land to Dully Road. There are two views taken from this right of way looking in different directions. The footpath runs along the eastern edge of the proposed Oakwood village development. The route of the SRR and associated junctions lie to the west of the housing. Construction would include the SRR to the west, with the area between the road and the viewpoints being the location for housing development as part of Oakwood village. The Illustrative

Masterplan indicates the route of the right of way would be retained as part of the green grid forming a linear buffer on the edge of the development. I judge that hoarding along a footpath would be perceived as part of the construction, rather than screening low level views. I agree with the Applicants' Magnitude of High to Medium. It is reduced from Very High because development is on one side of the footpath and the existing agricultural context remains to the east. I agree with the Applicants that effects would be Moderate Substantial (but not also Moderate). In year 1, The housing development would result in a complete change in these views from rural to urban housing on one side of the footpath, despite the presence of a landscape buffer. Views to the east would be unchanged. I judge that effects would remain Substantial Adverse at year 1.

6.66 At year 15, I do not agree with the Applicants' reasoning or rationale that the Magnitude would reduce to Medium to Low and there would only be Moderate effects due to the establishment and maturing of landscape planting within the linear open space and greenway. The LVIA notes that planting once established would screen some parts of the built development, however, the Applicants should assess the change at year 15 from the open rural baseline. In my opinion the Magnitude of effect would remain High to Medium, and the effect would be Moderate Substantial Adverse. Users of this right of way would experience views of the development/planting to the west and open countryside to the east.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR197 (VP 5,6,7)

		Construction		**Operation (year 1)**		**Residual (year 15)**	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very High	Major Substantial	Very High/High	Major Substantial/ Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.67 ZR196 runs across an area of farmland off Dully Road and provides a connection to other rights of way (assessed above). Users of the rights of way would not experience a change in isolation at a single viewpoint but would experience a sequence of changes as they move through the rights of way network for example at VP 1,2,5,6,7. The Illustrative Masterplan [CD 8.32] shows this right of way being included within a greenway linking to an area of open space at Dully Road and a further area of open space where it meets the SRR which it would need to cross to meet ZR194.

6.68 Construction would include the SRR to the west, with the area between the road and the viewpoints, the location for housing development forming part of Oakwood village. Hoarding along a footpath would be perceived as part of the construction, rather than screening views. I agree with the Applicants' Magnitude of Very High (but not Medium), and effect as Major Substantial (and not Moderate). In year 1 the housing development would result in a complete change in views from rural to urban housing. I do not agree that close development would mitigate and help screen development further away. Linear landscaped areas following the footpath would be beneficial but would not take away for the fact that the footpath runs through a housing area. I agree with the Applicants' Magnitude of Very High (but not Medium). I judge that effects would Major Substantial to Substantial. I do not agree with the Applicants' reasoning or rationale that the Magnitude would reduce to Medium to Low and there would only be Moderate Adverse effects due to the establishment and maturing of landscape planting within the linear open space and greenway. The LVIA notes that planting once established would screen some parts of the built development, however, the Applicants should assess the change at year 15 from the open rural baseline. In my opinion the Magnitude of effect would remain High, and effects would be Substantial Adverse. I also note that the visual experience for users of this right of way would include crossing of the SRR.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR208 (VP 10, 11)

		Construction		**Operation (year 1)**		**Residual (year 15)**	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/	High to Low	Major Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Low	Moderate Adverse

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
			Substantial Adverse				
My Assessment	High	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Major Substantial Adverse	Medium	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.69 The PRoW runs across the elevated slopes west of Rodmersham, providing panoramic views to the west and north. The proposed SRR would cut across this view, partially on embankment and across the ridge. The pattern of agricultural farmland would change with the construction of the Country Park. I agree with the Applicants' judgements of Substantial Adverse at construction and year 1. I judge that the magnitude of change would remain High in year 15, despite the maturation of planting of the country park. The view would be to a wholly different landscape. Visual receptors on this right of way would pass through a new landscape type as a country park which could be beneficial, however, their use of the PRoW and experience would include the need to cross the SRR, which would have a high visual impact. This would therefore remain a Significant Adverse effect at year15.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR209 (VP 14)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium (Option 1+2)	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse (option 1 and 2)	Very High to Medium (Option1+ 2)	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse (option1) Substantial to Moderate/Substantial	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse (option 1)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
					Adverse (option 2)		
My Assessment (Option 1 and 2)	High	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	Medium	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.70 The PRoW runs along an access track to Rodmersham Court Farm looking north to Rodmersham Church. It is a small-scale landscape with mature trees and sheep grazing in paddocks contrasting with larger arable fields and orchards. This area would be replaced by community gardens and sports pitches. The LVIA indicates changes in ground level and potential for floodlighting of the pitches. I cannot see any rationale for reducing the year 1 judgement for Option 2. In my opinion these changes would remain at least Moderate Substantial Adverse in the long term for both options.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR159 (VP 21, 22)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate to Slight Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.71 The PRoW crosses open countryside within a minor valley, with woodland on the upper valley sides. The footpath would be routed through housing forming part of Highsted village, with a local access road through the development. The SRR would pass to the to the north. The LVIA describes the introduction of housing development as blocking views (VP21) and viewers being in very close proximity to the development (VP22), and the experience of users changing to a more urban context. VP 22 is a further example where the LVIA describes new development closest to the viewer as screening development / dwellings within the remaining parts of the Application Site, which is an unusual conclusion. It also notes that views would be maintained northwards along the new access road. While the road could offer a longer view this is very different to view from a right of way through countryside. Given the proximity of housing development and the local access road. I judge that this would remain Substantial to Moderate Substantial Adverse in year 15.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR158 (VP 24)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.72 This is a short footpath between the Kent Science Park and Ruins Barn Road. Construction of the first phase of development (SRR) would be approximately 180 to 350m from this viewpoint (and users of the footpath). A new junction and land bridge is proposed, and the alignment of the footpath would be diverted to follow the west side of slip road to the junction before crossing the land bridge to reconnect to the footpath alignment on Broadoak Road. Housing development would be constructed to the north in close proximity to the footpath. I agree with the Applicants'

judgements for construction and year 1, although I do not agree with statements such as the use of hoarding along the right of way would screen low level construction activity. I do not agree the Magnitude would reduce such that the effect would not be Significant in year 15, despite the maturing of landscape planting along the footpath. Users of the right of way would have views of the housing development and there would be a substantial change to the visual experience involving views from the slip road and crossing of the SRR at year 15. I judge that effects would remain Substantial Adverse.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR156 (VP 25)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Very High to high	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	Very High to high	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.73 The PRoW runs to the west of Ruins Barn Road. It would pass through the housing development of Highsted village. It would form part of linear greenway through the development with housing development 10 -20m from the footpath. I agree with the conclusions for construction and year 1, although I disagree with some of the reasoning, such as the development itself would screen the views from other parts of the development. I do not agree the Magnitude would reduce such that the effect would not be Significant in year 15, despite the maturing of landscape planting along the footpath. Receptors on the right of way would still experience the footpath within an urban context and I judge that a Substantial Adverse effect would remain.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR157 (VP 26, 28)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Very High to high	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major Substantial	Very high	Major Substantial	High	Substantial

Reasons for difference

6.74 The footpath runs south from PROW ZR156, towards the M2. It is identified on the Illustrative Masterplan as a linear route through the development. It would potentially be part of the access to residential areas. The viewpoint photos show this as currently a large open arable field, with glimpses of traffic on the M2 and more distant views to woodland of the Kent Downs. The area would contain parcels of residential development as part of Highsted village which would be 10-20m from the route. A 'Greenway; and landscaped areas would be introduced adjoining the footpath. I agree that effects at construction and year 1 would be Substantial, but do not agree that the effects would be partially mitigated by hoarding or new shrub and tree planting along the Greenway. In my opinion, effect would remain Substantial Adverse in year 15 as the character and appearance of this footpath would be in an urban context, despite some screening of nearby development by vegetation.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR150 (VP 27) South

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/	High to Medium	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
			Substantial Adverse				
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major substantial Adverse	Very high	Major substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.75 The PRoW runs along the western boundary of the development at Highsted. At present there are open, intermittent views with large scale arable fields on the dip slope landform. A landscape buffer is proposed along the western edge of the housing development, providing in the order of 30m separation. I agree that Significant effects would occur at construction and year 1. However, as the Applicants note for viewpoint 27 [CD 9.2.26] " …. *due to the scale and extent of the Highsted Village housing development, within the western parts of the Application Site, this will inevitably result in a noticeable and apparent change to views from this viewpoint, primarily due to the close proximity of the viewer(s) to the Application Site and high sensitivity of the receptor."* The Applicants describe buffer planting in year 15 as screening some part of the built development. I do not agree that this would reduce the effect to not Significant.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR203 (VP 34)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	High to Medium	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	High	Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	Medium	Substantial/ Moderate Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.76 The right of way runs east west across a rural open arable landscape with long views out across the dip slope towards Sittingbourne, the Swale and Sheppey. It connects to ZR199 (assessed below) linking Rodmersham to Lynsted. This right of way would not be contained within the development. It is located on elevated land approximately 30m from the edge of housing. The agricultural landscape is the foreground to these longer views. Construction would include the SRR cutting across the topography to the north-west, with the main development of extensive housing associated with Oakwood village filling the lower slopes in views west and southwest from the right of way. In my opinion, the elevation of this right of way means that landscape buffer planting would not adequately screen the development, and housing would remain a prominent feature in the landscape and in views for people using this right of way. For this reason, I judge that effects would remain Substantial/Moderate Adverse and Significant in the long term.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR199 (VP 35, 36) and VIS2

		Construction		**Operation (year 1)**		**Residual (year 15)**	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	High to Medium	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Extract 6.2: Year 15 visualisation ES, Vol2, Appendix 10.17 Part 2 [CD 9.2.30]

Reasons for difference

6.77 This right of way and the associated visualisation (see extract above) is an example of the potential impact of development at year 15 from a right of way beyond the site. The VP is approximately 150m from the Application Site. The visualisation shows residential development of up to 10m in height (mauve) and the proposed education facility (yellow).

6.78 Currently there are open rural views from this right of way which runs east west across the slopes between Dully Road and Rodmersham Church Street. These views include the tower of Rodmersham Church, which forms a landmark feature, and long-distance views south and west down the dip slope to the Thames estuary. I agree that effects would be Significant at construction and in year 1, although at a higher order than judged by the Applicants. In my opinion, the elevation of this right of way means that landscape buffer planting would not adequately screen the development, and housing would remain a prominent feature in the landscape and in the views for people on this right of way. For this reason, I judge that effects would remain Substantial Adverse and Significant in the long term.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR147 (VP 40, 52) and ZR155 (no VP)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/	High to Medium	Moderate/ substantial	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
			Substantial Adverse		to Moderate Adverse		Moderate to slight (VP52)
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Extract 6.3: Year 15 visualisation. ES, Vol 2, Appendix 10.17 [CD 9.2.30]

Reasons for difference

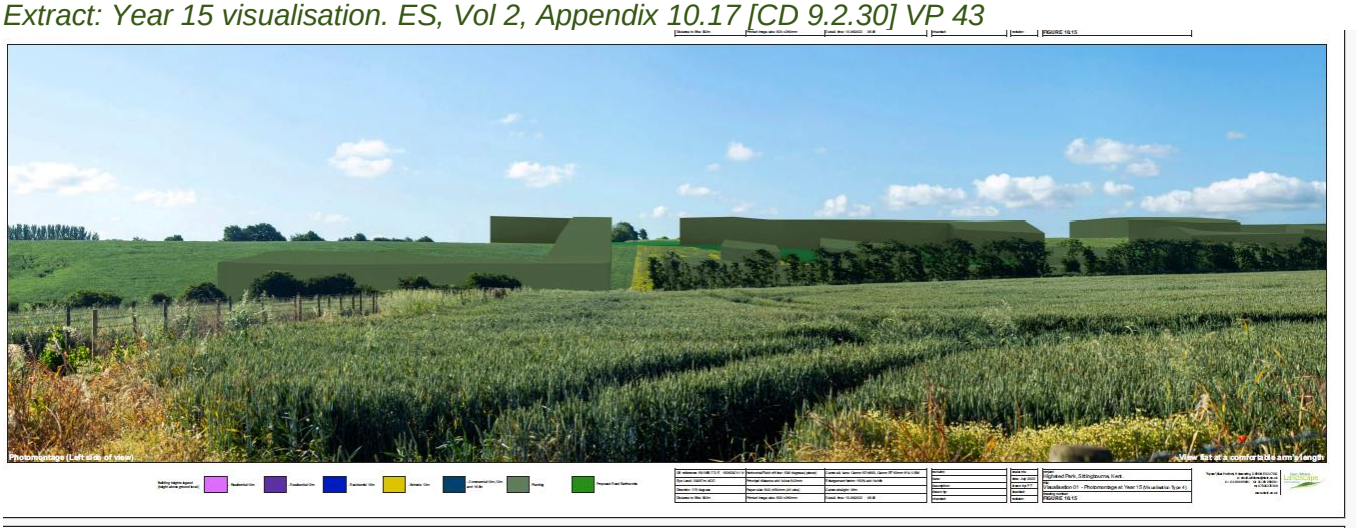
6.79 This right of way and the associated visualisation (see extract above) is a good example of the potential impact of development at year 15 from a right of way beyond the site boundaries. These linked rights of way extend from Tunstall to Ruins Barn Road. Part of the boundary of the proposed Highsted village would follow a section of ZR147. I agree that effects would be Significant and Adverse at construction and year 1. I do not agree that the landscape buffer indicated in the Illustrative Master Plan [CD 8.31] would be enough to reduce effects to being not Significant by year 15, as in my opinion, the character and visual experience of views would be permanently changed to a more urban context.

6.80 No viewpoint, or assessment has been taken to represent the users of right of way ZR155, which links with ZR157. I have looked at this right of way in the context of the scheme shown on the Illustrative Masterplan and I note this right of way has a complex interaction with the SRR and major new junction to the Kent Science Park development. This would require, stopping up or diversion, and I therefore I judge that visual effects would be Major Substantial, Significant and Adverse for users of this PRoW.

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZU30 (VP 42, 43 and VIS 1)

		Construction		Operation (yr 1)		Residual (yr 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicant (ES)	High	Very high to Medium	Major Substantial to moderate/ Substantial Adverse	High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Extract: Year 15 visualisation. ES, Vol 2, Appendix 10.17 [CD 9.2.30] VP 43



Reasons for difference

6.81 I have included this viewpoint as an example of a right of way at some distance from the development and clearly showing the SRR cutting across the ridge of the dry valley (AHLV). At this point the visualisations illustrate the SRR cutting across the ridge of the dry valley in the mid ground to the east, with planting proposed as part of the Country Park, plus new development at Highsted village to the south- west. I agree that effects will be significant and Adverse at construction and year 1. I do not agree with the year 15 judgement that maturation of planting will reduce effects to being not significant by year 15. In my opinion, the character and visual experience of views will be permanently changed as both the SRR and the housing are likely to remain partially visible in views form this right of way.

Local Residents

Receptor: Local residents on Dully Road (VP 8)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium	Very High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate Adverse	High to Medium	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate to Slight Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very High	Substantial Adverse	Very High	Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.82 There are panoramic rural views from Dully Road across the undulating arable landscape towards Sittingbourne. The church tower at Rodmersham forms part of the horizon. The rural view would change to one containing substantial areas of residential development forming Oakwood village. I judge that the sensitivity of local residents along Dully Road would be High as they are highly susceptible to changes in their direct view. The Plan of Access and Strategic Vehicle Routes for Oakwood [CD 8.26] shows that current access along Dully Road to properties at New Cottage and Little Dully would be by the new Primary Access Routes through the development. A Secondary development access and new junction are also shown to Dully Road. The introduction of landscape areas and a buffer along Dully Road would not be enough to change the fact that

open views would be to an urban context, and I judge that the Magnitude of Change would be higher at year 1 and 15. The Applicants' assessment that by year 15 the road would have an enclosed rural 'sylvan' character seems to be an overstatement for a road running through a housing development. Rural residences along this road, as at Dully House, New Cottages and Little Dully would be contained within a continuous urban area and accessed by a new road.

Receptor: Local residents on Church Street, Rodmersham (VP 15)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.83 VP 15 in the LVIA is taken from a right of way but is the only VP in the ES representative of Church Street looking to the east. Local residents of High Sensitivity on Church Street, looking to the east, would perceive a wholly residential urban landscape (Oakwood village East). I agree that there would be Significant Adverse effects at construction and year 1. The LVIA that states that establishment and maturing of landscape planting within the landscape 'buffer' would increase tree cover and habitat diversity within the Oakwood Village / northwestern parts of the Application Site. It states that planting once established would attain a height up to about 10m which would screen some parts of the built development whilst controlling other views. I do not agree that screening of some parts of the development would reduce the Magnitude to Medium to Low. In my opinion effects would remain Substantial to Moderate Adverse. This is because the housing development would require access routes out onto Church Street at several points. The Plan of Access and Strategic Vehicle Routes for Oakwood [CD 8.26] shows that Church Street would have an interchange with the SRR just north of Rodmersham village, with a primary access

route from the development at this point and a secondary access to Church Street south of the village. At these access points there would undoubtedly be views into the development. Traffic would increase on Church Street with associated visual effects for residents, as would the SRR interchange. The landscape buffer alongside Church Street is important in providing screening but would also block the currently long rural views over the undulating landscape that can presently be obtained from Church Street.

Receptor: Local residents at Doves Croft, off Primrose Lane (VP 39)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium	Very High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate Adverse	High to Medium	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Medium	Moderate to Moderate/ Slight Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse	Medium	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.84 There is a collection of properties along Primrose Lane which have views extending across and open arable field to the trees on Ruins Barn Road. The lane is on the western part of the Highsted village development, and the Illustrative Masterplan shows a substantial landscape buffer at this location. I judge that sensitivity of local residents at this location would be high. I agree with the Applicants' judgement for VP39 that at year 1 "*due to the scale and extent of the Highsted Village housing development, within the western parts of the Application Site, this will inevitably result in a noticeable and apparent change to views from this viewpoint, primarily due to the close proximity of the viewer(s) to the Application Site and extent of the development seen in the view (over 50% of the view will change).*"

6.85 I judge that even by year 15, despite the landscape buffer, the character and visual experience of views for users of a section of Primrose Lane would be changed to a more urban context albeit with a landscaped edge. For this reason, I judge that effects would remain Moderate Substantial and Adverse.

Receptor: Local residents on Ruins Barn Road (VP 24)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High	Very High to Medium	Major Substantial to Moderate/ Substantial Adverse	Very High to high	Major Substantial to Substantial Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
My Assessment	High	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial

Reasons for difference

6.86 There is no specific viewpoint to represent residents on Ruins Barn Road, with the nearest being VP24. Ruins Barn Road would run through the centre of the new residential development of Highsted West as shown on the Framework Plan for Access and Strategic Vehicle Routes [CD 8.25]. Residents would be contained within a green buffer however this would not take away from the fact they would be surrounded by development and the road would form an access route into development parcels with associated changes in character. I judge that effects would remain Substantial Adverse at year 15.

Receptor: Local residents at Highsted (west) (VP18,19) (VIS3)

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium	Very High to Low	Substantial to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Very High to Low	Substantial to Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate to Slight Adverse
My Assessment	High for local residents	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	Very high	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.87 I judge that sensitivity would be high, for local residents. My main difference is the Magnitude of change. Construction of the SRR would require demolition of Golden Wood. Parts of the road junction here has at least four carriageways and is elevated over the dry valley to maintain the flood routes (see my evidence para. 6.51 for the AHLV), with a sustainable movement corridor passing beneath the road junction (see also illustrations in my Appendix 3). I do not agree with the Applicants' indication of a wide range of Magnitude here which suggests that the construction of the country park at Low would compensate for the road infrastructure at construction. I do not agree that in year 1, the country park and associated planting would soften and screen, curtail and control views to such an extent that the Magnitude of change would be reduced. Similarly, in year 15 despite the establishment of mature planting along the SRR and the country park, the qualities of this view as an open dry valley landscape showing the articulated topography would be changed to one of a road with tree planting. The Visualisation (VIS 3) show complete tree screening at this point. The LVIA states that the planting would screen some parts of the development. I judge that effect at this would remain Substantial and Adverse for local residents in this part of Highsted.

Users of local roads (pedestrians and motorists)

6.88 I have not undertaken a detailed assessment for users of the local road network (pedestrians and motorists). I agree that sensitivity of these receptors would be Low. The roads are mostly rural running through open countryside, often with low hedges and long views of an open undulating arable landscape, occasionally more enclosed by commercial orchards. The exception to these rural roads is the view from the A2 (VP32). This is an important rural gap in the development between Teynham and Bapchild and offers a view of the open countryside up the lower dip slope.

6.89 I do not agree that the Magnitude of Change would reduce to such an extent that the views would not remain as Significant Adverse effect (above Moderate) by year 15 for the following receptors:

- A2 / London Road looking south (VP 32)
- Primrose Lane (VP 39)
- Bexon Lane (VP 29/30)
- Church Street Rodmersham (VP,14,15)
- Dully Road (VP 5,6,7,8)
- Highsted Road/Stockers Hill (VP 18 (VIS 3)

- Ruins Barn Road

Landscape and visual effects on the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL)

Receptor Kent Downs National Landscape

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Medium to High	Medium	Moderate/ Substantial Adverse to Moderate Adverse	Medium to Low	Moderate/ Substantial Adverse to Moderate Adverse	Low to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
My Assessment	Very High	High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Major Substantial Adverse	Medium	Substantial Adverse

6.90 I judge that the sensitivity of the nationally designated landscape to transport infrastructure, a new motorway junction, plus commercial development in the immediate setting is Very High. I agree with the Applicants' judgement of Major Substantial Adverse effects at construction and year 1. In my opinion these would remain Substantial and Significant at year 15. The information in the LVIA, including visualisations does not support the judgements that there would be no longstanding impacts on the KDNL. The LVIA shows that views to extensive areas of commercial and housing development would be available from viewpoints in the National Landscape at more than 2km distance. I do not agree with the Applicants' Assessment in Table 10.13.4.1(Ref 17) [CD 9.2.26] that the mitigation measures proposed would sufficiently moderate effects. I do not agree with the reasoning and rationale that the effects are localised, and that since the development only affects a small part of the National Landscape "*changes to a large part of the Kent Downs AONB, due to the development of the Application Site will be negligible*." In my opinion harm to the special qualities and character of the National Landscape occurs even if the effect is over a relatively small geographic area.

Visual receptors in the KDNL

6.91 The Visual Appraisal Plans provided in the LVIA, Figure 10.10 Visual Analysis Plan – Operation at year 15 with Visual Barriers [CD 9.2.27] illustrates the potential for views across the elevated ground on the dip slope of the Kent Downs National Landscape. The LVIA includes 6 viewpoints in the National Landscape representing a range of receptors

Receptor: Deans Hill - Pedestrians (VP 73) VIS7

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	Very High	Low to negligible	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Low to Negligible	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Negligible	Moderate/ Slight to Slight Adverse/ Negligible
My Assessment	Very High	High	Major Substantial Adverse	High	Major Substantial Adverse	Medium	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.92 The viewpoint is a considerable distance (2.1km) from the proposed development. The visuals provided at VIS 7 (reproduced below) show that even with such a long-distance view that residential and commercial development would be clearly perceptible over a wide area in the middle ground. In my opinion these would remain as Significant Adverse at year 15.

Extract 6.4: Year 15 Visualisation. ES, Vol2, Appendix 10.17 [CD 9.2.30]

Receptor: Users of rights of way on PRoW ZR 219 (VP 68) Kent Downs

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High to Very High	Very Low to Negligible	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Very Low to Negligible	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Negligible	Moderate Adverse to Negligible Adverse
My Assessment	Very High	Medium	Substantial Adverse	Medium	Substantial Adverse	Medium-Low	Moderate Substantial Adverse

Reasons for difference

6.93 VP 68 shows ZR 219 in its rural context across an arable field with medium distance views to the ridge with Kingsdown Church and Kingsdown Wood. It is just under 3km from the application site. I agree with the Significant Adverse effect identified at construction and year 1. At year 15 the LVIA states that "*The planting once established will attain a height up to about 10m or more which will screen some parts of the built development whilst controlling other views*." It states that upper parts of houses may be visible. This does not give me certainty that mitigation would be sufficient

to reduce effects to not Significant by year 15. I judge that effect would remain Moderate Substantial Adverse at year 1 and Moderate Substantial adverse at year 15.

Receptor: Right of Way ZR184 (VP54 and VP55) representing pedestrians, walkers, local residents

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High to Very high	Very Low to Negligible	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Very Low to Negligible	Moderate/ Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Negligible	Moderate Adverse to Negligible Adverse
My Assessment	Very High	Medium	Substantial Adverse	Medium	Substantial Adverse	Medium – Low	Moderate Substantial Adverse

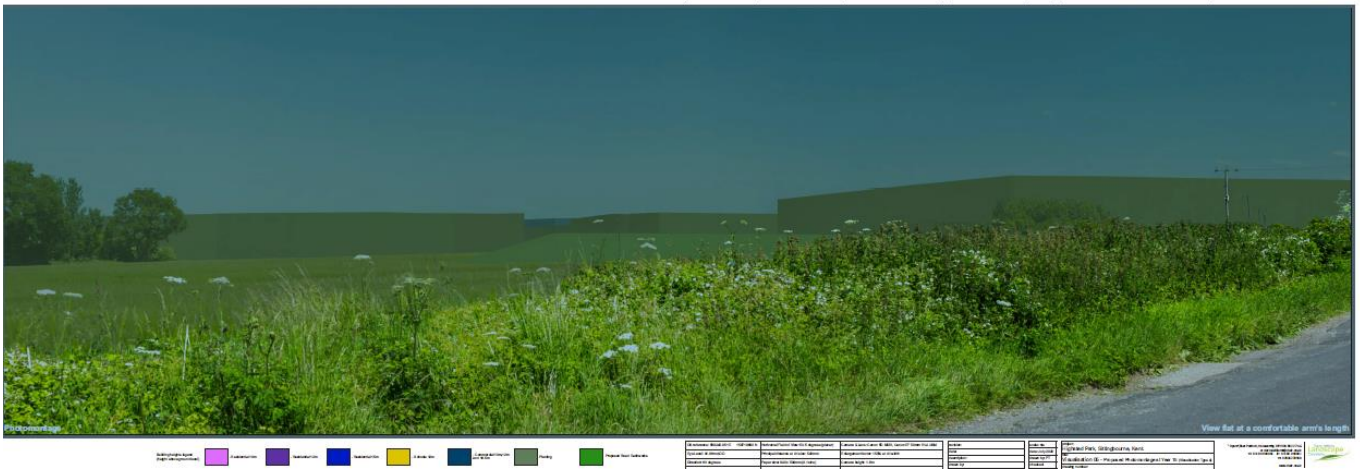
Reasons for difference

6.94 VP54 on footpath ZR184 is representative of medium to long distance view within the KDNL, and I agree with the sensitivity as High to Very High. Reference to the Applicants' ZTV indicates that the upper storeys and rooftop of new buildings would be visible. The LVIA draws an unusual conclusion that "*development closest to the viewer will screen development/dwellings within the remaining south western parts of the Highsted Village development*". I agree with the conclusions for Construction and year 1. Given that the LVIA states that planting once established would screen *'some parts'* of the development, I differ on the Magnitude at year 15 and conclude that effects would remain Moderate/Substantial Adverse and Significant. I draw the same conclusions for VP55.

Bexon Lane (VP 29 (VIS 5), VP 30) for pedestrians, walkers, cyclists, local residents

		Construction		Operation (year 1)		Residual (year 15)	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**	Magnitude	**Effect**
Applicants (ES)	High (Very High VP30)	Very High to High	Major Substantial to Moderate Substantial Adverse (VP29) Major Substantial Adverse (VP30)	High to Medium	Substantial to Moderate Adverse (VP29) Substantial to Moderate Substantial Adverse (VP30)	Medium to Low	Moderate to Moderate/ slight Adverse (VP29) Moderate Substantial to Substantial Adverse (VP30)
My Assessment	Very High	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse	Very High	Major Substantial Adverse

Extract 6.5: Year 15 Visualisation. ES, Vol2, Appendix 10.17 [CD 9.2.30]



Reasons for difference

6.95 These are the two viewpoints in the National Landscape in closest proximity to the development on Bexon Lane immediately adjacent to the new SRR motorway junction. The views represent pedestrians, cyclists, equestrian users, local residents, visitors and motorists. In my opinion sensitivity is Very High for all visual receptors except motorists. I agree with the conclusions of the

LVIA for VP 29 and 30 that there would be Major Substantial effects at construction, and I judge that these would remain Major Substantial at year 1 and year 15 for all users (except motorists). There is no rationale for a reduction in effect at VP29 at year 15 such that it is not Significant, given the scale and proximity of the junction infrastructure. The LVIA rationale states that "*The planting once established will attain a height of about 10m or more which will screen some parts of the built development whilst controlling other views*". This statement indicates that the junction and M2 overbridge would not be fully screened at this location. In my experience the amount of planting would also need to be controlled by requirements for visibility on junction slip roads, so a precautionary approach should be taken in making judgements.

6.96 VP30 is the only receptor for the whole of the Southern scheme where the Applicants record Significant effects at year 15. The Applicants state in the LVIA (VP 30) [CD 9.2.6] that "*The landscape proposals would also provide the opportunity to enhance the southern edge of the Application Site including parts of the Kent Downs AONB in the longer term"*. In my opinion, this statement is implausible, and I judge that effects would remain as Major Substantial and Adverse.

ZR185 Right of Way (VP31)

6.97 This right of way connects into the KDNL, running on a footbridge across the M2 and then parallel with Bexon Lane. The footbridge and route within the KDNL would be replaced by the new M2 junction infrastructure. The assessment records Major Substantial Adverse effect at construction due to a requirement for closure and diversion of the footpath. Effects at year 1 and year 15 are recorded as N/A, as users would be able to use alternative routes further away from the junction. This does not recognise the effects on this right of way and the alternative routes are not clear in the Illustrative Masterplan, although the Framework Plan for Pedestrian and Cycle Routes (CD 8.28] indicates a new motorway footbridge to the east.

Summary and conclusions for the Southern site

6.98 In my opinion and based on my judgements above, the proposed scheme for the Southern site would have Significant Adverse effects at construction, year 1 and continuing into 15 for a wide range of landscape and visual receptors. This is an appropriate finding for a development of this size and scale which includes locally and nationally valued landscapes. The reasons for my differences include an under estimation of Sensitivity for some receptors but more importantly an underestimation of the Magnitude of Change, including an over ambitious interpretation of the benefits and effects of screening/vegetation in the Illustrative Masterplan [CD 8.32]. The approach

often appears to be assessing subsequent years against a baseline of the development already being present, rather than the actual landscape or visual receptor baseline, which is not the method advocated in GLVIA3 [CD 18.41]. The reduction in Magnitude of change because receptors would be screened from most of the proposed development by the new development in the foreground is also an inappropriate interpretation of the principles of LVIA. Other issues include the overemphasis on localised effects, and the identification of wide range of Magnitude of effects which makes it difficult to interpret the findings. I have shown, in my evidence above, that assessment does not always take a realistic view of the scheme as presented for example in the engineering, transport or flood risk assessments. The visual assessment generally concentrates on a static interpretation of the change in view from the assessed viewpoint but does not recognise the kinetic visual experience of moving along a right of way with a sequence of views of development or changes in experience with views of different parts of the development or with a currently rural right of way being routed, with an urban area or across major roads.

Chapter 7
Landscape Strategy and Mitigation

7.1 This chapter sets out my opinion on the Landscape Strategy and designed mitigation measure as set out in the Composite Illustrative Masterplans [CD 2.3 and CD 8.30]. I recognise that this is an outline application and that the landscape masterplan is illustrative. However, this plan is relied on by the Applicants to inform judgements in the LVIA, and particularly the role of landscape buffers in screening views of development to the extent that effects are not Significant by year 15. An understanding of the proposed landscape scheme is therefore an important part of the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

7.2 For the Northern scheme reference is made in the LVIA, para 10.232 [CD 3.1]) to the Landscape Masterplan - evolved though the establishment of green grid (existing and proposed vegetation / landscape character areas / attractive green environment / wildlife connectivity), blue grid (proposed water bodies / sustainable drainage) and grey grid (existing and proposed network of paths, cycle routes and roads and connectivity) strategies which set out the framework of elements underpinning the Landscape and Open Space Strategy. The Landscape and Open Space Strategy is not included as part of the planning application.

7.3 For the Southern scheme the Landscape Concept Masterplan is shown in Appendix 10.14 [CD 9.2.7]. This is described in para 10.257 in the LVIA [CD 9.1] as "*a landscape-led, holistic, and considered Landscape Masterplan covering the Application Site*".

7.4 I assess the scheme in relation to Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework, 2023 [CD 18.36], and I also review to site in relation to the landscape-led objectives for the Thames Gateway.

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

7.5 The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework was launched in February 2023, a commitment made within the 25 Year Environment Plan. The tool provides a mechanism to support both local authorities and developers to deliver well planned, designed and maintained GI as part of a 'landscape-led' approach. Comprised of GI Mapping, Principles, Headline Standards, Design Guide and Process Journeys, the Natural England GI Framework is intended to guide decision makers, policy makers and developers into delivering successful and good quality GI.

7.6 The ‘GI Principles Wheel’ forms a component of the Natural England GI Framework, outlining 15 principles to promote the successful delivery of GI. These 15 principles are comprised of the following:

- Five ‘Benefits of GI’.
- Five ‘Descriptive Principles’; and
- Five ‘Process Principles’.

7.7 The five ‘Descriptive Principles’ (What Good GI Looks Like) are used in Table 7.1, below, to structure this critique to establish whether the Illustrative Masterplans adhere to best-practice guidance for green infrastructure.

7.8 I set my critique below under each principle of the guidance. The high-level points are:

- A missed opportunity to design the scheme with a ‘landscape-led’ approach. Parkland and green infrastructure for both schemes are centred on the relief roads.
- Lack of a coherent strategy for the siting of semi-natural greenspace – this provision is currently concentrated at the fringes of the schemes, with the aim of softening / screening the development boundary. GI provision is often mitigatory in function, with the aim of providing a landscape buffer to proposed road carriageways or at the red line boundary.
- A scheme is designed in isolation and appears disconnected from wider GI, landscape and ecological networks, with limited connectivity for both people and wildlife within the development and between GI assets.
- An opportunity has been missed to utilise a bold landscape framework to structure opportunities for active travel. Active travel corridors run parallel on the same alignment as the relief roads and main vehicular corridors.
- The scheme which is not well related to its landscape context.

Table 7.1 Highsted Northern and Southern Scheme – Green Infrastructure Critique

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework – 'What' Principles – what GI should look like	Assessment narrative
'What' Principle 1: Multi-functional: GI delivers multiple functions and benefits	■ The Illustrative Masterplan does not indicate existing green infrastructure (including trees to be retained) on the sites or ecological networks adjacent to and beyond the red line boundary. The schemes should maximise opportunities to connect or strengthen links to the existing landscape framework. ■ The Illustrative Masterplan highlights a missed opportunity to design the scheme with a 'landscape-led' approach as residential areas are not structured around the parkland and wider green infrastructure framework. This is evident for the northern scheme where parkland at Teynham West is centred on the route of the Northern Relief Road, rather than in close proximity to residential development plots which would deliver the greatest benefits for the community. Similarly, a large component of the landscape framework for the Southern scheme borders the Southern Relief Road, separating the residential land use at Highsted Village and Oakwood Village. Green infrastructure along a relief road is unlikely to deliver optimum benefits for people or wildlife. ■ The Design and Access Statement Addendum indicates the provision of swales and water attenuation features, as well the integration of overland flows as part of a connected green and blue infrastructure design solution within the site. However, these features primarily append on to development plots and vehicular corridors, rather than forming integral components of a wider approach to sustainable drainage. It is also not clear if the schemes have considered catchment scale linkages to blue infrastructure features beyond the red line boundary. The need for extensive engineering works at two

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework – 'What' Principles – what GI should look like	Assessment narrative
	locations to allow the SRR to maintain flow routes in dry valleys is an illustration. ■ Whilst the construction of the Northern Relief Road would help alleviate air pollution in Sittingbourne, the Illustrative Masterplan does not identify means to mitigate air and noise pollution from vehicular traffic on this route and the Primary and Secondary Development Access Roads. Indeed, the scheme proposes that pedestrians and cyclists travel beside these vehicular routes, which would not be conducive to healthy air quality for users of these active travel networks.
'What' Principle 2: Varied: GI includes a mix of types and sizes that can provide a range of functions and benefits to address specific issues and needs	■ The Illustrative Masterplans incorporate a mixture of parkland, semi-natural greenspace, amenity greenspace and highway greenspace. Play provision is also accommodated within both schemes. However, greenspace provision is not equally distributed across the sites. It is also noted that some areas of GI are mitigatory in function, with the aim of providing a landscape buffer to proposed road carriageways, locations not conducive for either people or wildlife. ■ The Illustrative Masterplan lacks a coherent strategy for the siting of semi-natural greenspace – this provision is currently concentrated at the fringes of the schemes, with the aim of softening / screening the development boundary. Semi-natural vegetation within the Northern scheme is limited in scale and primarily associated with linear strips to accommodate existing field boundaries or boundary screening. Similarly, the siting of semi-natural vegetation for the Southern Scheme appears to be largely focussed at the red line boundary

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework – 'What' Principles – what GI should look like	Assessment narrative
	which acts as a landscape buffer between residential or commercial plots.
'What' Principle 3: Connected: GI connects as a living network for people and nature at all cales, connecting provision of GI with those who need its benefits	■ Areas of existing local ecological networks and sites designated for nature conservation beyond the boundary of the sites have not been identified on the Illustrative Masterplans. This includes the potential for stepping-stone linkages to existing ecological features. It is also not clear from the Illustrative Masterplans how the schemes align with plans for nature recovery and wider habitat networks. ■ Whilst existing features (such as ancient woodland and traditional orchards) have been largely (but not completely) retained as part of the proposals, these do not appear to have been integrated into a cohesive GI network, instead functioning as isolated islands separated from one another by built form and road carriageways. ■ Some existing landscape features (hedgerows and shelter belts) have been incorporated into the schemes, influencing the organisation of residential development plots (particularly on the Northern Scheme, albeit largely retained rather than enhanced as part of a wider landscape framework or creation of new sense of place for the development. ■ The Southern scheme shows limited connectivity between existing green infrastructure features on site and wider habitat networks. This is emphasised by the lack of buffer and strategic GI corridor connecting Highsted Wood to Cromer's Wood. ■ The route of the Southern Relief Road divides the proposed nature park and existing area of ancient woodland at Highsted Village East.

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework – 'What' Principles – what GI should look like	Assessment narrative
	The siting of the carriageway at this location does not maximise the potential for effective linkages between habitats and wildlife networks. ■ The Draft Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) maps the Tonge Conservation Area and surrounding area as an Area that Could become of Importance to Biodiversity (ACIB). This is the only area within Highsted Park (North) included within the Draft LNRS. The scheme retains and preserves existing GI at this location but does not propose green infrastructure features to promote landscape connectivity.
'What' Principle 4: Accessible: GI creates green, liveable places where everyone has access to good quality green and blue spaces, routes and features	■ The Northern and Southern Relief Roads currently form the 'spines' of the site, with active travel corridors running parallel on the same alignment. An opportunity has been missed to utilise a bold landscape framework to structure the scheme, rather than vehicular corridors. ■ The scheme incorporates active travel routes. However, these corridors are appended onto the Northern and Southern Relief Roads, as opposed to being situated within dedicated greenways. ■ Extension of the Sustainable Movement Corridor on the Northern scheme into the residential development plots would help promote low or zero carbon behaviours. ■ The network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) demonstrates some connectivity to the wider environment. However, a number of these routes appear to terminate abruptly, reducing connectivity, or are shown to cross the NRR or SRR, or bridges, along slip roads, or at grade crossing requiring 'dogleg diversions'. For many rights of way, the means of crossing the roads are not indicated.

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework – 'What' Principles – what GI should look like	Assessment narrative
	■ Existing rights of way are routed through development as linear greenways, but few examples are given of new rights of way being created for the expanded population, missing links in the network plugged, or aspirations met for upgrading of footpaths. ■ The Northern Greenway does not connect any community assets such as the local centres.
'What' Principle 5: Responds to local character: GI should respond to an area's character	■ The local landscape assessment baseline provides information of what is valued and important about the area. It is not clear how or if this information has been used to inform the Landscape Masterplan. ■ References such as maintaining development parcels in the existing landscape structure – e.g. large arable fields are not an innovative or forward-thinking approach to design of places. ■ The emphasis on creating screening belts along roads, footpaths and the periphery of development, may provide positive screening but the contrary blocking of open views should also be considered. Ther is an over emphasis on screening of development, as opposed to creation of places which are visually attractive. ■ Many linear planting belts appear to be solely designed to screen housing belts rather than reflect their landscape context. These are likely to appear as incongruous features. Planting could reflect the context such as sinuous hangar woodlands on the crest of dry valleys.

Thames Gateway Vision

7.9 The Applicants' Statement of Case [CD 33.1] makes a case for the scheme based on its strategic location in the Thames Gateway. Map 1 and Map 2 shows the strategic constraints for Thames Gateway and Swale, respectively. The text states *that 'Highsted Park is one of the few sustainably located areas where growth can happen within KTG (Kent Thames Gateway) at a strategic scale without significant impacts on those high-level statutory and policy designations'* A closer review of the maps indicates that there are substantial areas of 'white' land without policy designations across the Gateway and in Swale – indeed much of the area between the Thames Estuary and the National landscape – this particular site location is not unique or exceptional. Para 1.26. of the Statement of Case indicates that the development would bring local, regional and national benefits "*whilst not causing harms to the natural and historic environment beyond those that would inevitably arise from development at this scale and provides carefully planned enhancements wherever possible*". I disagree with this conclusion – the extensive and linear nature of the proposed scheme results in significant harm to landscape and visual resources across a wide area involving a range of landscape types and visual receptors. I cover this further in the following section which comments on compliance with planning policy.

7.10 Since its inception there has been an emphasis on a landscape-first approach to the Thames Gateway.

- The Thames Gateway - Core Vision, 2009 (Terry Farrell) [CD 16.8] states (pg.14) that the Core Vision goals is to build *'A high quality, high value Parklands landscape'*.
- The Thames Gateway Parkland Vision, 2008 [CD 16.9] (pg.8) is to *'Regenerate and develop urban and rural open spaces which are connected together to create an accessible and coherent landscape'.*
- The Thames gateway – where next? 2009 [16.10] notes that the Gateway should be based on (pg.7) *'landscape and environmental improvement as the first step in attracting investment and improving the quality of life'*.
- Creating sustainable communities: Greening the Gateway [CD 15.65] the core vision of the document is around the Thames Gateway being a world class model of sustainable development, with the living landscape at its heart (pg.5) *"Greening the Gateway calls for the landscape to be regarded as the functional green infrastructure which is needed to create a positive sense of place, provide environmental protection for local communities and enhance the quality of life of those who live and work here*".

Summary

7.11 In my opinion, the proposed landscape scheme is not an accessible and coherent landscape; it is a linear development along a main road corridor, which severs coherence and accessibility. It does not put landscape and environmental improvement as the first step. The scheme shown on the Illustrated masterplan does not create a multi-functional landscape, or represent well planned, designed and maintained GI as part of a ‘landscape-led’ approach, as promoted by Natural England.

7.12 Landscaping is a reserved matter in these planning applications. There is an important opportunity to develop a better and more coherent scheme, with improved content meeting Natural England's GI Principles. Strong conditions for the landscape are required.

7.13 Given that the masterplan is outline and illustrative, a degree of caution is also required in interpreting the benefits of landscape planting for screening and softening development to the extent such that landscape and visual effects reported in the LVIAs for the Proposed Developments are largely reduced to being not Significant by year 15.

Chapter 8
Key Landscape and Visual Issues of the Combined Schemes

8.1 This chapter focusses on the significant residual (year 15) operational landscape and visual effects of the combined scheme of relevance to this inquiry.

8.2 The effects at construction and year 1 are shown in chapters 5 and 6 of my evidence are also an important part of the planning balance. The scale of the scheme and the longevity of construction period means that I judge that effects will be greater and significant for many landscape and visual receptors at construction and year 1.

8.3 In this chapter I also comment on compliance with planning policy.

Effects on landscape receptors

8.4 Chapters 5 and 6 of my evidence show my differences in judgement to the Applicant's LVIAs. This shows that the Applicant's judgement of landscape effects is consistently lower than my judgements, primarily but not exclusively, due to an underestimation of the Magnitude of change and an ambitious interpretation of the effects and benefits of landscape screening. I draw out my main conclusions below.

Effect on valued landscapes (National and Local)

8.5 My evidence sets out my judgements on effects on the KDNL. I conclude that there would be a substantial Adverse and significant residual effect on landscape, character and qualities. I do not agree that the maturation of planting would be sufficient to reduce the effects of the motorway junction and overbridges, plus significant commercial and residential development in the setting which would be visually prominent in views from the Kent Downs at some distance. I do not agree with the reasoning and rationale that the effects are localised, and that since the development only affects a small part of the KDNL "*changes to a large part of the Kent Downs AONB, due to the development of the Application Site will be negligible*." In my opinion harm to the special qualities and character of the National Landscape occurs even if the effect is over a relatively small geographic area.

8.6 I draw a similar conclusion for the locally designated (Rodmersham, Milstead and Highsted dry valleys) AHLV Kent level. The AHLV will be crossed by the route of the SRR raised up over the

dry valley with associated junctions and slip roads. The road continues, cutting into the topography or on embankment along the western valley crest, toward Sittingbourne. I do not agree that the effects of planting would result in effects at year 15 being only negligible to slight Adverse. In my opinion the effects would be substantial to moderate substantial Adverse and would therefore be a residual significant effect. I do not agree with the Applicant's assertion that large parts of the AHLV would be unaffected. An AHLV is designated as a whole and loss or negative changes to parts would mean it would be unlikely that remaining parts would be designated.

8.7 For the nationally and locally designated valued landscapes, the proposals for the Southern scheme are contrary to NPPF [CD16.1] para.187(a) which refers to *"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes"*. It also conflicts with the aim Swale BC Adopted Local Plan policy DM24 Conserving and Enhancing Valued Landscapes (Part A). [CD 13.1]. My colleague, Ms Miller concludes in more detail on the harmful effect on the KDNL in relation to NPPF para. 189-190.

Effects on landscape character

8.8 My assessment concludes that the combined scheme would have significant residual effects on four Borough Level landscape character areas and one landscape character area in the KDNL. I do not agree with the Applicant that there would be no significant residual effects on landscape character. Landscape character, attributes and qualities would be permanently changed for:

- LCA 29 Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands
- LCA 31 Teynham Fruit Belt
- LCA 40 Rodmersham and Milstead Dry Valley
- LCA 42 Tunstall Farmlands and LCA Mid Kent Downs – Bicknor (KDNL)

8.9 For the northern scheme alone, development in LCA 29 is relatively minor and not significant. However, when considered in combination with the southern scheme – would result in development extending up from north of the A2 over a significant part of the character area forming a continuous developed area from Teynham encompassing the new settlement of Teynham West and Oakwood village either side of the A2, plus the SRR and associated junctions.

8.10 The two schemes in combination would result in a continuous urban area, with major new roads r extending from the fruit belt at the edge of the Thames Estuary up and into the Kent Downs. This

creates an unusual linear pattern of development which is not consistent with the settlement pattern and character in Swale.

8.11 The Applicant's LVIA focuses on the fact that the change would be localised to the vicinity of the Application site within each LCA and would be assimilated by green infrastructure, mainly in the form of linear planting belts. It emphasises the role of planting in screening and control views at year 15, to the extent that it would not register in views by year 15. However, this type of wording implies that the development is not located within the character area and can be screened from it. In my opinion, and as shown in the Applicants LVIA planting will not be able to screen all views, and I judge that linear planting belts will in itself be incongruous and have Adverse effects on character. The Applicant's reasoning that since only a small geographic area would be affected it is not significant is flawed.

8.12 The effects on five landscape character areas conflicts with NPPF Conserving and enhancing the natural environment para. 187 (b) which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (inter alia) … "*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*". It also conflicts with NPPF para 135 in Achieving well-designed places.

8.13 With reference to SBC Adopted Local Plan policy, the 7 November 2024 Swale Borough Council Committee report [CD 6.1] conclude that the proposals conflict with DM24 Conserving and Enhancing Valued Landscapes in relation to non-designated landscapes (Part B) and for all landscapes (Part C). The reports conclude that the proposals conflict with Strategic Policies: ST1 Delivering sustainable development which seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment by protecting or enhancing the intrinsic character, beauty and tranquillity of the countryside, and part 5 of ST3 Swale Settlement Strategy which highlights (outside built-up areas) the importance of protecting enhancing the intrinsic value, landscape setting, tranquillity and beauty of the countryside. Furthermore, it conflicts with DM14 which relates to general development criteria and requires development to reflect the positive characteristics and features of the site and locality, conserve and enhance the natural and/or built environments.

8.14 The strategic **Thames Gateway initiative** has informed the policies in Local Plan (e.g. para. 4.3.2) and notably the settlement strategy and the vision (para. 3.07). The proposed development area of the Northern and Southern schemes lies within the strategy area for higher growth. However, the key diagram in the Local Plan also clearly shows the KDNL, the AHLV and a strategic green corridor (CP7) and the area for protection of wider countryside under policy ST3

within the growth area. The key requirement is for development to be sustainable located. The whole of the Thames Gateway is not implied to be unconstrained or undesignated 'white' land.

Effects on Green Infrastructure

8.15 In chapter 7 of my evidence, I review the landscape strategy as shown on the Illustrative Master Plan [CD 2.3 and CD 8.30] against Natural England's The Natural England GI Framework [CD 18.36]. The outline landscape scheme is used to justify the low level of residual significant effects recorded in the LVIA. I conclude that the proposals do not represent good practice for green infrastructure and do not represent a landscape-led scheme. The proposal therefor conflicts with the NPPF Achieving well-designed places (para.135) and Swale BC Adopted Local Plan policy CP7 – providing for green infrastructure, part 8. More specifically, the proposed development for the Southern scheme does not conserve the Strategic Green Corridor (CP7) shown on the key diagram. The transport infrastructure of the SRR would be the dominant feature of much of this corridor. I recognise that landscaping is a reserved matter, and this should be considered in reviewing the judgements in the LVIA. In my opinion, there is an opportunity to develop an improved landscape scheme.

Rural Lanes

8.16 My assessment concludes that the combined scheme would have significant Adverse residual effects on the character and amenity of 6 Rural Lanes (Hempstead Lane, Ruin Barns Road, Church Street, Dully Road, Highsted Road and Highsted Valley). I do not agree with the Applicant that effects will be moderated by mitigation measures. It is an ambitious assertation that planting will create a ‘sylvan’ character to the roads, which will be mostly routed through development areas, and often contain multiple primary and secondary access routes into development or include major transport infrastructure in the form of new junctions.

8.17 The development would conflict with SBC Adopted Local Plan Policy DM26 [CD13.1] in relation to harm to the character, landscape, and amenity importance of Rural Lanes.

Woodland, trees and hedges

8.18 The southern scheme will involve loss of one TPO tree and an area of ancient woodland at Highsted Wood to accommodate the SRR. The LVIA rationale [CD 9.2.26] states that the Proposed Development will have unavoidable impacts of trees, wooded areas and hedgerows and would remove 13No. category ‘A’ trees, 19No. category B trees, 3No. category B groups and parts of 19No, category B groups, 18No. category C trees, 11No. category C groups and parts of

5No. category B groups and 7No. category C hedgerows and parts of 14No. hedgerows and 13No.

8.19 The Arboricultural Impact Assessment for the Northern development summarised in para. 10.280 of the LVIA [CD 3.1] summarises the tree losses anticipated under the proposals, which include nineteen individual trees, fourteen groups of trees, twelve hedges and one parcel of commercial orchard. In addition, the partial removal of six groups of trees, five hedgerows and one small section of woodland will be necessary. There are no protected or ancient trees.

8.20 The LVIAs for both developments identify the beneficial effects of the introduction of new planting by year 15, and I agree that the landscape will have more trees which would be under management. The Southern scheme does not comply with the objectives of SBC Adopted Local Plan Policy DM29 [CD 13.1] which relates to avoiding loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland, old orchards or hedges, and loss of trees that make an important contribution to the amenity, historic, landscape value of the site or surrounding area.

Effects on the visual amenity of surrounding receptors

8.21 Chapters 5 and 6 of my evidence show my differences in judgement to the Applicant's LVIAs. This illustrates that the Applicant's judgements of visual impact are consistently lower than my judgements. This is as a result of an underestimation of the sensitivity of some visual receptors, relying on assessment and individual viewpoints rather than collectively (for example along a right of way) and underestimates of magnitude of change relying on an ambitious interpretation of the benefits of landscape screening by year 15. I draw out my main conclusions below.

People using rights of way (recreational receptors)

8.22 My evidence shows that the combined schemes will affect people using numerous rights of way in and around the sites, in the region of 13 km (see Figure 4 in my Proof Appendix 2). The scale of the Proposed Development means that visual receptors will not just experience the change in view from the specific viewpoint assessed in the LVIA but will result in a change to the entire visual experience for people as they access and use rights of way on and around the sites. This is particularly the case for the large number of rights of way that are diverted or required to cross development or the proposed relief roads (SRR and NRR), including the examples shown in my evidence, such as stopping up, diversion along a junction slip, or a dogleg along the main road to reach an at grade crossing point. These effects are rarely taken into account in the LVIA judgements. The rights of way network is largely retained in its present form, with limited example

new networks or connections being created to serve the new population of Teynham West, Highsted and Oakwood villages (although I recognise that this is not part of the visual effect). The existing rural rights of way will form linear greenways or run alongside access roads through the new development areas. At year 15 the LVIAs describe the maturing of landscaping along footpaths that will screen some parts of the development. This is described as a beneficial change from year 1 but does not sufficiently express the change from the open rural baseline with often panoramic countryside views to one that is enclosed and channelled through development, albeit with associated vegetation. Some examples, include reference to long views being maintained within development along the access roads – but while arguable, 'long', this would be an entirely different type of view.

8.23 The combined effects of the schemes have long term residual significant effects on people using rights of way in and around the site. It does not comply with SBC Local plan CP7 providing for green infrastructure. Changes in views for people on rights of way experiencing views focussed on the landscape will also not comply with the objectives of Local Plan Policies [CD1 3.1]: ST1, ST3, ST5, DM14, DM24 in relation to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the intrinsic value, landscape setting, tranquillity and beauty of the countryside.

Local residents

8.24 My evidence shows that the combined scheme would have significant residual effect on local residents at, Frognal lane, along parts of the A2, Dully Road, Doves Croft, Primrose Lane, Highsted/Stockers Hill, Ruins Barn Road, Bexon Lane, parts of Bapchild. The Applicant's LVIA for the Southern Scheme only identifies one long term significant residual effects for local residents at Bexon Lane who will be within metres of the proposed M2 junction and overbridge. The judgement of no significant effects for other local residents who will be directly affected by the scheme, is improbable and an unusual conclusion for a development of this size and scale. For the Northern scheme, the Applicant identifies significant effects for some residents on the A2 and at Frognal Lane, and Frognal Farm. I agree with this assessment, although I note that the combined scheme involving the NRR and SRR interchange at the A2 will have greater effects for residents along the A2.

8.25 The Applicant's LVIA for the Southern Scheme is over optimistic on the benefits of maturing vegetation at year 15 to screen views for local residents. It does not take account of the fact that linear screening belts of vegetation could have adverse effects by blocking existing long countryside views, or the limitation on planting for example at road junctions, primary and

secondary access where views into the development will remain for residents. Some local residents will be wholly subsumed within development areas as at Dully Road, other as at Rodmersham Church Street will have development filling the foreground, despite screening.

Summary

8.26 The combined effects of the Northern and Southern development would result in a continuous urban area, with major new roads extending from the fruit belt landscape at the edge of the Thames Estuary up and into the Kent Downs. It creates an unusual linear pattern of development from Teynham and Bapchild on the A2 and extending some 4-5km up the dip slope to the M2, with two major new settlements at Oakwood and Highsted connected by the SRR. This is not consistent with the settlement pattern and character in Swale, filling in the gaps and sense of separation between settlements and being close to but entirely unrelated to Sittingbourne. It would have significant Adverse residual effects on landscape designations at the national and local level, landscape character, rural lanes, trees and woodland. It would have significant Adverse residual effects on users of many PRoW, local residents along the roads and villages and people on local roads. The scheme conflicts with polices in the NPPF [CD 16.1]and the SBC Adopted Local Plan [CD13.1].

Chapter 9
Summary and conclusions

9.1 My evidence addresses the impacts of the proposed developments on landscape character and visual amenity. I provide the Inquiry (and the Secretary of State) with an assessment of the key landscape and visual effects of the proposal. My evidence shows that the effects on landscape and visual amenity of each scheme individually and in combination is greater than judged by the Applicant. This will then inform those charged with weighing the planning balance.

9.2 I provide a summary of my findings on the landscape and visual effects of proposed development on the Northern and Southern sites. I draw an overall conclusion on combined effects.

Northern Site

Baseline

9.3 The Northern Site is located on the shallow sloping topography at the base of the north downs dip slope where it meets the coastal marshes to the north. It is primarily under arable and commercial orchards and is cut east west by the routes of the A2 and railway line. Topography is variable including a more gently rolling area of chalk to the west of Teynham. An area of higher scenic quality is identified around Tonge Mill.

9.4 **Landscape:** The Landscape Character Area (LCA) of most interest for this development is LCA 31: Teynham Fruit Belt [CD18.27]. The baseline in the LVIA includes smaller landscape sensitivity units, the most relevant ones for this inquiry being SE1 and TM2. In SE1 the area around Tonge, south of the railway, is identified as being of higher sensitivity due to its smaller scale, higher scenic quality, and greater prevalence of valued historic and natural features. Other landscape receptors are three Rural Lanes, as recognised in the Local Plan, and the Public Rights of Way (PRoW). In this summary, I deal with PRoW in terms of the people (visual receptors) using them. I provide a fuller assessment in the main text of my proof.

9.5 **Views and visual receptors:** The key visual receptors can be summarised as:

- Local residents living on adjacent network of road and lanes.

- People walking on the public rights of way and recreational receptors at Tonge Country Park within or close to the site (Public footpaths ZR189, ZR190, ZR191, ZR192, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256 and ZR257).

Significant landscape and visual effects

9.6 I agree with the Applicants that effects on the following receptors would remain Significant and Adverse in year 15:

- Landscape pattern, land use, land cover and management of the Site.
- Landscape sensitivity unit TM2 Teynham.
- Users of PRoW ZR192, ZR195, ZR256 (although I judge a greater level of effect for these rights of way).
- Residents on Frognal Lane.
- Residents on the A2; and

9.7 It is my opinion that effects would also remain Significant and Adverse in year 15 for the following landscape receptors:

- Landscape features of the Site (hedgerows, trees and woodland, grassland, ponds and watercourses, agricultural land).
- LCA 31: Teynham Fruit Belt; and
- Landscape sensitivity unit SE1.

9.8 I judge that effects would remain Significant Adverse at year 15 for Hempstead Lane (Rural Lane) which would be crossed by the Northern Relief Road (NRR), with effects on other Rural Lanes reducing to Minor Adverse by year 15.

9.9 I identify Significant effects for visual receptors on all PRoWs on the site, namely: ZR189, ZR190, ZR191, ZR192, ZR193, ZR195, ZR256, ZR257 and including visitors accessing Tonge Country Park. Rights of way would be affected by the NRR on the western part of the site or routed through housing development at Teynham West to the east.

9.10 The reason for these differences in professional judgement is due to an underestimation of sensitivity, particularly for users of the PRoW. It is also due to an underestimation of the magnitude of change from the construction and operation of the NRR, particularly where it passes through the most sensitive parts of the landscape around Tonge Mill and the associated mill

stream. The Illustrative Masterplan includes proposals for planting as part of the parkland or natural greenspace (Tonge County Park), and I agree that this landscape infrastructure would have a beneficial effect over time, albeit it would be severed by the NRR. However, I do not agree that this would be sufficient to render effects as not Significant by year 15 for the key landscape and visual receptors at LCA and local site level.

Southern Site

Baseline

9.11 The Southern Site is located on the chalk dip slope of the North Downs, as it descends towards the fruit belt marshes to the north. It is a gently undulating to rolling landscape cut by dry valleys. It has a strong rural character with small villages, and isolated farms and houses, and, in places, a strong sense of remoteness.

9.12 **Landscape:** The Proposed Development extends into the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL), with the M2 junction proposed within the KDNL boundary south of the M2. The land north of the M2 has visual and landscape continuity with the KDNL as part of the dip slope, and integrity as part of its setting. The Southern Relief Road (SRR) cuts across the Rodmersham, Milstead and Highsted dry valleys Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV). This local landscape value designation covers the distinctive dry chalk valleys which extend north of the National Landscape.

9.13 The Proposed Development crosses three Swale Borough LCAs [CD 18.27]: LCA 29: Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands, LCA 40: Rodmersham and Milstead Dry Valleys and LCA 42 Tunstall Farmlands. It is also within the Mid Kent Downs - Bicknor LCA identified in the LCA for the KDNL [CD18.19]. There are five roads identified as Rural Lanes in the Local Plan within the Site.

9.14 **Visual:** The key visual receptors of most concern to the LPA are:

- People using local rights of way within and close to the site (Public footpaths ZR147, ZR150, ZR156, ZR157, ZR158, ZR159, ZR194, ZR196, ZR197, ZR199, ZR203, ZR208, ZR209, ZU30 and ZR682).
- People using local rights of way and local roads within the KDNL.
- Local residents on Dully Road, Church Street Rodmersham, Doves Croft, Highsted Road/Stockers Hill, Ruins Barn Road, Bexon Lane and in the west of Highsted village.

- People using local roads within and close to the site, both as pedestrians and motorists (the A2 London Road, Primrose Lane, Church Street Rodmersham, Dully Lane, Highsted Road/Stockers Hill and Deans Hill).

9.15 In my evidence I focus on selected visual receptors to illustrate the extent of Significant Adverse effects. I note that there are further receptors including Rights of Way that are crossed by the SRR that would also be adversely impacted by the development.

Significant landscape and visual effects

9.16 I agree with the Applicants that there would be long term and Significant effects for visual receptors (pedestrian/walkers/local residents) at Bexon Lane (VP 30), within the KDNL, at the closest point (within 10m) of the proposed M2 junction and overbridge. In my evidence I show that the Southern Site Proposed Development would have Significant Adverse effects at construction, year 1 and continuing beyond year 15 for a much greater range of landscape and visual receptors. In my opinion, this is a more appropriate finding for a development of this size and scale which includes locally and nationally valued landscapes. I identify Significant residual effects on landscape for the KDNL and the AHLV, and for all 4 of the local character areas (SBC and KDNL) which contain parts of the Proposed Development. I also identify Significant residual effects for all the Rural Lanes, which would become dominated in parts by major new transport infrastructure, or encapsulated within residential areas, such that they could no longer be described as 'rural'. For visual receptors I judge that Significant Adverse effects would remain for people using the many public rights of way in and around this large site. They would frequently be channelled through development areas, or on routes required to cross the SRR, or have views to development, albeit partially screened. I identify Significant Adverse effects for residents within and surrounding the site, whose current rural outlook would change to one dominated by the road or residential development, with linear buffer screening, as well as for people on the local road network.

9.17 The reasons for differences in professional judgements include an underestimation of sensitivity for some receptors by the Applicants, but more importantly, an underestimation of the magnitude of change, including an over ambitious interpretation of the benefits and effects of screening/vegetation to 'hide' the development. The approach often appears to be assessing subsequent years against a baseline of the development already being present, rather than the actual landscape or visual receptor baseline, which is not the method advocated in GLVIA3. The reduction in magnitude of change because receptors would be screened from most of the

Southern Site Proposed Development by new development in the foreground is also an inappropriate interpretation of the principles of LVIA. Other issues include the emphasis on localised effects and the identification of a wide range of magnitude of effects which makes it difficult to interpret the findings in the LVIA. I show in my evidence that the assessment does not always take a realistic view of the Scheme, relying heavily on the proposals in the Illustrated Masterplan to provide mitigation by concealing/screening the development.

Conclusion on combined effects

9.18 I conclude that the combined effects of the proposed development for the Northern and Southern schemes would result in a continuous urban area, with major new roads extending from the fruit belt landscape at the edge of the Thames Estuary up and into the Kent Downs. It creates an unusual linear pattern of development from Teynham and Bapchild on the A2 and extending some 4-5km up the dip slope to the M2, with two major new settlements at Oakwood and Highsted connected by the SRR. This is not consistent with the settlement pattern and character in Swale, filling in the gaps and sense of separation between settlements and being close to but entirely unrelated to Sittingbourne. It would have significant Adverse residual effects on landscape designations at the national and local level, landscape character, rural lanes, trees and woodland. It would have significant Adverse residual effects on users of the network of PRoW, local residents, and people on local roads. The scheme conflicts with polices in the NPPF [CD 16.1] and the SBC Adopted Local Plan [CD13.1].