

**LAND OFF COSSINGTON ROAD, SILEBY**

LPA ref. P/21/0491/2

PINS ref: APP/X2410/W/21/ 3287864

“S Higson’s Landscape and Visual Assessment”

Appendix 1 to Proof of Evidence of

By Simon Higson

Prepared for Charnwood Borough Council

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## Contents

1	INTRODUCTION .....	1
2	LANDSCAPE-RELATED PLANNING CONTEXT .....	7
3	ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS .....	19
4	ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS .....	41
5	POTENTIAL EFFECTS UPON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA OF LOCAL SEPARATION .....	65

## DRAWINGS

CBC-003-C-001	Viewpoint 7 (micro-siting i)
CBC-003-C-002	Viewpoint 7 (micro-siting ii)
CBC-003-C-003	Viewpoint 6i (micro-siting i)
CBC-003-C-004	Viewpoint 6i (micro-siting ii)
CBC-003-C-005	Viewpoint 6ii (micro-siting iii)
CBC-003-C-006	Viewpoint 6ii (micro-siting iv)
CBC-003-C-007	Viewpoint 2 (micro-siting i)
CBC-003-C-008	Viewpoint 2 (micro-siting ii)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

1.1.1 This appendix sets out my summary re-assessment of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment included with the planning application, produced by Golby and Luck, February 2021 (GLLVIA, **CD1.09**). I have used the findings of my LVIA to inform my assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the Area of Local Separation (AoLS).

1.1.2 My landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) is carried out in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3, **CD 6.25**), produced by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

1.1.3 In addition, it was agreed as part of discussions with Job Golby (and the initial draft Landscape Statement of Common Ground 'LSoCG' on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022) that the GLLVIA needs to be re-assessed to account for the following:

- Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – “Assessing Landscape Value outside National Designations”, published by the Landscape Institute in May 2021 (after the applicant’s LVIA was completed) (TGN 02/21, **CD6.28**); and
- Resolution by Charnwood Borough Council to grant planning permission for the development of land of Humble Lane, east of Cossington (P/20/2393/2) (Committee 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 after the applicant’s LVIA was completed) (**CD7.01**).

1.1.4 I was advised at the Case Management Conference on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 that the Appellant’s Landscape Witness had changed from Jon Golby to Andy Cook. I received a revised draft LSoCG on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and provided comments in response.

1.1.5 As noted below, one of the matters in dispute relates to the ‘significant impact’ on the character of the countryside. However, whilst this term was included in the Council’s Reasons for Refusal (in the decision notice of 17th September 2021 (**CD5.01**)), it was not used specifically in the GLLVIA and as such I have incorporated consideration of this term in my re-assessment below.

## 1.2 Matters in Dispute

1.2.1 The LSoCG identifies that the issues that remain in dispute between the Appellant and the Council can be narrowed down to the following:

- Issue 1 - Reduced actual and perceived gap of open undeveloped land between the villages of Sileby and Cossington.
- Issue 2 - Significant impact on the character of the countryside.

## 1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as *“an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”* (see GLVIA3, paragraph 2.2). As GLVIA3 states, the ELC definition of landscape is inclusive, in that it covers *“natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas”*, as well as *“inland water and marine areas”*.

1.3.2 In accordance with ELC and GLVIA3 the definition of landscape within this proof therefore includes natural, rural, urban and peri-urban (‘urban fringe’) areas.

1.3.3 Paragraph 1.1 of GLVIA 3 states that *“Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity”*.

1.3.4 Paragraph 5.1 of GLVIA3 describes how landscape effects are concerned with *“how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character”*.

1.3.5 Allied to this, paragraph 6.1 of GLVIA3 describes how visual effects are concerned with *“assessing how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements”*.

1.3.6 This assessment considers landscape and visual effects separately, although where relevant and appropriate, cross references may be made to the same features or elements

1.3.7 The determination of potential landscape and visual effects follows a step-by-step

process based on the combination of the sensitivity of the receptor (susceptibility to type of change proposed and value) and the magnitude of effect (size/scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility).

- 1.3.8 Paragraph 3.23 of GLVIA3 describes how LVIA *“is an evidence-based process combined with professional judgement. It is important that the basis of such judgements is transparent and understandable, so that the underlying assumptions and reasoning can be understood by others.”*
- 1.3.9 GLLVIA, Appendix 1 defines significance as *“A measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect, defined by significance criteria specific to the environmental topic. The use of the word significance in this LVIA is a measure of to the importance to be placed on an identified effect in the planning decision making process. This is distinct from the identification of ‘significant effects’ used in the framework of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).”*

#### **1.4 Methodology**

- 1.4.1 I have used the methodology set out in Appendix 1 of GLLVIA, with the exception of the considerations relating to landscape value set out in TGN 02/12, and other aspects of GLVIA3, where relevant and set out below.
- 1.4.2 I have carried out a desk top review of relevant policies and guidance, other appeal decisions, relevant character assessments for the Appeal Site and its context, materials submitted as part of the planning application and sequent correspondence, as described in more detail below.
- 1.4.3 As part of my assessment, I visited the Appeal site and surrounding area on 4th January, 7th January and 11th January 2022. This included the representative viewpoints shown on the Golby and Luck Drawing GL1400 02 Site Location which was included in GLLVIA. I also travelled past the Appeal site on a southbound train on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022.
- 1.4.4 During the site visits, the weather conditions were suitable for assessing all views for this assessment. Visual effects vary depending on light and weather conditions and also the time of day and time of year. Accordingly, this assessment takes account of the conditions in the photographs but also considers alternative conditions within the written assessment, where relevant.
- 1.4.5 I have included annotated baseline photography from my visits within Drawings CBC-

003-C-001 to CBC-003-C-008 to illustrate micro-siting of representative viewpoints 2, 6 and 7 and the relationship between several key elements around the viewer at each location, as well as the extent and position of the site. These 'specific viewpoints' are intended as an aid in assessing landscape and visual effects and are defined as Type 1 in the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (**CD6.26**). Photographs were taken using a Canon D6 digital camera. The camera was set to a focal length which is the equivalent of a 50mm lens for a 35mm format camera. The panoramic views consist of several photographic frames digitally merged using industry standard software.

## **1.5 The Study Area**

1.5.1 The Study Area for my re-assessment of landscape and visual effects is based primarily on the visual envelope of the Appeal Site as described within paragraph 4.26 of GLLVIA. However, I have made references to either landscape or visual receptors in the wider area, where this is relevant and provides context to the assessment (e.g. characteristics of the Soar Valley / Trent Valley Washlands and / or sequential views for users of certain routes).

## **1.6 Development Proposal**

1.6.1 The development proposal is as described within the Planning Statement (**CD1.11**) and Statement of Common Ground and comprises of an outline planning application for "*up to 170 dwellings. All matters are reserved except access. Details relating to the appearance, layout, amount and scale of development as well as landscaping within the site are to be the subject of subsequent reserved matters approval.*"

1.6.2 The Appeal site extends to approximately 10.1ha. The David Wilson Homes Site Location Plan / Sketch Proposals Drawing SIL/LOC/01 (**CD1.02**) which was submitted with the planning application shows a housing layout and site access (with a detail of the proposed site access junction on Drawing B024412/35/18/003 and 'offsite' works to the Cossington Road and roadside footpath).

1.6.3 The individual plots numbered on the David Wilson Homes Site Location Plan is up to 158, which is 12 dwellings short of the 170 referenced in the planning application.

1.6.4 Page 58 of the Design and Access Statement (**CD1.16**) refers to 4.29ha development area, with a density of 40 dwellings/ha. My calculation of 4.29ha x 40 dwellings/ha = 171.6 dwellings. This is 1 dwelling above the 170 dwellings referenced in the planning

application.

- 1.6.5 Page 28 of GLLVIA refers to “4.29 hectares of development land with the potential to secure up to 170 new houses at an average density of 35 dwellings per hectare”. My calculation of 4.29ha x 35 dwellings/ha = 150 dwellings. This is 20 dwellings short of the 170 referenced in the planning application.
- 1.6.6 The Golby and Luck Illustrative Masterplan Drawing GL1400 13 (**CD1.03**) which was submitted with the planning application (and subsequent Updated Masterplan GL1400 13A **CD2.06**) shows the same housing layout and site access, with additional detail relating to the open space including locally equipped area for play (LEAP), structural and buffer planting, attenuation ponds (as wet meadow), species-rich meadow grassland and bound gravel cycle path/footpath. However, as this was an outline application only, the arrangement of the proposed development shown on the submitted drawings is for illustrative purposes only. Nevertheless, I have taken this into account in my assessment.
- 1.6.7 Both the Design and Access Statement (page 56) and GLLVIA page 28 are consistent in their description of the total area of 5.88 ha of open space. My calculation of 4.29ha + 5.88ha = 10.17ha, which is the stated total area of the Appeal site.
- 1.6.8 Visualisations prepared by Nineteen47 were submitted by the applicant (**CD2.04 a-t**) and taken into account during the determination of the planning application (referenced as ‘CGIs’ in Charnwood Borough Council’s Officers Delegation Report, **CD5.02**). These visualisations showed oblique aerial imagery of the illustrative masterplan and also ground level views from locations along Cossington Road.
- 1.6.9 Once construction (and landscaping) phases are complete, the proposed development would be permanent. Any landscape planting would develop over time, with young trees and shrubs anticipated to grow and mature. The likely heights will therefore vary based on species, ground conditions and planting techniques / establishment success. GLLVIA refers to short term (Year 1) and long term (Year 15) landscape and visual effects.

## **1.7 Potential Sources of Landscape and Visual Effect**

- 1.7.1 The main landscape and visual components of the proposed development include:
- site preparation of new highways access (including visibility splays and ‘offsite’

amendments to the roadside footpath) and soil stripping, with associated materials and plant (including stocking and loading areas and vehicle movements);

- construction of development plots / individual dwellings, access (roads, driveways and paths), landscaping (including individual garden plots and management of perimeter vegetation) and infrastructure (drainage, fixed equipment play area, fencing / railings, signage); and
- occupation of the new dwellings, use of access and management of the landscaping and infrastructure.

1.7.2 These components would result in direct effects upon landscape elements and features within the Appeal site itself. The above changes would also influence the Appeal site's appearance, aesthetic and perceptual aspects and therefore may also have potential effects on landscape character and the visual amenity of offsite receptors in the surrounding area.

1.7.3 The main indirect effects would be from traffic generated from the development, as this would have a general impact on the scenic quality of local views (and receptors such as local residents, pedestrians, cyclists and other road users).

## **1.8 Structure of this Appendix**

1.8.1 This appendix is structured as follows:

- Landscape-related Planning Context;
- Assessment of Landscape Effects;
- Assessment of Visual Effects; and
- Potential Effects upon the character and appearance of the Area of Local Separation.

## 2 LANDSCAPE-RELATED PLANNING CONTEXT

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 In this section of my Assessment, I have briefly reviewed the relevant designations, planning policy and correspondence in order to understand the landscape-related planning context for the proposed development. I have also reviewed other relevant appeal decisions. A full consideration of planning policy and history is included within the evidence of Nigel Gould; this section focuses only on those aspects relevant to the effects of the development upon character, views, and the function of the Area of Local Separation.

### 2.2 Landscape-related Designations

2.2.1 The Appeal Site is not located within, nor is it adjacent to a nationally designated landscape, such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Park. As such the landscape does not benefit from statutory status.

2.2.2 The Appeal site is designated as an Area of Local Separation (AoLS) between the villages of Sileby and Cossington (Borough of Charnwood Local Plan adopted 2004 (**CD6.01 and CD6.02**) and Core Strategy 2011-2028 (**CD6.03**).

2.2.3 The Local Separation Policy was originally set out in Technical Report No.2 published by the Borough Council in 1995 which stated that *“the key area of separation should focus on the critical gap west of the mainline railway either side of Cossington Road between Cossington Brook and the existing southern edge of Sileby. This would include the farm buildings and the nursery”*.

2.2.4 AoLS is described in Charnwood Borough Council’s Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation - Methodology and Assessment Findings Report March 2016 (**CD6.06**) as primarily a planning designation, although how each area performs against its purpose is assessed using landscape and visual criteria. The qualities of the AoLS, such as maintaining the separation of settlements, are identified in the local plan as requiring protection.

2.2.5 The Appeal site is outside the defined Limits to Development, shown on Figure 2 within the Sileby Neighbourhood Plan (2018-2036) (**CD6.13**), and as such will be treated as open countryside for the purposes of policy G1.

- 2.2.6 There are no public rights of way within the Appeal Site. There is, however, a well-used footpath adjacent to the Cossington Road along the entirety of the western boundary of the site (and which will be affected by 'offsite' access works). Public rights of way connect Cossington Road, immediately to the south-west of the Appeal Site, with Cossington Conservation Area and Church of All Saints (Listed Building), via public rights of way I47 and I61.
- 2.2.7 Brook Farm barns and farmhouse on the southern boundary of the Appeal Site are Locally Listed Buildings and therefore 'Heritage Assets' under the provisions of NPPF (with planning consent for use of barn for model railway club meetings, provision of car parking to rear and alterations of access onto Cossington Road, reference P/99/1168/2).
- 2.2.8 Other 'Heritage Assets' include the Cossington Conservation Area which is c220m to the south of the Appeal Site and contains several Listed Buildings, including the Church of All Saints Grade II\* Listed Building at c380m to the south of the Appeal site. The Sibley Conservation Area is c715m to the north of the Appeal Site and also contains several Listed Buildings. The two Conservation Areas are connected by the Cossington Road / Main Street and the public rights of way network (I47 and I61) and roadside footpaths and pavements.
- 2.2.9 The Cossington Conservation Area Character Appraisal Adopted 13th February 2014 (CD6.23) states the following:
- Landmarks – *“The grouping of the church and War Memorial close to the north boundary of the Conservation Area forms a focal point within the village. The opening up of the land around the memorial provides a pleasing setting for the monument which is complemented by the view through the trees of the church and churchyard together with a large pond beyond the car park.”*
  - Parks, Gardens and Trees – *“There is no significant area of open space within the Conservation Area although Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve forms a pleasing setting to the area surrounding the church and War Memorial”*.
  - The main contributions to the special character of Cossington Conservation Area includes under 5<sup>th</sup> bullet point – *“the easily discernable historic forms and fabric which are not dominated or overwhelmed by infill developments.”*
- 2.2.10 GLLVIA representative viewpoint 7 is located on the footpath approach to Cossington

Meadows Nature Reserve and viewpoint 6 is on a public right of way within pasture fields nearby and I would consider both to be within the visual setting of the Conservation Area, as described above. From this location there are views of the Church of All Saints amongst the trees, as well as a broad panoramic view over pasture fields and glimpsed views of the rising arable field within the Appeal site. Whilst I am not giving evidence on the effect on heritage assets, I note that the landscape has connection to them.

## 2.3 Relevant Planning Policy

2.3.1 The relevant planning policy context is as referenced in the Decision Notice of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (CD5.01) and the Appellants Statement of Case including the following (for the full text of policies refer to core documents):

- Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 9th November 2015) (CD6.03) Policy CS1 identifies Sileby as a Service Centre and that *“We will plan positively for the role of Service Centres...”*, whilst Cossington is classified as *“Other Settlement”*;
- Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 9th November 2015) (CD6.03) Policy CS11, which states *inter alia* that *“We will support and protect the character of our landscape and countryside...”*;
- Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (adopted 12 January 2004) (saved policies) (CD6.01) Policy ST/2 states that *“Built development will be confined to allocated sites and other land within the Limits to Development identified on the Proposals Map...”*;
- Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (adopted 12 January 2004) (saved policies) (CD6.01) Policy CT/1 which states that *“Land lying outside the defined Limits to Development is variously identified on the Proposals Map as Countryside, Green Wedge and Areas of Local Separation. Development within these areas of generally open land will be strictly controlled.”*;
- Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (adopted 12 January 2004) (saved policies) (CD6.01) Policy CT/4 which states that *“In areas of local separation development acceptable in principle will only be permitted where the location, scale and design of development would ensure that: i) the predominantly open and undeveloped character of the area is retained; and ii) the already narrow*

*gap between settlements is not reduced.”; and*

- The Sileby Neighbourhood Plan (2018-2036), **(CD6.13)** Policy G1 Limits to Development states *“Land outside the defined Limits to Development will be treated as open countryside, where development will be carefully controlled in line with local and national strategic planning policies”;* and
- The Sileby Neighbourhood Plan (2018-2036), **(CD6.13)** Policy G2 states that *“New development should enhance and reinforce the local distinctiveness and character of the area in which it is situated...”* and *“Development which would have a significant adverse effect on the street scene, or the character of the countryside will only be permitted where any harm is clearly outweighed by the wider benefits of the proposal...”*

2.3.2 National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) **(CD6.24)**, under paragraph 174 requires that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- *“a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- *b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;”*

2.3.3 A definition of ‘Major Development’ is also described within the Glossary of NPPF as *“For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.”* Thus, the proposed development of 170 dwellings at the Appeal Site would constitute ‘Major Development’.

2.3.4 A definition of ‘Heritage asset’ is also provided within the Glossary of NPPF as *“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”* Thus, the Appeal Site is directly adjacent to a ‘Heritage Asset’ (Brook Farm barns and farmhouse).

## 2.4 Evidence Base

2.4.1 The following Charnwood Borough Council documents provide further considerations a part of the evidence base (in chronological order):

- Charnwood Borough Council – The Borough of Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment - 2012 (**CD6.16**). This provides a baseline study of landscape character that provides an understanding of the landscape resource. It identifies the Appeal site as located within the Soar Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA);
- Charnwood Borough Council – Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation - Methodology and Assessment Findings Report March 2016 (AoLS Assessment) (**CD6.06**). The report noted that Area of Local Separation D ('ALS-D'), within which the Appeal site is located, had a 'Moderate' purpose score and *“provides the gap between Sileby and Cossington, preventing further ribbon development along Cossington Road and ensuring that the integrity of the gap is maintained”*;
- Charnwood Borough Council - Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation - Methodology and Assessment Findings Report Addendum May 2019 (AoLS Addendum Assessment) (**CD6.07**). The addendum reviewed and responded to the representations received in response to consultation on the Green Wedges and Areas of Local Separation Report with the aim of assisting their consideration of making or amending designations in the emerging Local Plan. There was no change to the ALS-D, which includes the Appeal site;
- Charnwood Borough Council - Charnwood Borough Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites - 2019 prepared by LUC (the SHLAA Assessment 2019) (**CD6.27**). This report provided landscape capacity and sensitivity evidence to inform the preparation of the Borough's Local Plan to 2036. The Appeal site was not assessed in this study. Land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington was assessed;

- Charnwood Borough Council - Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum – prepared by LUC, Feb 2021 (the SHLAA Addendum assessment 2021) (**CD6.09**). This report provides landscape capacity and sensitivity evidence to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan to 2036. This document builds upon results obtained in the 2019 'Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites' and forms an addendum to the previous study. It identifies the Appeal site as PSH474 and as 'low to moderate' overall sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing;
- Charnwood Borough Council – Charnwood Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – July 2021 (the CBCLSA) (**CD6.08**) which presents a landscape sensitivity assessment of a number of sites considered for development as part of the preparation of the Charnwood Local Plan 2021–2037. It identifies the Appeal site as PSH474 and makes reference *inter alia* to how “*Development of this site would have a substantial and critical effect on the purpose of the Area of Local Separation. Development of the site would irrevocably alter the larger more significant eastern part of Area of Local Separation, changing the land use nature and characteristic from open rural agriculture to urban housing and urban green space. The erosion of the Area of Local Separation cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.*”;
- Charnwood Local Plan, Development Strategy and Site Selection Topic Paper, July 2021 (**CD6.22**) describes on Page 37 why the Appeal site was not allocated “*PSH474 (Land off Cossington Road) because of the impact on the Area of Local Separation between Sibleby and Cossington, especially cumulatively with the development proposed at Cossington which is preferable because it is related to school expansion there as part of the development strategy.*”

2.4.2 The Council submitted the Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037 for Examination on Friday December 3, 2021, with Policies Map 1 dated October 2021 (**CD6.21**).

2.4.3 This shows that the Appeal site is not allocated for housing and the western boundary of the AoLS is extended westwards. The AoLS boundary around the Appeal site is unchanged.

## **2.5 Recent Planning Decision, Land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington**

2.5.1 As noted above, Charnwood Borough Council have resolved to grant planning

permission for the development of land of Humble Lane, east of Cossington (P/20/2393/2) subject to S106, on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 (CD7.01). This relates to the development of up to 130 dwellings, provision of land for school expansion, open space and children's play area. Outline application with all matters reserved except access.

- 2.5.2 The planning application documents on the Council's website include FPCR Drawing 9300-L-03 'Indicative Layout' (CD7.05) and show the northern site boundary meeting the southern boundary of the Appeal site, along the watercourse east of Derrys Nurseries. The site boundary is annotated on the plan as 9.7ha, with residential development of 4.3ha (130 dwellings at 30 dwellings per ha) and potential for school expansion of 0.6ha. The remainder is shown as open space, with landscaping and infrastructure.
- 2.5.3 This site was previously identified as SHLAA site PSH260 in the SHLAA Assessment 2019 (CD6.27) and was described *inter alia* as "a large-scale and relatively open field", currently under arable and how "The area provides a level of separation from the nearby town Sileby, part of which is visible in the distance from this Site." It was also included as allocated site HS66 in the submitted Policies Map 1, Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037.
- 2.5.4 The proposed development of 130 dwellings at this site would constitute 'Major Development', using the threshold set out in NPPF.
- 2.5.5 The development of this site would alter the landscape and visual context of the Appeal Site and result in potential cumulative landscape and visual effects, which I have incorporated into my assessment below.

## 2.6 Officer Delegation Recommendation

- 2.6.1 Charnwood Borough Council's Officer Delegation Recommendation Report of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 (CD5.02) identified landscape and visual impact as a main issue for consideration and that:

- "the proposal would be contrary to policies CS11 and saved policies CT/1 and CT/4 which serve an important function for preventing coalescence of the settlements and protection of the countryside."; and
- "The proposal would introduce a substantial number of houses along with the roads, parking areas, SUDs and play equipment which would all have a

*significant urbanising effect to the character of the countryside and the settlement edge of Sileby. It is not considered that this harm can be mitigated and weighs against the proposal in the planning balance and conflict with Policies CS11 and saved policies CT/1 and CT/4.”*

## **2.7 Landscape Officer’s Consultation Comments**

2.7.1 Charnwood Borough Council’s Senior Landscape Officer provided consultation comments on 6 May 2021 and updated 23 August 2021 following submission of illustrative masterplan (CD4.24 and CD4.25) including *inter alia*:

- Area of Local Separation *“The proposal would have a substantial effect on the purpose of the ALS-D and result in settlement coalescence notwithstanding the submitted illustrative masterplan indicating compartmentalised public space to the southern portion of the site”;*
- Landscape Character *“The site is typical for the existing character area of the Soar floodplain. It is open gently rising in undulation toward the east.”*
- Visual Impact. *“The landform of the site as it rises to the east makes it prominent and particularly sensitive to change. The proposal would significantly alter the open rural characteristic and replace it with built form.”*

## **2.8 Reason for Refusal**

2.8.1 The scope of this evidence is defined by the first Reason for Refusal set out in the decision notice of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (CD5.01) which specifically relate to landscape character, views and visual amenity. The first Reason for Refusal states:

- *“The local planning authority is of the opinion that the proposal would lead to the loss of an Area of Local Separation resulting in a significantly narrowed and reduced actual and perceived gap of open undeveloped land between the villages of Sileby and Cossington contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS11 and the saved policy CT/4 in the adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan. The resulting harm would also have a significant harmful impact to the character of the countryside and the separate identities of the villages of Sileby and Cossington which is well documented in Council studies and assessments. This would be contrary to interests of the well established planning policies, and emerging policies in the draft Charnwood Local Plan, to prevent the coalescence*

*and merging of villages in the Soar Valley. This significant adverse impact is considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of allowing the development because of the harmful effect it would have on the purpose and integrity of the Area of Local Separation and would undermine its continuing planning function.*

- *To approve the development would be contrary to Policies CS1 and CS11 of Charnwood Core Strategy, 'saved' Policies ST/2, CT/1 and CT/4 of the Charnwood Local Plan, Policies G1 and G2 of Sileby Neighbourhood Plan, and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework. In combination these harms are considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme when taken as a whole."*

## **2.9 Appellant's Statement of Case**

2.9.1 My evidence also addresses the following issues raised in the Appellant's Statement of Case:

- the status of the appeal site in terms of landscape character, views and visual amenity, and the Area of Local Separation;
- the potential effect on the existing character edge of Sileby and gap, resulting from the proposed residential development areas and separately the open space treatment between the settlements; and
- the potential effect of planting enhancement within the site and the characteristics of the wider countryside in this location and any new vistas on land which is not currently accessible to the public.

## **2.10 Other Relevant Appeal Decisions**

2.10.1 I have identified the following two appeal decisions as relevant to the Appeal site.

Land south of Nanpantan Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire

2.10.2 In this case (Appeal Ref: APP/X2410/W/15/3028159 and APP/X2410/W/15/3028161) for a) (CD7.04) the erection of 74 dwellings served via formation of a new pedestrian and vehicular access from Nanpantan Road, landscaping, car parking and all other ancillary and enabling works and b) change of use of land from agricultural to public open space; engineering works to facilitate construction of surface water drainage, the

Inspector considered the effects of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, having particular regard to local and national policy for development in the countryside and for housing and (b) the use of agricultural land.

2.10.3 The Inspector describes the character and appearance of the site and includes reference to the following:

- Paragraph 15. *“The appeal site has a long frontage to Nanpantan Road. This boundary is marked by an agricultural hedge, but the treatment of the roadside, with a footway, street trees, planted beds and grass verge, has a ‘municipal’ feel. However, the depth of the site, along with its gentle slope down to Wood Brook beyond the open field, means that the trees and vegetation along the brook appear to be located within the countryside, rather than defining its edge. The appeal site relates more to the open countryside to its south than it does to the built development to its east, north and west. Beyond the brook, open farm land rises up, at first gently, then more steeply, to a wooded hill containing Outwoods, that is a feature on the skyline. The byway along Watermead Lane, which marks the eastern boundary of the site, provides a footpath route up the rising land to link into a network of permissive paths in Outwoods.”*
- Paragraph 22 *“...The appeal site is valued locally because it is part of the open countryside that provides a rural context for the urban area, which here forms an important part of Charnwood Forest’s setting. It is the combination of the physical attributes of the area with how it is perceived that makes this a valued landscape...”*

2.10.4 The Inspector also evaluates how the proposed development would obscure views towards the hills, except for glimpses between or over the proposed buildings, and along an open corridor which would extend from the road and through the centre of the site between the proposed houses and includes reference to the following:

- Paragraph 23 *“...Furthermore, even this restricted view would only be available for viewers aligned directly along the open corridor. The built form of the proposed scheme would diminish the significance of what is an important skyline feature. The proposed ‘vista corridor’ would appear as a contrived design feature in this context, at odds with the aims of Policy CS2. I do not consider that the proposal would preserve or enhance a valued landscape. It would not protect landscape character or reinforce a sense of place and local*

*distinctiveness, and so would conflict with Policy CS11.”*

2.10.5 The appeal was dismissed (16th January 2017).

Land to the east of Woodham Burn and west of A167, Newton Aycliffe

2.10.6 In this case (Appeal Ref: APP/X1355/W/17/3180108) for up to 430 dwellings (Use Class C3) (CD7.03) and associated access, landscaping and engineering works, the Inspector considered the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area having regard to whether the site is or forms part of a valued landscape for the purposes of the NPPF and the effect on the function of the Green Wedge (within which the site was located).

2.10.7 The Inspector describes character and appearance of the site and includes reference to the following:

- Paragraph 19 *“...the topographical containment of the land gives it a close relationship to the settlement edge and its open countryside character can be readily appreciated from the permissive path next to the Burn and from the A167. To my mind, this only serves to heighten the importance of the site’s contribution to the openness between Woodham and Newton Aycliffe...”*

2.10.8 In relation to Green Wedge the Inspector sets out the following:

- Paragraph 28. *“The justification for saved policy E4 explains that the role of Green Wedges is to maintain the distinction between the countryside and built-up areas, prevent the coalescence of adjacent places and provide a rural setting to development.”*
- Paragraph 30. *“The proposal provides for a green corridor along the Burn that would range between about 94m and 155m in width. The appellant contends that this would maintain the separation between Woodham and Newton Aycliffe and would thus perform the role of a Green Wedge.”*
- Paragraph 31. *“In purely functional terms, it would maintain the physical separation between Woodham and the proposed development. However, it would not be of sufficient width to prevent the experience of travelling across and through that space being influenced to varying extents by built development on both sides. It would therefore be perceived more as a broad*

*but linear green space running through a built-up area rather than maintaining the semblance of a much more expansive rural landscape interjecting between settlements.”*

- Paragraph 32. *“For these reasons, I do not consider that the proposal would provide a rural setting to development or maintain a satisfactory rural link between the countryside and built-up area.”*

2.10.9 The appeal was dismissed (10th May 2018).

## **2.11 National Character Area 69**

2.11.1 As part of the baseline assessment, GLLVIA made reference to Natural England - National Character Area 69 Trent Valley Washlands (NCA 69) (CD6.29).

### 3 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In this section of my Assessment, I consider the potential landscape effects of the proposed development.

#### 3.2 Landscape Receptors

3.2.1 As described in paragraph 5.34 of GLVIA3, landscape receptors that may be affected by the scheme include the overall character and key characteristics, individual elements or features and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects.

3.2.2 The GLLVIA (in Table 3) identifies the following landscape area/receptors, that are considered suitable for the re-assessment of potential effects at different scales:

- The Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69;
- The Soar Valley LCA;
- Local setting of the Appeal Site (including the site, the land associated with the wider AoLS, land to the immediate south of the local watercourse, and to the east of the railway line); and
- The Appeal Site.

3.2.3 For clarity, where Charnwood Borough Council have resolved to grant permission for the development of land off Humble Lane (Application P/20/2393/2), this extends over land immediately to the south of the watercourse and up to the watercourse itself. This other development therefore forms part of the local setting of the Appeal site.

#### Landscape Susceptibility to change

3.2.4 In assessing landscape susceptibility, I have referenced the methodology within Appendix 1 of GGLVIA and I have also referenced GLVIA3 paragraph 5.40 *“This means the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.”*

- 3.2.5 My assessment of the susceptibility of each landscape area / receptor is set out in the tables SH-1 to SH-4 below. In summary whilst the wider Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69 and Soar Valley LCA have a generally medium susceptibility to the proposals, it is acknowledged that variation will occur at more local scales and that the Local Setting of the Appeal Site and the Appeal Site itself have a high susceptibility to the proposed development.
- 3.2.6 The open, arable field, situated on the gently rising land between the villages of Sileby and Cossington has no ability to accommodate the addition of up to 170 dwellings and associated ancillary development (access, landscaping and infrastructure) without transformational adverse effects upon its baseline situation or without restricting the achievement of the Council's Area of Local Separation planning policy.
- 3.2.7 The Appeal site is characteristic of NCA 69 Trent Valley Washlands as it extends over gently rising land which is utilised as a single large-scale arable field and borders the flatter valley floor which extends towards the River Soar to the west and which has a more pastoral, smaller scale and enclosed character derived from grassland fields, defined by thick hedgerows and trees.
- 3.2.8 The Appeal site is typical of the Soar Valley LCA, as it is a single arable field which extends over rising valley sides and is bordered by the mainline railway (with embankments) and visible built development. In addition there is 'offsite' work along the footpath and Cossington Road for the proposed access.

**Table SH-1 – Landscape Susceptibility of the Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69**

Moderate strength character	<p>The published key characteristics for NCA 69 Trent Valley Washlands relevant to the appeal site are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Distinctly narrow, linear and low-lying landscape largely comprised of the flat flood plains and gravel terraces of the rivers and defined at its edges by higher ground.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“Geology dominated by superficial alluvium and gravel river terrace deposits underpins the contrast in arable and pastoral agricultural use, arable crops predominating on the free-draining soils of the river terraces, with grassland more commonly located along the alluvial river flood plains where soils are subject to frequent flooding or are naturally wet.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“Flood plain pastoral areas where riverside pastures are subdivided by thick, full hedgerows with some trees contrast with arable areas with larger fields divided by low, small hedgerows with few trees.”</i></li> </ul>
Low to Moderate scenic quality	<p>In the Supporting Document 1 for NCA 69 there is reference to how <i>“There are no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Trent Valley Washlands NCA”</i> and how <i>“This NCA is in one of the least tranquil areas of the country...The 2007 Intrusion Map (CPRE) shows the extent to which rural landscapes are ‘intruded on’ from urban development, noise (primarily traffic noise), and other sources of visual and auditory intrusion. This shows that this is a very disturbed area especially across the valley floor and along the numerous major roads...”</i> However, under Ecosystem Services Analysis section of the published description there is reference to how <i>“In places, particularly beside the rivers, the Washlands provide a picturesque pastoral and wetland landscape.”</i></p>
Low to Moderate condition	<p>In the Supporting Document 1 for NCA 69 there is reference to the <i>“total area of NCA 69: 39,376 ha...3% of NCA is designated as SSSI (A total of 14 sites wholly or partly within the NCA)...12% is Grade 2 Agricultural Land and 46% is Grade 3...The NCA contains 1,719 ha of woodland (4 per cent of the total area), of which 75 ha is ancient woodland...On the gravel terraces and on higher ground where arable crops tend to be grown, hedgerows tend to be low and tightly trimmed with few hedgerow trees... 11% of the NCA is Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (mapped priority habitat).”</i></p>
Moderate tolerance to proposed change	<p>NCA 69 Ecosystem Services Analysis refers to how <i>“Unsympathetic urban development forms a frequent presence, mainly on valley sides and along road corridors...”</i> NCA 69 Strategic Environmental Option 1 refers to how <i>“Carefully plan and manage new development within the NCA to ensure that landscape character...are enhanced...For example by...Locating new built development within existing settlements and avoiding the valley floors and bordering slopes...”</i></p>
Medium Overall	<p>Medium / Moderate overall susceptibility of NCA 69 to the proposed development</p>

**Table SH-2 – Landscape Susceptibility of the Soar Valley LCA**

Moderate strength character	<p>Soar Valley LCA is described in paragraph 7.60 of the Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment as having moderate strength of character.</p> <p>Paragraph 7.45 refers to how <i>“the landscape of the Soar Valley is essentially a flat floodplain with rising valley sides”</i> and that <i>“It is the most urbanised area of Charnwood Borough, with Loughborough in the north, substantial settlements to both east and west sides of the river corridor, and the influence of Leicester City to the south.”</i> Under paragraph 7.55 it was described how <i>“Most fields are small to medium size with a regular outline. Where arable production has replaced meadows and pastures, fields have been enlarged and are substantially larger (Cossington, Rothley and parts of Quorn).”</i></p>
Low to Moderate scenic quality	<p>There are no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Soar Valley LCA. The published key characteristics for the Soar Valley LCA relevant to the appeal site include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Major engineering features are the raised landscaped embankments of A6 and mainline railway and electricity pylons</i></li> <li>• <i>Visible built development on well-defined rising valley slopes”</i></li> </ul>
Moderate condition	<p>Soar Valley LCA is described in paragraph 7.6 of the Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment as Moderate Condition, <i>“Although some areas are well managed, or being actively created or in the process of re-naturalising, many hedgerows are fragmented and some areas and waterside trees are neglected. Close to settlements some urbanising influences add to the air of neglect, and a balance between nature conservation, recreation, farming and urban pressures is needed.”</i></p> <p>Under paragraph 7.49 of the Soar Valley LCA there is reference to how <i>“Much of the area is still farmed, predominantly as grassland, either as hay meadows or as permanent pastures that are cattle - or to a lesser extent horse - grazed. There is a minor component of arable farming.”</i></p>
Moderate tolerance to proposed change	<p>The Soar Valley LCA in 7.61 of the Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment refers to a landscape strategy of “Conserve and Enhance”, Paragraph 7.62 refers to the Guidelines For Soar Valley Landscape Character Area includes reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Maintain the current balance between the urban and rural character of the Soar Valley</i></li> <li>• <i>Direct development away from prominent locations on the valley slopes. Any new built form on the valley slopes should be assimilated into its surroundings by careful scale, layout, siting, and design, and the use of materials and associated landscaping</i></li> </ul>
Medium Overall	<p>Medium / Moderate overall susceptibility of Soar Valley LCA to the proposed development</p>

**Table SH-3 – Landscape Susceptibility of the Local Setting of the Appeal Site**

<p>Good strength character</p>	<p>The Local Setting of the Appeal Site forms a recognisable and coherent landscape character sub-unit of the wider Soar Valley LCA and Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69.</p> <p>The Appeal site is an open arable field on rising slopes (which continues to rise eastwards towards the Ratcliffe Road), which is adjacent to the lower-lying and flatter pasture associated with the wider AoLS west of Cossington Road, bordered by tree-lined water course to the south, positioned between the villages of Sileby and Cossington.</p> <p>Development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will completely change the character of this open, large-scale single arable field and part of the local setting of the Appeal site.</p>
<p>Good scenic quality</p>	<p>The Appeal site rises in elevation from west to east by some 9m and is therefore prominent and visible from certain locations with the local setting, whilst offering longer distance views (e.g across the flatter floodplain and towards Charnwood Forest to the west). This is also the case for the rising land east of the railway line. Although there is modern built development along the edge of Sileby, traffic along Cossington Road and regular passing trains, Brook Farm barns and farmhouse is locally listed and provides an appealing historic landmark element on the southern edge of the site. Other aesthetic aspects include its open and undeveloped character, simple and smooth landcover, muted green and brown colours. The western side of the AoLS is low-lying, flatter and much more contained by hedgerows and trees, more complex and smaller scale, with scenic quality enhanced by Church of All Saints (Listed Building) and Cossington Conservation Area. Glimpsed views towards the Appeal site provide depth and contrast to the enclosure provided by trees and other vegetation. Development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will completely change the character of this open arable field and part of the local setting of the Appeal site</p>
<p>Moderate condition</p>	<p>The Appeal site is well managed high grade agricultural land, whilst the AoLS west of Cossington Road is pasture and in good condition (with clearly marked footpaths), good thick hedgerows and trees. Although close to the settlements of Sileby and Cossington and well used by recreational visitors, there is limited negative urbanising influences (neglect, litter).</p>
<p>Low tolerance to proposed change</p>	<p>The Local Setting of the Appeal Site is heavily influenced by the existing built development around Sileby and Cossington, which are already close to each other and with the built forms of Brook Farm barns and farmhouse (and Derry’s Nursery) further narrowing the perception of the gap. The development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will further enclose the local setting of the Appeal site. The urban and rural character of the Soar Valley at this location is already finely balanced and the proposed development would be positioned on a prominent location on the valley slope.</p>
<p>High Overall</p>	<p>High overall susceptibility of the Local Setting of the Appeal Site to the proposed development. The open, arable field, situated on the gently rising land between the villages of Sileby and Cossington has no ability to accommodate the addition of up to 170 dwellings and associated ancillary development without transformational adverse effects upon its baseline situation or without restricting the achievement of the Council’s AoLS planning policy.</p>

**Table SH-4 – Landscape Susceptibility of the Appeal Site**

Good strength character	<p>The Appeal site is a single, large-scale open arable field on rising slopes and is a key characteristic of the Soar Valley LCA and Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69.</p> <p>‘Offsite’ works relate to the footpath alongside Cossington Road for proposed access.</p>
Good scenic quality	<p>The Appeal site rises in elevation from west to east by some 9m and is therefore prominent and visible from certain locations with the local setting, whilst offering longer distance views (e.g across the flatter floodplain and towards Charnwood Forest to the west).</p> <p>Although there is modern built development along the edge of Sileby and traffic along Cossington Road, Brook Farm barns and farmhouse is locally listed and provides an appealing historic landmark element on the southern edge of the site.</p> <p>Other aesthetic aspects include its open and undeveloped character, simple and smooth landcover, large-scale, muted green and brown colours.</p> <p>The Appeal Site forms part of the visual setting of Church of All Saints (Listed Building) and Cossington Conservation Area, as it is visible in glimpsed views from public rights of way.</p>
Moderate condition	<p>The Appeal site is well managed high grade agricultural land, with a hedgerow along the roadside. Although close to the settlements of Sileby and Cossington, there is limited negative urbanising influences (neglect, litter).</p>
Low tolerance to proposed change	<p>The Appeal Site is heavily influenced by the existing built development around Sileby and Cossington, which are already close to each other and with the built forms of Brook Farm barns and farmhouse (and Derry’s Nursery) further narrowing the perception of the gap between the settlements. The development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will further enclose the local setting of the Appeal site.</p> <p>The urban and rural character of the Soar Valley at this location is already finely balanced and the proposed development would be positioned on a prominent location on the valley slope.</p>
High Overall	<p>High overall susceptibility of the Appeal Site to the proposed development.</p> <p>The open, large-scale arable field, situated on the gently rising land between the villages of Sileby and Cossington has no ability to accommodate the addition of up to 170 dwellings and associated ancillary development without transformational adverse effects upon its baseline situation or without restricting the achievement of the Council’s AoLS planning policy.</p>

## Landscape Value

- 3.2.9 In assessing landscape value, I have referenced the methodology within Appendix 1 of GGLVIA and also GLVIA3 paragraph 5.19 *“As part of the baseline description the value of the potentially affected landscape should be established. This means the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.”*
- 3.2.10 I have also referenced GLVIA 3, para 5.29 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet which states that *“Areas of landscape whose character is judged to be intact and in good condition, and where scenic quality, wildness or tranquillity, and natural or cultural heritage features make a particular contribution to the landscape, or where there are important associations, are likely to be highly valued”*.
- 3.2.11 It is also necessary to also reference TGN 02/21 which was published after GLLVIA was completed. Bullet 5, paragraph 2.4.5 of TGN 02/21 states that *“When assessing landscape value of a site as part of a planning application or appeal it is important to consider not only the site itself and its features/elements/characteristics/qualities, but also their relationship with, and the role they play within, the site’s context. Value is best appreciated at the scale at which a landscape is perceived – rarely is this on a field-by-field basis.”*
- 3.2.12 I have therefore reviewed the agreed landscape areas / receptors using the factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value in Table 1 of TGN 02/21, as summarised in Tables SH-5 to SH-8 below.
- 3.2.13 In summary whilst the wider Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69 and Soar Valley LCA have a generally medium overall landscape value, it is acknowledged that variation will occur at more local scales and that the Local Setting of the Appeal Site and the Appeal Site itself are highly valued. With reference to paragraph 174 of NPPF, I consider that the Appeal site is part of a valued landscape.
- 3.2.14 The Local Setting of the Appeal Site and the Appeal Site itself has clear physiological interest which contributes positively to the local landscape, forms part of the visual setting to several ‘Heritage Assets’ including the Cossington Conservation Area and Church of All Saints (listed Building), with additional time depth from Brook Farm (Locally listed), and offering an important contribution to the character of the settlements of Sileby and Cossington by providing a clear sense of separation and

arrival. In scenic terms, the harmonious combination of open, simple, arable landcover and gently sloping lowland valley side, contrasts with the floodplain smaller-scale pastoral areas to the west to create an attractive rural character, which is balanced with the influence of urban and modern elements associated with the settlements. The farmland land contributes to the healthy functioning of the landscape, in terms of hydrological systems / floodplain and undisturbed and healthy soils (high grade agricultural land).

- 3.2.15 Although AoLS is primarily a planning designation, the relevant areas have landscape qualities, such as maintaining the separation of settlements, that are identified in the local plan as requiring protection.

**Table SH-5 – Landscape Value of the Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69**

Natural Heritage	The Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69 has a clear and distinctive physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape. For example, the published key characteristic refers to <i>“Distinctly narrow, linear and low-lying landscape largely comprised of the flat flood plains and gravel terraces of the rivers and defined at its edges by higher ground”</i> .
Cultural Heritage	Parts of the NCA 69 landscape offers a dimension of time depth, for example with <i>“evidence of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries has been found along the Trent Valley dating from the 5th and 6th centuries”</i> and 6 Registered Parks and Gardens covering 184 ha, 63 Scheduled Monuments and 1,179 Listed Building (Section 9 Of Supporting document 1).
Landscape Condition	Landscape condition varies within the NCA 69. Supporting Document 1 refers to <i>“total area of NCA 69: 39,376 ha...3% of NCA is designated as SSSI (A total of 14 sites wholly or partly within the NCA)...12% is Grade 2 Agricultural Land and 46% is Grade 3...The NCA contains 1,719 ha of woodland (4 per cent of the total area), of which 75 ha is ancient woodland...On the gravel terraces and on higher ground where arable crops tend to be grown, hedgerows tend to be low and tightly trimmed with few hedgerow trees... 11% of the NCA is Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (mapped priority habitat).”</i>
Associations	No known associations
Distinctiveness	Whilst NCA 69 floodplain landscape contributes to the character of the settlements, the Ecosystem Service Analysis section of the published description refers to <i>“The pace of change through development in the Washlands has been rapid and has eroded sense of place..”</i> and <i>“the bland architecture of distribution depots and out-of-town warehouses found in many places diminishes local distinctiveness, sense of place and inspiration”</i>
Recreational	NCA 69 landscape provides recreational opportunities where experience of the landscape is important. For example, within the Ecosystem Service Analysis section of the published description there is reference to how <i>“Recreation is supported by a network of rights of way totalling 502 km at a density of 1.3 km per square km while 2 per cent (909 ha) of land is classified as being publically accessible.”</i> And opportunities associated with restored sand and gravel workings, canal towpaths, National Cycle Network and local green spaces.
Perceptual (Scenic)	There are no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Trent Valley Washlands NCA. However, under Ecosystem Services Analysis section of the published description there is reference to how <i>“In places, particularly beside the rivers, the Washlands provide a picturesque pastoral and wetland landscape.”</i>
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	The NCA 69 landscape is described as <i>“one of the least tranquil areas of the country especially in and around the urban areas of Derby, Loughborough, Tamworth, Burton-upon-Trent and Long Eaton.”</i> (within the Ecosystem Service Analysis section of the publication).
Functional	The natural NCA 69 floodplain landscape performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape. The description of NCA 69 refers to how <i>“It is strongly defined by its watercourses which all provide multifunctional links with the upstream and downstream NCAs of the Trent catchment which extends over 10,000 km2.”</i>

**Table SH-6 – Landscape Value of the Soar Valley LCA**

Natural Heritage	The Soar Valley LCA has a clear and distinctive physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape. Paragraph 7.45 refers to how <i>“the landscape of the Soar Valley is essentially a flat floodplain with rising valley sides”</i> .
Cultural Heritage	Parts of the Soar Valley LCA landscape offers a dimension of time depth, for example with Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings within the historic cores of several settlements (including Sileby and Cossington), parkland around Wanlip Hall and Quorn House, and medieval open field systems at Loughborough Meadow and Bishop Meadow.
Landscape Condition	Soar Valley LCA is described in paragraph 7.6 as Moderate Condition, <i>“Although some areas are well managed, or being actively created or in the process of re-naturalising, many hedgerows are fragmented and some areas and waterside trees are neglected. Close to settlements some urbanising influences add to the air of neglect, and a balance between nature conservation, recreation, farming and urban pressures is needed.”</i>
Associations	The description of heritage within the Soar Valley LCA includes reference to <i>“Robert Bakewell, who was instrumental in 18th century livestock breeding, was based at Dishley Farm, between Loughborough and Hathern where much of this experimental breeding and land management took place.”</i>
Distinctiveness	Soar Valley LCA is described in 7.60 as having moderate strength of character. It is also a landscape which makes an important contribution to the character of the settlements, as described in the publication <i>“the majority of the Soar Valley is alluvium with river gravel terraces rising to each side. The Soar Valley villages are located on these higher better drained terraces”</i> and how <i>“Although there are few buildings in the floodplain, there are extensive and large industrial uses on the sides of the valley adjoining settlement”</i>
Recreational	The Soar Valley LCA offers recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important, for example key characteristics includes <i>“Restored gravel worked landscapes for recreation, farmland and wildlife benefit”</i> and there is also reference to how <i>“The landscape is intensively used for leisure and recreation with a wide range of provision for formal use.”</i>
Perceptual (Scenic)	The Soar Valley LCA is a landscape which appeals to the senses, with reference to how <i>“The river floodplain creates the recognisable character of the Soar Valley; a pastoral landscape of fields and wetlands with recreational facilities and areas to benefit wildlife. The valley slopes enclose it and add diversity with their variety of vegetation and land use of settlements and industry.”</i>
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	The perceptual value of the Soar Valley LCA is reduced, for example by how <i>“This landscape character area is the most urbanised area of Charnwood Borough with many towns and villages. It is one of the more varied of the Charnwood landscape character areas, showing post-war changes resulting from pressures of urbanization”</i> .
Functional	The Soar Valley LCA provides a clearly identifiable and valuable function, with key characteristics including the <i>“Flat wide river floodplain which experiences regular flooding”</i>

**Table SH-7 – Landscape Value of the Local Setting of the Appeal Site**

Natural Heritage	The local setting of the Appeal site comprises of gently sloping lowland valleyside, with a visually appealing and distinctive sweep (emphasised by its open landcover), which rises up from the adjacent lower-lying flatter pasture west of Cossington Road. Overall this area provides a good example of the wider published character assessments and the floodplain and terraces and rising side slopes.
Cultural Heritage	The local setting of the Appeal site forms part of a coherent landscape area with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depth. This includes locally listed Brook Farm barns and farmhouse which are immediately adjacent to the site, as well as the context and sequential views from public rights of way connecting Church of All Saints (Listed Building) and Cossington Conservation Area. Overall these 'Heritage Assets' (as defined in NPPF) contribute positively to the landscape.
Landscape Condition	The local setting of the Appeal site includes good productive arable land on rising valleyside slopes of the site (high grade agricultural land) and the pastures on the lower-lying and flatter pasture associated with the wider AoLS west of Cossington Road. Development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will change the condition of this open arable field and part of the local setting of the Appeal site.
Associations	No known associations.
Distinctiveness	The local setting of the Appeal site is open and is visible from the adjacent residential properties, road and footpaths. The rising eastern slopes form a visually distinctive skyline from views to the west, which is undeveloped. The Appeal site forms an important part in the perception of a gap between the two villages Sileby and Cossington and as settlement gateway / approaches. Roadside views show several of the key characteristics identified in the published landscape character assessments.
Recreational	The local setting of the Appeal site forms part of a network of footpaths which connects Sileby and Cossington, including the Church of All Saints, the Leicestershire Round and Cossington Meadows. Other recreational interests include cyclists along Cossington Road, passengers on trains, visitors to Derrys Nurseries, as well as other local amenities.
Perceptual (Scenic)	The local setting of the Appeal site demonstrates a harmonious combination of open, simple, arable landcover and gently sloping lowland valleyside, which contrasts with the smaller-scale pastoral flatter floodplain areas. There is a balance between rural features with more urban / built elements (associated with the settlements). Development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will alter this open arable field.
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	The sense of tranquillity within and around the local setting of the Appeal site is influenced by traffic along the busy Cossington Road and passing trains. Development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will increase traffic movements within and around the local setting of the Appeal site.
Functional	The local setting of the Appeal site performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape, with undisturbed healthy soils on the rising valley sides and areas of flood zones on lower-lying land and near to the watercourse to the south.

**Table SH-8 – Landscape Value of the Appeal Site**

Natural Heritage	The Appeal site comprises of gently sloping lowland valleyside, with a visually appealing and distinctive sweep (emphasised by its open landcover), which rises from the Cossington Road. Overall it provides a good example of the wider published character assessments and the terraces and rising side slopes to the floodplain.
Cultural Heritage	The Appeal site forms part of a coherent landscape area with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depth. This includes the prominent Brook Farm barns and farmhouse which are locally listed buildings immediately adjacent to the site. It is also visible within sequential views from public rights of way connecting Church of All Saints (Listed Building) and Cossington Conservation Area. Overall these Heritage Assets' (as defined in NPPF) contribute positively to the landscape.
Landscape Condition	The Appeal site includes the good productive arable land on rising valleyside slopes of the site (high grade agricultural land).
Associations	No known associations.
Distinctiveness	The Appeal site is open and has a high degree of visibility from the adjacent residential properties, road and footpaths. The elevated eastern slope forms a visually distinctive skyline from views to the west, which is undeveloped. The Appeal site forms an important part in the perception of a gap between the two villages Sibley and Cossington and as settlement gateway / approaches. Roadside view show several of the key characteristics identified in the published landscape character assessments.
Recreational	The 'offsite' works include part of the footpath along Cossington Road. The Appeal site forms part of a wider setting to a network of roadside footpaths and public rights of way immediately adjacent to the west which connects Sibley and Cossington, a public right of way which connects to Church of All Saints, as well the Leicestershire Round and the popular Cossington Meadows. Other recreational interests include cyclists along Cossington Road, passengers on trains, visitors to Derrys Nurseries, as well as other local amenities.
Perceptual (Scenic)	The local setting of the Appeal site demonstrates a harmonious combination of open, simple, arable landcover and gently sloping lowland valleyside, which contrasts with the smaller-scale pastoral flatter floodplain areas to the west. There is a balance between rural features with more urban / built elements (associated with settlements). Development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will completely change the character of this open arable field adjacent to the southern boundary.
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	The sense of tranquillity within and around the local setting of the Appeal site is influenced by traffic along the busy Cossington Road and passing trains. Development of land off Humble Lane to the south of the watercourse, will increase traffic movements within and around the local setting of the Appeal site.
Functional	The Appeal site performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape, with undisturbed healthy soils on the rising valley sides and areas of flood zones on lower-lying land and near to the watercourse to the south.

### Landscape Sensitivity

3.2.16 In Table SH-9 below I have combined the above gradings of landscape susceptibility with landscape value to derive an overall judgement of landscape sensitivity for each of the landscape areas / receptors identified (with reference to Table 1, Appendix 1 of GLLVIA).

3.2.17 In summary, whilst the wider Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69 and Soar Valley LCA have a generally medium overall landscape sensitivity, I consider that variations will occur at more local scales and that the Local Setting of the Appeal Site and the Appeal Site itself are highly sensitive to the proposed development.

**Table SH-9 – Overall Landscape Sensitivity to the Proposed Development**

	Susceptibility to the Proposed Development	Landscape Value	Overall Landscape Sensitivity
Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69	Medium	Medium	Medium
Soar Valley LCA	Medium	Medium	Medium
the Local Setting of the Appeal Site  (including the site, the land associated with the wider AoLS, land to the immediate south of the local watercourse, and to the east of the railway line)	High	High	<b>High</b>
Appeal Site	High	High	<b>High</b>

### Magnitude of Landscape Change

3.2.18 In assessing magnitude of landscape change I have referenced the methodology within Appendix 1 of GGLVIA, as well as GLVIA3 where relevant to take account of size or scale, geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility (paragraph 5.48 of GLVIA3).

3.2.19 My assessment of the magnitude of change for each landscape area / receptor is set out in the tables SH-10 to SH-14 below. In summary, the proposals would result in a low adverse degree of change upon the wider Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69, low-

medium adverse change to the Soar Valley LCA and a high adverse degree of change upon the Local Setting of the Appeal Site and the Appeal Site itself.

3.2.20 The proposed development would completely change the existing rural character of the Appeal Site and there would be the loss of several characteristics such as openness, undeveloped, simple, smooth, large scale, green / brown arable field. These would be replaced by up to 170 dwellings and other built elements / vertical and horizontal forms, increasing enclosure, complexity, texture, garish and wider range of colours, movement and noise. There would also be a loss of undeveloped skyline. This would be perceived to varying degrees within its local setting (including part of the visual setting to several 'Heritage Assets', including Cossington Conservation Area and Church of All Saints Listed Building and Brook Farm) and on a permanent basis. There would be 'offsite' modifications to the footpath along Cossington Road.

3.2.21 The potential influence of the establishment of potential landscaping treatments and therefore long-term effects (year 15) is not anticipated to reduce the short-term effects (year 1) from the overriding loss of open countryside and introduction of new built elements.

3.2.22 The nature of the effect would be adverse as it would conflict with published guidelines about maintaining the current balance between the urban and rural character and directing development away from prominent locations on the valley slopes.

#### *Cumulative Landscape Impacts*

3.2.23 Although not set out within the GLLVIA, it is also recognised that there will be cumulative landscape impacts related to other consented development / projects which are under construction, or other proposed and/or allocated development, which have the potential to cause further fragmentation, intrusion or urbanisation when considered together.

3.2.24 This includes 'Major Development' within land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington which extends immediately along the southern boundary of the Appeal Site.

3.2.25 The addition of 'Major Development' within the Appeal site to this type of incremental change will result in a wider extent of urbanisation between the two settlements, enclosing Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries and a medium adverse cumulative change to the Soar Valley LCA and a high adverse cumulative degree of change upon the Local Setting of the Appeal Site.

- 3.2.26 It is likely that this would alter a key characteristic of the Soar Valley LCA, where “Sileby and Cossington” are perceived as a single, larger sprawling development, instead of separately as stated in the publication (“...*Sileby, Cossington*...”).
- 3.2.27 In otherwords, there is a recognised landscape trend of settlements expanding and the addition of the Appeal site would result in the coalescence of two.
- 3.2.28 In the absence of development at the Appeal site, the two settlements would expand, but remain separate (with Sileby remaining as a “Service Centre” and Cossington as ‘Other Settlements’).

**Table SH-11 – Magnitude of Landscape Change to the Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69**

Size or Scale - Small	<p>Loss of published characteristic element - arable field on sloping valley sides</p> <p>Replace with published characteristic element - built development on sloping valley sides</p> <p>Adverse effect - Conflicts with published strategic opportunities about locating new built development within existing settlements and avoiding the valley floors and bordering slopes</p>
Geographical Extent - Small	<p>10ha Appeal site is a very small part of the overall NCA 69 (39,376 ha)</p>
Duration - High	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>Influence of the establishment of landscaping treatments over long-term (Year 15) is not anticipated to reduce the main short-term (Year 1) effects of the loss of open countryside and introduction of additional new urban / built development</p>
Overall – Low Adverse	<p>Low adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon NCA 69 from the proposed development.</p>
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>NCA 69 is described as “<i>a landscape that is heavily fragmented and intruded upon by modern built development, communication and transport infrastructure</i>”. Any consented development / projects which are under construction, or other proposed and/or allocated development, will have the potential to cause further fragmentation or intrusion.</p> <p>The addition of the development within the Appeal site is unlikely to tip the balance and change the character of the NCA 69, as a whole. However, this type of incremental change does have the potential to alter more localised parts of the NCA and is addressed in Tables SH-12, SH-13 and SH-14 below.</p>

**Table SH-12 – Magnitude of Landscape Change to the Soar Valley LCA**

<p>Size or Scale - Low</p>	<p>Loss of characteristic element - arable field on rising valley sides</p> <p>Replace with characteristic element - built development on sloping valley sides</p> <p>Adverse effect - conflicts with published guidelines about maintaining the current balance between the urban and rural character and directing development away from prominent locations on the valley slopes</p>
<p>Geographical Extent - Small</p>	<p>10ha Appeal site is a small part of the overall Soar Valley LCA (6,543ha)</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>Influence of the establishment of landscaping treatments over long-term (Year 15) is not anticipated to reduce the main short-term (Year 1) effects of the loss of open countryside and introduction of additional new urban / built development</p>
<p>Overall – Low - Medium Adverse</p>	<p>Low - medium adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon Soar Valley LCA from the proposed development</p>
<p>Cumulative Landscape Impact - Medium</p>	<p>The Soar Valley LCA is described as “<i>the most urbanised area of Charnwood Borough</i>”. Any consented development / projects which are under construction, or other proposed and/or allocated development, will have the potential to cause further urbanisation.</p> <p>This type of incremental change has the potential to have major effects on localised areas. For example, since the Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2012, planning permission for 530 dwellings have been consented around Sileby and 1 dwelling around Cossington, whilst the amount of land allocated around Sileby is 15.19ha and around Cossington is 9.3ha.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>The resolution to grant permission to develop land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington with up to 130 dwellings, provision of land for school expansion, open space and children's play area, will result in additional urbanisation south of the Appeal Site and Derrys Nurseries.</p> <p>The addition of the Appeal Site will likely further tip the balance and thereby substantially alter the landscape resource in this part of the Soar Valley LCA and transform a key characteristic from “<i>Settlements are....Sileby, Cossington,...</i>”, to “<i>Sileby and Cossington</i>”, to reflect coalescence of the two settlements. This is also addressed in Table SH-13 below.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence with Charnwood Borough Council Planning Department in January and February 2022

**Table SH-13 – Magnitude of Landscape Change to the Local Setting of the Appeal Site**

<p>Size or Scale - High</p>	<p>Loss of characteristic element, aesthetic and perceptual aspects- open, simple, smooth, green/brown, large scale arable field on rising valley sides (rural character overall). Clearly defined boundaries.</p> <p>Replace with uncharacteristic elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects - built development comprising of up to 170 dwellings (including affordable housing), access, associated landscaping and other infrastructure. Complex, textured, vertical and horizontal forms, enclosure, garish and wider range of colours, movement and noise. Loss of undeveloped skyline.</p> <p>Overall change to character – “Rural” would become “Urban and Urban Fringe” (albeit there are reserved matters of design, layout, landscaping details, etc).</p> <p>Adverse effect - conflicts with published guidelines about maintaining the current balance between the urban and rural character and direct development away from prominent locations on the valley slopes</p> <p>Also located within an AoLS and between two settlements and result in coalescence. Note influence of built forms, car parking and access to Brook Farm barn (model railway club) and Derrys Nurseries</p>
<p>Geographical Extent – High</p>	<p>Alterations to the landscape of the Appeal site constitutes a medium to high part of its local setting (directly and as perceived due to the visual envelope). Also ‘offsite’ modifications to the footpath along Cossington Road.</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>Influence of the establishment of landscaping treatments over long-term (Year 15) is not anticipated to reduce the main short-term (Year 1) effects of the loss of open countryside and introduction of additional new urban / built development</p>
<p>Overall – High  Adverse</p>	<p>High adverse overall magnitude of landscape change to the Local Setting of the Appeal Site from the proposed development</p>
<p>Cumulative Landscape Impact - High</p>	<p>The addition of the Appeal site to the effects on its local setting anticipated in relation to the development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington to the southern will result in a wide extent of urbanisation connecting the two settlements and enclosing Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries.</p>

**Table SH-14 – Magnitude of Landscape Change to the Appeal Site**

<p>Size or Scale - High</p>	<p>Loss of characteristic element, aesthetic and perceptual aspects - open, simple, smooth, green/brown, large scale arable field on rising valley sides</p> <p>Replace with uncharacteristic elements, aesthetic and perceptual aspects - built development comprising of up to 170 dwellings (including affordable housing) access, associated landscaping and other infrastructure. Complex, textured, vertical and horizontal forms, enclosure, garish wider range of colours, movement and noise. Loss of undeveloped skyline.</p> <p>Overall change to character – “Rural” would become “Urban and Urban Fringe” (albeit reserved matters of design, layout, landscaping details, etc).</p> <p>Adverse effect - conflicts with published guidelines about maintaining the current balance between the urban and rural character and direct development away from prominent locations on the valley slopes</p> <p>Also located within an AoLS and between two settlements and result in coalescence</p>
<p>Geographical Extent – High</p>	<p>Complete alteration to the landscape of the Appeal site. Also ‘offsite’ modifications to the footpath along Cossington Road.</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>Influence of the establishment of landscaping treatments over long-term (Year 15) is not anticipated to reduce the main short-term (Year 1) effects of the loss of open countryside and introduction of additional new urban / built development</p>
<p>Overall – High  Adverse</p>	<p>High adverse overall magnitude of landscape change to the Appeal Site from the proposed development</p>

### Summary of Landscape Effects

3.2.29 I have carried out an assessment of the potential landscape effects of the proposed development in accordance with the latest guidance and the GLLVIA. In my assessment I have reviewed the existing character assessments as well as carrying out my own assessment of the Appeal Site and its context.

3.2.30 As described in paragraph 5.56 of GLVIA3, *“There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and landscape context and with the type of proposal. At opposite ends of the spectrum it is reasonable to say that:*

- *major loss or irreversible negative effects, over an extensive area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character of nationally valued landscapes are likely to be of the greatest significance;*
- *reversible negative effects of short duration, over a restricted area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that contribute to but are not key characteristics of the character of landscapes of community value are likely to be of the least significance and may, depending on the circumstances, be judged as not significant;*
- *where assessments of significance place landscape effects between these extremes, judgements must be made about whether or not they are significant, with full explanations of why these conclusions have been reached.”*

3.2.31 As set out in Table SH-15 below, the landscape effects on the wider Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69 would be minor adverse overall, whilst effects on the Soar Valley LCA would be minor/moderate adverse. Although these effects involve permanent, negative effects on key characteristics, they are over a relatively restricted area and I do not consider them to be significant.

3.2.32 The effects upon the Local Setting of the Appeal Site and the Appeal Site itself would be major and adverse. The effects would involve major loss and permanent, negative effects, over an extensive part of the receptor area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character. Overall I consider these to be significant.

3.2.33 As set out in table SH-16 below, the cumulative landscape effects on the Soar Valley

LCA would increase to moderate and adverse, whilst cumulative landscape effects upon the Local Setting of the Appeal Site would remain as major adverse. The cumulative effects on the Soar Valley are on the threshold of significant, due to the consequential coalescence of the two separate settlements, that are key to its character.

3.2.34 With reference to paragraph 174 of NPPF, the proposed development would not protect or enhance a valued landscape.

3.2.35 With reference to Saved Policy CS11, Policy CT/4 and Policy G2, the proposed development would not protect the character of the Soar Valley landscape or maintain the separate identities of Sileby and Cossington. The proposed development would cause permanent and significant harm to the predominantly open and undeveloped character of the AoLS and reduce the already narrow gap.

**Table SH-15 – Overall Landscape Effect of the Proposed Development**

Landscape Receptor	Landscape Sensitivity	Magnitude of Landscape Change	Landscape Effect
Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69	Medium	Low and Adverse	Minor and Adverse
Soar Valley LCA	Medium	Low-Medium and Adverse	Minor/Moderate and Adverse
the Local Setting of the Appeal Site (including the site, the land associated with the wider AoLS, land to the immediate south of the local watercourse, and to the east of the railway line)	High	High and Adverse	<b>Major and Adverse</b>
Appeal Site	High	High and Adverse	<b>Major and Adverse</b>

**Table SH-16 – Overall Cumulative Landscape Effect of the Proposed Development**

Landscape Receptor	Landscape Sensitivity	Cumulative Magnitude of Landscape Change	Cumulative Landscape Effect
Trent Valley Washlands NCA 69	Medium	-	-
Soar Valley LCA	Medium	Medium and Adverse	Moderate and Adverse
the Local Setting of the Appeal Site (including the site, the land associated with the wider AoLS, land to the immediate south of the local watercourse, and to the east of the railway line)	High	High and Adverse	<b>Major and Adverse</b>
Appeal Site	High	-	-

## **4 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 In this section of my Assessment, I consider the potential visual effects of the proposed development.

### **4.2 Potential Visual Envelope**

4.2.1 GLLVIA described the visual envelope of the Appeal site extending over a relatively wide area and including the following:

- Open and filtered private residential views and highway views from Chalfont Drive, Molyneux Drive and Charles Street immediately to the north of the site;
- Open private residential views and highway views from Cossington Road immediately to the west of the site;
- Filtered views from sections of public footpaths I47 and I51 at over 0.3km to the south-west of the site;
- Heavily filtered and glimpsed views from Derrys Nurseries site, the northern section of Main Street at 100m away and sections of public footpath I62 at over 0.3km;
- Filtered views from section of Humble Lane at over 1km to the south-east and Blackberry Lane that includes the Leicestershire Round recreation route at over 0.8km to the south;
- Distant heavily filtered views from public footpath I50 and associated sections of Cossington Meadows LWS at over 0.8km to the west; and
- Distant and elevated filtered views from sections of Ratcliffe Road and Leicestershire Round at over 1.2km to the north-east of the site.

4.2.2 The addition of 2-3 storey dwellings (c9m high) onto the highest part of the Appeal site would increase the overall extent of the visual envelope.

### **4.3 Visual Receptors**

4.3.1 Paragraph 6.13 of GLVIA3 defines visual receptors as people living in the area; people

who work there; people passing through on road, rail or other forms of transport; people visiting promoted landscapes or attractions; and people engaged in recreation of different types.

4.3.2 I have identified the following visual receptors as suitable for re-assessment of potential effects on views and visual amenity (with reference to GLVIA3):

- local residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site, as well as others within and around Sileby and Cossington (and at farmsteads such as Barn Lodge and Glebe Lodge Farm off Blackberry Lane and Home Farm and Lodge Farm off Humble Lane to the east) and using local amenities;
- road users travelling in both directions along Cossington Road (including those travelling on buses and recreational cyclists);
- travellers on passenger trains, as they pass by the Appeal site;
- recreational users of the footpath alongside Cossington Road carriageway;
- recreational users of the public right of way network which connects the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road;
- visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows); and
- visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east.

4.3.3 People using local amenities within 1km and potentially travelling along the Cossington Road (vehicle, walking or cycling) may include visitors to Brook Farm barn for model railway club meetings, visitors to Derrys Nurseries, Lime Tree Day Nursery, The Green Place Café and Cossington C of E school.

4.3.4 Travellers on passenger trains may include people departing / speeding up or arriving / slowing down on the approach to Sileby train station which is c1km to the north of the Appeal site.

4.3.5 As stated in paragraph 6.19 of GLVIA3, viewpoints can fall broadly into three groups: representative; specific; and illustrative.

- 4.3.6 The GLLVIA identified a series of 12 viewpoints at the locations shown on Drawing GL0400 02 that are considered representative of the visual envelope of the Appeal site and acceptable for assessment purposes. Photographs of the representative views at locations 1 to 12 are shown on Drawings GL1400 07 to GL1400 12 and have been referenced alongside my field assessment.
- 4.3.7 I have also carried out additional photography of 'specific viewpoints' which provide additional micro-siting that I have identified during my fieldwork. They are all 360-degree panoramas and show the wider context of the views and in particular the relationship between several key elements around the viewer at each location, as set out in Table SH-17 below and Drawings CBC-003-C-001 to CBC-003-C-008.

**Table SH-17 – Summary Description of Specific Viewpoints (micro-siting)**

<p>Viewpoint 7</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-001 (micro-siting i)</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-002 (micro-siting ii)</p>	<p>Panoramic photography from public right of way I51 and part of the Leicestershire Round.</p> <p>Glimpsed view of the arable field on rising valley side slope within the Appeal site, with intervening vegetation and buildings to varying degrees. This view may become more enclosed during summer months, when deciduous species in leaf. The Appeal site is a small part of the view, but provides a sense of depth. Relatively open and undeveloped skyline. Foreground to the east includes lower-lying flatter pasture, divided by hedgerows and some standing water. Enclosure from vegetation around Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve to the west. Also visible are dwellings within Cossington and Sileby, Brook Farm locally listed buildings and the Church of All Saints, Cossington (Grade II* Listed Building) and Cossington Conservation Area.</p> <p>Well-used route by walkers along the footpath and connected to the car park at the Church.</p>
<p>Viewpoint 6</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-003 (micro-siting i)</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-004 (micro-siting ii)</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-005 (micro-siting iii)</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-006 (micro-siting iv)</p>	<p>Panoramic photography from public right of way I47 and includes 2 positions either side of the footbridge.</p> <p>Glimpsed view of the arable field on rising valley side slope within the Appeal site, with intervening vegetation and buildings to varying degrees. This view may become more enclosed during summer months, when deciduous species in leaf. Appeal site is a small part of the view, but provides a sense of depth. Foreground in all directions includes lower-lying flatter pasture, divided by hedgerows and some standing water. Also visible are dwellings within Cossington and Sileby, Brook Farm locally listed buildings and the Church of All Saints, Cossington (Grade II* Listed Building) and Cossington Conservation Area.</p> <p>Well-used route by walkers along the footpath and connected to the car park at the Church and also Cossington Road (and footpath).</p>
<p>Viewpoint 2</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-007 (micro-siting i)</p> <p>Drawing CBC-003-C-008 (micro-siting ii)</p>	<p>Panoramic photography from junction between public right of way I47 and Cossington Road.</p> <p>Clear view of the arable field on rising valley side slope within the Appeal site. Appeal site is a wide and prominent part of the view. The Appeal site is open and rural and there is an undeveloped skyline which offers a distinctive contrast to the built development edge. Foreground to the west includes lower-lying flatter pasture, divided by hedgerows. Brook Farm locally listed buildings is also prominent on the corner of the Appeal site and fronting onto the Cossington Road, with model railway club car park, access gate and fencing adjacent. Although not in this photograph, during visit of 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022 the car park was full of vehicles.</p> <p>Well-used route by vehicles, cyclists and walkers along the footpath.</p>

### Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change

- 4.3.8 In assessing susceptibility of visual receptors to change, I have referenced the methodology within Appendix 1 of GGLVIA and I have also referenced GLVIA3 paragraph 6.32 *“The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is a function of: the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations.”*
- 4.3.9 My assessment of the susceptibility of each visual receptor is set out in Table SH-18 below.
- 4.3.10 In summary, the visual receptors which have a high susceptibility to the proposed changes include local residents with direct views of the Appeal site, recreational users of Cossington Road (including cyclists and those on the roadside footpath) and the public right of way network, and visitors to the Leicestershire Round and Cossington Meadows.
- 4.3.11 Visual receptors with medium susceptibility to the proposed changes include other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington which are set back from the Appeal site and/or using local amenities, travellers more generally along the Cossington Road (private vehicles and buses) and passengers on trains on the adjacent railway line, as it passes by the Appeal site.

**Table SH-18 – Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to the Proposed Development**

Local Residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site	Rural views which contribute to the landscape setting and enjoyed by residents of the area.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).	High susceptibility
Other Local Residents at properties within and around Sileby and Cossington	Secondary / restricted views from other residential properties. Includes locations towards village centre or isolated farmstead. Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 4, 5, 10 and 12.	Medium susceptibility
Road users generally - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site	General travellers on private vehicles and buses, and whose attention may not be focused on the landscape. Includes local residents using local amenities, where landscape forms important part of setting – Appeal site forms gateway to the settlement  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1 and 2 and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).	Medium susceptibility
Recreational Road users - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site	Recreational users including those travelling on private vehicles and on buses, but also recreational cyclists and users of the footpath adjacent to the carriageway whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1 and 2 and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).	High susceptibility
Travellers on passenger trains, as they pass by the Appeal site	Including commuters and other travellers either slowing down to arrive at Sileby station (which is 1km to the north of the Appeal site) or speeding up on departure, as well as other trains passing at a higher speed and not stopping at Sileby.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 3	Medium susceptibility
Recreational users of the public right of way network (including connection between the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road)	Including recreational users whose attention is likely to be focused on the rural landscape.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 2 and 6 and my Specific Viewpoint 2, 6i and 6ii micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-003 to CBC-003-C-008).	High susceptibility

<p>Visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows)</p>	<p>Including recreational users, whose attention is likely to be focused on the rural landscape.</p> <p>Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 7, 9, 10 and 11 and my Specific Viewpoint 7 micro-siting (Drawing CBC-003-C-001 and CBC-003-C-002)</p>	<p>High susceptibility</p>
<p>Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east</p>	<p>Recreational visitors whose attention is likely to be focused on the rural landscape. Includes those parking at the Church of All Saints in Cossington and walking along a section of the Leicestershire Round to access the nature reserve.</p> <p>Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 7 and 8 and my Specific Viewpoint 7 micro-siting (Drawing CBC-003-C-001 and CBC-003-C-002)</p>	<p>High susceptibility</p>

Value attached to Views

- 4.3.12 In assessing value attached to views, I have referenced the methodology within Appendix 1 of GGLVIA and I have also referenced GLVIA3 paragraph 6.37 *“This should take account of: recognition of the value attached to particular in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations; indicators of value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearance in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment (such as parking places, sign boards and interpretive material) and references to them in literature or art.”*
- 4.3.13 My assessment of the value attached to views for each visual receptor is set out in the Table SH-19 below. In summary, local residents with direct views of the Appeal site, recreational users of the public right of way network to the south-west of the Appeal site, Leicestershire Round and visitors to Cossington Meadows are of high value.
- 4.3.14 Visual receptors with views of medium to high value include other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington which are set back from the Appeal site and/or using local amenities, whilst travellers more generally along the Cossington Road (private vehicles and buses) and passengers on trains on the adjacent railway line are of medium value.

**Table SH-19 – Value attached to Views of Visual Receptors**

Local Residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site	Includes properties around the Appeal site boundary that are specifically designed to take advantage of views.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).	High value
Other Local Residents at properties within and around Sibley and Cossington	Includes other properties, where views are associated with regularly used living spaces.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 4, 5, 10 and 12.	Medium to High value
Road users generally - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site	General travellers on private vehicles and buses , includes local residents using local amenities, but landscape can be appreciated. Appeal site forms an important gateway to settlement.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1 and 2 and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).	Medium value
Recreational Road users - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site	Recreational cyclists and users of the footpath adjacent to the carriageway where views over the Appeal site is noteworthy and provides wider appreciation of landscape as well as an important gateway to settlement.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1, 2 and 4 and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).	High value
Travellers on passenger trains, as they pass by the Appeal site	Passing views on the edge of Sibley are noteworthy and provide wider appreciation of landscape (e.g. elevated views across Soar Valley towards Charnwood Forest), as well as gateway to settlement Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 3.	Medium value
Recreational users of the public right of way network (including connection between the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road)	Where views have important cultural associations and forms part of the setting of several heritage assets (including Cossington Conservation Area), are regularly visited and provides an appreciation of a landscape which defines the Soar Valley LCA.  Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 2 and 6 and my Specific Viewpoint 2, 6i and 6ii micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-003 to CBC-003-C-008).	High value

<p>Visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows)</p>	<p>Including recreational users, to publicised and popular route, where the views form an important part of the experience. Also passes through part of the setting of several heritage assets (including Cossington Conservation Area)</p> <p>Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 7, 9, 10 and 11 and my Specific Viewpoint 7 micro-siting (Drawing CBC-003-C-001 and CBC-003-C-002)</p>	<p>High value</p>
<p>Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east</p>	<p>Recreational visitors to publicised and popular visitor attraction, where the views form an important part of the experience. Also passes through part of the setting of several heritage assets (Cossington Conservation Area)</p> <p>Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 7 and 8 and my Specific Viewpoint 7 micro-siting (Drawing CBC-003-C-001 and CBC-003-C-002)</p>	<p>High value</p>

#### Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 4.3.15 In Table SH-20 below I have combined the above gradings of susceptibility of visual receptors with the value attached to views, to derive an overall judgement of sensitivity of visual receptors to change (with reference to Table 3, Appendix 1 of GLLVIA).
- 4.3.16 In summary, local residents with direct views of the Appeal site, recreational users of the public right of way to the south-west of the Appeal site, recreational users of the Cossington Road, users of the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows) and visitors to Cossington Meadows (accessing from the east) are of the highest sensitivity to the changes proposed.
- 4.3.17 Other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington which are set back from the Appeal site and/or using local amenities, travellers more generally along the Cossington Road and passengers on trains on the adjacent railway line are of medium sensitivity to the changes proposed.

**Table SH-20 – Overall Sensitivity of Visual Receptors to Change**

	Susceptibility to the Proposed Development	Value attached to Views	Sensitivity of Visual Receptors
Local Residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site	High	High	<b>High</b>
Other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington	Medium	Medium to High	Medium
Road users generally - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road (including private vehicles, buses and local residents using local amenities)	Medium	Medium	Medium
Recreational Road users - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site (including recreational cyclists and users of the footpath)	High	High	<b>High</b>
Travellers on passenger trains, as they pass by Appeal site	Medium	Medium	Medium
Recreational users of the public right of way network (including connection between the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington, to Cossington Road)	High	High	<b>High</b>
Visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows)	High	High	<b>High</b>
Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), access from the east	High	High	<b>High</b>

### Magnitude of Visual Effects

- 4.3.18 In assessing magnitude of change to views and visual amenity I have referenced the methodology within Appendix 1 of GGLVIA, as well as GLVIA3 where relevant, to take account of size or scale, geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility (paragraph 6.38 of GLVIA3).
- 4.3.19 I have also used the Nineteen47 CGI Visuals 'Illustrative Views' (catalogued as additional information dated 28th July 2021 on Charnwood Borough Council planning website) and referenced in the Officers' Report.
- 4.3.20 I understood from discussions with Jon Golby in January 2022 that additional 'verified views' were being produced by the Appellant, however these were not available at the time of preparing this Assessment.
- 4.3.21 My assessment of the magnitude of change for each visual receptor is set out in the tables SH-21 to SH-26 below. In summary, a high adverse degree of change resulting from the proposed development is identified for local residents with direct views of the Appeal site on the southern edge of Sileby and road users travelling along Cossington Road, as they pass the Appeal Site (including vehicles, buses, cyclists and along the footpath adjacent).
- 4.3.22 In these instances, the changes to views and visual amenity would be large-scale and introduce discordant or intrusive elements into the views.
- 4.3.23 Change to views for other residents at properties within and around other parts of Sileby and Cossington (and more remote farmsteads / not directly facing onto the Appeal site) would be more variable and dependent on position and orientation of properties, as well as intervening elements. Overall grading of low and adverse is identified for this category of receptor. However it is recognised that residents will frequently move around the area and especially along Cossington Road to access local amenities.
- 4.3.24 The magnitude of change for recreational users of the public right of way network which connects the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road (travelling in a northwards direction) and for travellers on passenger trains as they pass by the Appeal site would be medium to high and adverse.
- 4.3.25 The magnitude of change for users of the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road

and Cossington Meadows) and recreational visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east would be low and adverse.

- 4.3.26 The potential influence of the establishment of potential landscaping treatments and therefore long-term effects (year 15) is not anticipated to reduce the short-term effects (year 1) from the overriding loss of open countryside and introduction of new built elements. Even where new planting softens and filters the built development, this would still be at odds with the existing visual character and substantially alter the appreciation of the views.

#### *Cumulative Visual Impacts*

- 4.3.27 Although not set out within GLLVIA, it is also recognised that there will be cumulative visual impacts related to other consented development / projects which are under construction, or other proposed and/or allocated development, which have the potential to be seen together with the Appeal site (in combination, in succession or sequentially).
- 4.3.28 This includes primarily 'Major Development' within land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington which extends immediately along the southern boundary of the Appeal Site. This will introduce new visual receptors within this new residential development, as well as obscuring the views of existing visual receptors on the edge of Cossington.
- 4.3.29 For certain views where the two projects can be seen together, the addition of the Appeal site would result in an extended belt of urbanisation / loss of open countryside and for travellers along Cossington Road, Leicestershire Round or railway line an even greater perception of coalescence between the two settlements, over an extended section of the route.

**Table SH-21 – Magnitude of Change to Views for Local Resident’s at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site**

<p>Size or Scale - High</p>	<p>Loss of important features to the character and composition of the views – open, large-scale arable field on sloping valley sides, completely replaced with dwellings, access, landscaping and infrastructure. New barriers and focal points likely to be introduced.</p> <p>Complete contrast between the proposals and the visual setting of the receiving landscape – increased degree of enclosure from vertical built elements and landscaping, loss of open views of arable land and undeveloped skyline</p> <p>High extent and proportion of the views that the proposals will influence or change – due to proximity and orientation of dwellings facing directly towards the Appeal site</p> <p>Adverse effect – damaging to the quality of the visual resource</p>
<p>Geographical Extent - High</p>	<p>The proposed changes would be clearly visible from properties on the southern edge of Sileby positioned along the 390m long western and 120m long northern site boundaries and would typically alter a wide angle of view, due to proximity.</p> <p>The extent of visibility would reduce for other properties that are set back from the southern edge of Sileby and where there are intervening elements (such as buildings or vegetation).</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>In the long-term (Year 15) the new landscaping measures should mature and this would soften and filter views of the new housing within the site. However, the key rural characteristics of the open, arable field would still be lost. Interruption of the skyline with new development roofscape would also persist.</p>
<p>Overall – High Adverse</p>	<p>High adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon local residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site, on the southern edge of Sileby. A dominant or complete change or contrast to the views.</p> <p>Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1, 2 and 3, Nineteen47 CGIs and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).</p>
<p>Cumulative Visual Impact - High</p>	<p>Glimpsed views of the development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington are likely from certain properties on the higher ground on the edge of Sileby near to the railway line. This will be filtered to varying degrees by the deciduous tree line along the watercourse at 330m away. The addition of the Appeal site may screen the other development (which is set down slightly), but for certain views where the two projects can be seen together ‘in combination’ the result will be an extended belt of urbanisation southwards and a perception of coalescence between the two settlements.</p>

**Table SH-22 – Magnitude of Change to Views for other Local Residents within and around Sileby and Cossington**

<p>Size or Scale - Low</p>	<p>Generally limited alteration of important features to the character and composition of the views – relates to properties without direct views onto Appeal site and therefore no more than glimpsed or filtered views of open farmland or skyline being lost</p> <p>Low assimilation of the proposals and the visual setting of the receiving landscape - depending on individual view composition and influence of existing built elements and intervening features / vegetation. Views of the development may therefore be typically limited to potential glimpses of roofscape.</p> <p>Limited extent and proportion of the views that the proposals will influence or change – based on individual properties with indirect views and/or set back.</p> <p>Adverse effect – damaging to the quality of the visual resource</p>
<p>Geographical Extent – Low</p>	<p>Geographical extent would be limited, depending on location and orientation of the properties, for example with properties that are set back from the edges of Sileby and Cossington, with indirect and obscured views of the Appeal site, or with no views.</p> <p>The proposed changes would be visible for local residents travelling along the Cossington Road and accessing local services and amenities.</p>
<p>Duration – High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>In the long-term (Year 15) the new landscaping measures should mature and this would soften and filter views of the new housing within the site. However, the key rural characteristics of the open, arable field would still potentially be lost. Interruption of the skyline with new development roofscape may also persist.</p>
<p>Overall –Low Adverse</p>	<p>Low adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington. Relates to properties without direct views of the Appeal site and therefore change or contrasts to the views anticipated to be limited, to varying degrees.</p> <p>Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoints 4, 5, 10 and 12.</p>
<p>Cumulative Visual Impact – Low Adverse</p>	<p>Development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington may be visible for certain properties and in some cases will obscure views of the Appeal site from certain locations on the existing edge of Cossington, whilst also introducing new residential receptors. New residential views facing northwards towards the Appeal site will be filtered to varying degrees by the deciduous tree line along the watercourse. The addition of the Appeal site on the higher ground would bring the existing edge of Sileby closer towards these new receptors, and result in the loss of open farmland and the perceived separation between the two settlements. Potential in combination, successive or sequential views.</p>

**Table SH-23 – Magnitude of Change to Views for Road Users (Generally and Recreational) travelling along Cossington Road, as they pass the Appeal Site**

<p>Size or Scale – High</p>	<p>Loss of important features to the character and composition of the views – arable field on sloping valley sides, which forms a noticeable gateway / area of separation between two settlements, completely replaced with dwellings, access, landscaping and infrastructure. New barriers and focal points likely to be introduced along the road corridor</p> <p>Complete contrast between the proposals and the visual setting of the receiving landscape – increased degree of enclosure from vertical built elements and landscaping, loss of open arable land and undeveloped skyline</p> <p>High extent and proportion of the views that the proposals will influence or change – due to proximity of road as it passes by the Appeal site boundary and access</p> <p>Adverse effect – damaging to the quality of the visual resource</p>
<p>Geographical Extent – High</p>	<p>The proposed changes would be clearly visible for receptors as they pass along the western site boundaries (a distance of 130m), although this would reduce to little or no view at other parts of the road (eg back from the southern edge of Sibley or set back from Brook Farm).</p> <p>The proposed changes would be visible for those travelling on private vehicles and on buses, but also recreational cyclists and users of the footpath and therefore at varying speeds. Whilst it would be offset to the direction of travel it would nevertheless occupy a wide angle of view.</p>
<p>Duration – High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>In the long-term (Year 15) the new landscaping measures should mature and this would soften and filter views of the new housing within the site. However, the key rural characteristics of the open, arable field would still be lost. Interruption of the skyline with new development roofscape would also persist.</p>
<p>Overall – High Adverse</p>	<p>High adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon Road Users (Generally and Recreational) travelling along Cossington Road as they pass by the Appeal site (c130m).</p> <p>A dominant change and complete contrast to the view over this section of the route. Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 1 and 2, Nineteen47 CGIs and also my Specific Viewpoint 2 micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-007 and CBC-003-C-008).</p> <p>Noted that this would reduce to no apparent change over the remainder of the route (for example as users enter either Sibley or Cossington). Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 4 which shows the level of enclosure adjacent to Derry’s Nurseries.</p>
<p>Cumulative Visual Impact – High Adverse</p>	<p>Development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington will alter the existing framed views eastwards of open farmland on the corner of Cossington Road next to Derry’s Nurseries, resulting in an enclosed and urbanised appearance next to Viewpoint 4. For people travelling this route, the addition of the Appeal site will further reduce the perception of separation between the two settlements, with a clear sequential cumulative visual impact over an extended distance.</p>

**Table SH-24 – Magnitude of Change to Views for travellers on Passenger Trains, as they pass by the Appeal Site**

<p>Size or Scale - High</p>	<p>Loss of important features to the character and composition of the views - arable field on sloping valley sides, which forms an area of separation between two settlements, completely replaced with dwellings, access, landscaping and infrastructure</p> <p>Complete contrast between the proposals and the visual setting of the receiving landscape – increased degree of enclosure from vertical built elements and landscaping, loss of open arable land and would obscure elevated and long-distance views over the Soar Valley and to Charnwood Forest</p> <p>High extent and proportion of the views that the proposals will influence or change – due to proximity of railway line as it passes by the Appeal site</p> <p>Adverse effect – damaging to the quality of the visual resource</p>
<p>Geographical Extent - Medium</p>	<p>The proposed changes would be clearly visible for receptors as they pass along the eastern site boundaries (over a distance of 320m), although this would reduce to little or no view at other parts of the railway line as it enters Sileby or passes Cossington.</p> <p>The proposed changes would be visible for those travelling on the railway network generally and therefore quickly passing by / glimpsed views, but this may include those on trains which slow down on arrival towards the Sileby train station (or are speeding up from departure).</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>In the long-term (Year 15) the new landscaping measures should mature and this would soften and filter views of the new housing within the site. However, the key rural characteristics of the open, arable field and the long-distant elevated views to Charnwood Forest would still be lost.</p>
<p>Overall – Medium to High Adverse</p>	<p>Medium to High adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon travellers on passenger trains as they pass by the Appeal site (c320m). Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 3.</p> <p>A clearly noticeable change or contrast to the view over this short section of route and this would reduce to no change over the remainder of the network.</p>
<p>Cumulative Visual Impact – Medium to High Adverse</p>	<p>Clear views of the development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington are likely for passengers. This will result in new dwellings being brought closer to the rail line and thus reducing the extent of open farmland which is perceptible over the stretch of the journey immediately adjacent to the Appeal site. Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 9.</p> <p>For people travelling this route, the two projects will be seen sequentially over a short-time lapse and the addition of development on the Appeal site will result in an extended belt of urbanisation and a greater perception of coalescence between the two settlements.</p>

**Table SH-25 – Magnitude of Change to Views for Recreational users of the Public Right of Way network (including connection between the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road)**

<p>Size or Scale – Medium</p>	<p>Loss of important features to the character and composition of the views – glimpsed and framed views of part of the arable field on sloping valley sides, which forms an area of separation between two settlements, completely replaced with dwellings, access, landscaping and infrastructure. Views of the Church and Conservation Area would be uninterrupted.</p> <p>Identifiable contrast between the proposals and the visual setting of the receiving landscape – increased enclosure from vertical elements and landscaping, loss of open arable land and sense of depth / distance, alteration to the balance of urban and rural development. Development roofscape across the views, set within the context of other houses and barns.</p> <p>Limited extent and proportion of the views that the proposals will influence or change – due to degree of intervening vegetation associated with the pasture and existing dwellings along Cossington Road (fragmented and compartmentalised). Alters as viewer moves towards the Appeal site.</p> <p>Adverse effect – damaging to the quality of the visual resource</p>
<p>Geographical Extent – Medium</p>	<p>Although there is little or no view at the southern extent of the route (adjacent to the Church and car park), the proposed changes would be visible as people pass along the northern extent of route, to the Appeal site boundaries (230m of 450m). The Appeal site would be in the direct line of travel, albeit obscured by intervening vegetation depending on the position of the walker, with an often limited extent of area visible. Also likely to alter depending on time of year and be more enclosed / obscured when deciduous trees in leaf.</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>In the long-term (Year 15) the new landscaping measures should mature and this would soften and filter views of the new housing within the site. However, the key rural characteristics of the open, arable field would still be lost. Interruption of the skyline with new development roofscape would also persist.</p>
<p>Overall – Medium to High Adverse</p>	<p>Medium to High adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon recreational users of the public right of way network, which connects the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road. A clearly noticeable change or contrast to the view over much of this route, rising to a dominant change at the junction with Cossington Road, although it is noted that this would reduce to no change at the southern end of the route at the parking area. Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 2 and 6, Nineteen47 CGIs and my Specific Viewpoint 2, 6i and 6ii micro-siting (Drawings CBC-003-C-003 to CBC-003-C-008).</p>
<p>Cumulative Visual Impact - none</p>	<p>No clear combined or sequential views of the development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington are likely for users of this route.</p>

**Table SH-26 – Magnitude of Change to Views for Recreational Visitors to the Leicestershire Round  
(between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows)**

<p>Size or Scale – Low</p>	<p>Loss of important features to the character – glimpsed and framed views of part of the arable field on sloping valley sides, which forms an area of separation between two settlements, completely replaced with dwellings, access, landscaping and infrastructure</p> <p>Little to no change to composition – Foreground landscape elements would be unchanged and views of key landmarks (such as the Charnwood Forest or Church of All Saints) would be uninterrupted. Potential for interruption of the skyline with new development roofscape at certain locations.</p> <p>Identifiable contrast between the proposals and the visual setting of the receiving landscape – increased degree of enclosure from vertical built elements and landscaping, loss of open arable land, alteration to the balance of urban and rural development within this part of the Soar Valley</p> <p>Limited extent and proportion of the views that the proposals will influence or change – due to the degree of intervening vegetation associated with the pasture and trees along the watercourse to the south of the Appeal site. Alters as viewer moves towards the Appeal site and/or along this route.</p> <p>Development of land off Humble Lane, would also feature in views from the east, where this route crosses over the railway and the new dwellings will be closer and thus reducing the extent of farmland which is perceptible immediately adjacent to the Appeal site.</p> <p>Adverse effect – damaging to the quality of the visual resource</p>
<p>Geographical Extent – Low</p>	<p>Although there is little or no view over much of this long-distance route (163.7km) which takes in a circuit of the county, the visual envelope of the Appeal site and proposed changes would be visible for receptors as they pass along approximately 2.4km. The extent of visible effect will vary with different viewpoints, with the Appeal site being over 1km away at the junction with Ratcliffe Road (Viewpoint 11 - with wide elevated views and the Appeal site would be set down) and c300m away at the entrance to Cossington Meadows (Viewpoint 7 – offset to the line of travel at its nearest point and at this point being mostly obscured by intervening vegetation, with a limited extent of area visible)</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>In the long-term (Year 15) the new landscaping measures should mature and this would soften and filter views of the new housing within the site. However, the key rural characteristics of the open, arable field would still be lost. Visibility of the new development roofscape may also persist from certain locations to the east.</p>
<p>Overall –Low Adverse</p>	<p>Low adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon recreational visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows). A perceptible change or contrast to views, but would not materially alter the composition or appreciation of views. Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 7, 9, 10 and 11 and my Specific Viewpoint 7 micro-siting (Drawing CBC-003-C-001 and CBC-003-C-002) This would reduce to no anticipated change for the remainder of this long-distance route.</p>

Cumulative Visual Impact – Low to Medium Adverse	<p>Clear views of the development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington are likely for users of this section of the Leicestershire Round, in particular along Humble Lane itself and Blackberry Lane. This will result in new dwellings being brought closer to Humble Lane and rail line and thus reducing the extent of open farmland which is perceptible.</p> <p>Where the two projects can be seen together ‘in combination’ the result will be an extended belt of urbanisation and a greater perception of coalescence between the two settlements.</p> <p>For people travelling this route, the two projects will also be seen in sequentially over long-time lapse (due to the speed of travel) with the addition of development on the Appeal site being visible again near to the entrance to Cossington Meadows (Viewpoint 7). This will also result in an extended belt of urbanisation and a perception of coalescence between the two settlements.</p>
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**Table SH-27 – Magnitude of Change to Views for Recreational Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east**

<p>Size or Scale – Low</p>	<p>Loss of important features to the character of the views – glimpsed and framed views of part of the arable field on sloping valley sides, which forms an area of separation between two settlements, completely replaced with dwellings, access, landscaping and infrastructure.</p> <p>Little to no change to composition – Foreground pasture would be unchanged and views of the Church and Conservation Area would be uninterrupted. Interruption of the skyline with new development roofscape</p> <p>Identifiable contrast between the proposals and the visual setting of the receiving landscape – increased enclosure from vertical built elements and landscaping, loss of open arable land and sense of depth / distance, alteration to the balance of urban and rural development</p> <p>Limited extent and proportion of the views that the proposals will influence or change – due to intervening vegetation with the pasture and existing dwellings along Cossington Road.</p> <p>Adverse effect – damaging to the quality of the visual resource</p>
<p>Geographical Extent – Low</p>	<p>Although there is little or no view over much of this 89 ha visitor attraction which extends westwards over the flatter and enclosed pasture and wet woodland, the visual envelope of the Appeal site and proposed changes would be visible for receptors as they pass along approximately 180m of eastern access path, from the car park at the Church of All Saints at Cossington (listed in the parking information on LRWT website). The Appeal site would be offset c300m away to the line of travel on this access route (Viewpoint 7) and partly obscured by intervening vegetation, with a limited extent of area visible. Also, more enclosed / obscured when deciduous trees in leaf.</p>
<p>Duration - High</p>	<p>Permanent / irreversible</p> <p>In the long-term (Year 15) the new landscaping measures should mature and this would soften and filter views of the new housing within the site. However, the key rural characteristics of the open, arable field would still be lost. Interruption of the skyline with new development roofscape would also persist</p>
<p>Overall – Low Adverse</p>	<p>Low adverse overall magnitude of landscape change upon recreational visitors to Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east. A perceptible change or contrast to views over part of this route, but would not materially alter the composition or appreciation of most views and it is noted that this would reduce to no change at the southern end of the route at the parking area. Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 7 and my Specific Viewpoint 7 micro-siting (Drawing CBC-003-C-001 and CBC-003-C-002)</p> <p>Furthermore this would reduce to no change within the main part of the nature reserve (Refer to GLLVIA Representative Viewpoint 8) or for visitors which park off the road outside the main entrance on the Syston Road.</p>
<p>Cumulative Visual Impact - none</p>	<p>No clear combined or sequential views of the development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington are anticipated for users of this route.</p>

### Summary of Visual Effects

4.3.30 I have carried out an assessment of the potential visual effects of the proposed development in accordance with the latest guidance and the GLLVIA. In my assessment I have reviewed the previously identified representative viewpoints as well as carrying out my own assessment of the visibility of the Appeal Site and its context.

4.3.31 As described in paragraph 6.44 of GLVIA3, *“There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal. In making a judgement about the significance of visual effects the following points should be noted:*

- *Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant;*
- *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant; and*
- *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present in the view.”*

4.3.32 As set out in Table SH-28 below, major adverse visual effects are identified for Local Residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site on the southern edge of Sileby and recreational users travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site. Overall I consider these to be significant.

4.3.33 Major/moderate adverse visual effects are identified for other general users of the Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site and recreational users of the public right of way network, which connects the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road. Overall I consider these to be significant.

4.3.34 Effects upon travellers on passenger trains, visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows) and Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east would be moderate and adverse. Effects for other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington (without direct views) would be no more than minor adverse. Although these effects involve permanent, negative effects on people who are sensitive to changes in views

and visual amenity, the changes would be relatively small and I do not consider them to be significant.

- 4.3.35 I would however specifically draw attention to GLLVIA Representative viewpoint 7 (with my micro-siting) which is located on the footpath approach to Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve and viewpoint 6 (with my micro-siting to south of the footbridge) which is on a public right of way within pasture fields nearby. As described above I consider these to be within the visual setting of the Cossington Conservation Area, where there are views of the Church of All Saints Listed Building amongst the trees, as well broad panoramic views over pasture fields and glimpsed views of the rising arable field within the Appeal site. Changes to the views and visual amenity at these specific locations would be at least moderate and adverse and on the threshold of significant, if not above.
- 4.3.36 As set out in Table SH-29 below, major adverse cumulative visual effects are identified for Local Residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site on the southern edge of Sileby and recreational users travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site. Major/moderate adverse cumulative visual effects are identified for other general users of the Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site. Overall I would consider these to be significant.
- 4.3.37 Moderate adverse cumulative effects are identified for travellers on passenger trains, visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington (without direct views onto the Appeal site). The cumulative effects these visual receptors are on the threshold of significant, due to the consequential coalescence of the two separate settlements, that increase the overall scale and degree of change.
- 4.3.38 With reference to Saved Policy CS11, Policy CT/4 and Policy G2, I have concluded that the harm to the character of the Soar Valley landscape, and the degradation of the separate identities of Sileby and Cossington (via the permanent harm to the open and undeveloped character of the AoLS and reduction of the already narrow gap), would be perceived by a wide range of visual receptors.

**Table SH-28 – Overall Visual Effects**

	Sensitivity of Visual Receptors	Magnitude of Visual Change	Visual Effect
Local Residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site	High	High and Adverse	<b>Major and Adverse</b>
Other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington	Medium	Low and Adverse	Minor and Adverse
Road users generally - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road (including private vehicles, buses and local residents using local amenities)	Medium	High and Adverse	<b>Major/moderate and Adverse</b>
Recreational Road users - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site (including recreational cyclists and users of the footpath)	High	High and Adverse	<b>Major and Adverse</b>
Travellers on passenger trains, as they pass by the Appeal site	Medium	Medium to High and Adverse	Moderate and Adverse
Recreational users of the public right of way network (including connection between the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington, to Cossington Road)	High	Medium to High and Adverse	<b>Major/Moderate and Adverse</b>
Visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows)	High	Low and Adverse	Moderate and Adverse
Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east	High	Low and Adverse	Moderate and Adverse

**Table SH-29 – Overall Cumulative Visual Effects**

	Sensitivity of Visual Receptors	Magnitude of Cumulative Visual Change	Cumulative Visual Effect
Local Residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site	High	High and Adverse	<b>Major and Adverse</b>
Other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington	Medium	Low and Adverse	Minor and Adverse
Road users generally - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road (including private vehicles, buses and local residents using local amenities)	Medium	High and Adverse	<b>Major/moderate and Adverse</b>
Recreational Road users - travelling in both directions along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site (including recreational cyclists and users of the footpath)	High	High and Adverse	<b>Major and Adverse</b>
Travellers on passenger trains, as they pass by the Appeal site	Medium	Medium to High and Adverse	Moderate and Adverse
Recreational users of the public right of way network (including connection between the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington, to Cossington Road)	High	None	-
Visitors to the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows)	High	Low to Medium and Adverse	Moderate and Adverse
Visitors to Cossington Meadows (LRWT Nature Reserve), accessing from the east	High	None	-

## **5 POTENTIAL EFFECTS UPON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA OF LOCAL SEPARATION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 In this section of my Assessment I consider the potential effects upon the character and appearance of the AoLS and in particular the reduction in the actual and perceived gap of open undeveloped land between the villages of Sileby and Cossington.

### **5.2 Background to ALS-D**

5.2.1 Paragraph 7.13 of the Core Strategy (**CD6.03**) states that *“‘Areas of Local Separation’ have been used successfully to guide development in areas between our towns and villages. The policy has maintained the character and identity of individual settlements and prevented their coalescence”*.

5.2.2 As described in the AoLS Assessment (**CD6.06**), AoLS have a narrower remit than Green Wedges which *“prevent the merging of settlements; guide development form; provide a ‘green lung’ into an urban area; and a recreational resource.”*

5.2.3 The AoLS Assessment reviewed the role of the designated AoLS within the Borough and whether they physically separate settlements and the extent to which this separation is at risk of being compromised. This included considerations of visual and perceptual coalescence, width, openness or visual links between developed areas and the area between them, any development proposals or pressures (such as permitted or submitted planning applications) which might compromise the openness of the gap and planned development set out in the Core Strategy. The criteria additionally took into account the contribution of the landscape character to the visual context and the perceived gap.

5.2.4 The Appeal Site is located within ALS-D, defined in the AoLS Assessment as a ‘Moderate’ purpose score as it *“provides the gap between Sileby and Cossington, preventing further ribbon development along Cossington Road and ensuring that the integrity of the gap is maintained.”*

5.2.5 The AoLS Assessment description of ALS-D also described how *“The AoLS is bounded by defensible features to the north, south and east, consisting of the hard settlement edge of Sileby, a small brook and the railway line. The boundary to the west is weakly defined and does not appear to follow a logical or readily recognisable feature.”*

- 5.2.6 An alternative defensible boundary was proposed as follows “*The western edge of ALS-D should be realigned to the stronger alternative boundary features consisting of dense tree and scrub vegetation at the edges of field.*” This has subsequently been incorporated into the Local Plan 2021-2037 which was submitted for examination in December 2021 (refer to Policies Map 1 **CD6.21**).
- 5.2.7 An alternative defensible boundary to the north or east of ALS-D (ie within and around the Appeal site) was not proposed.
- 5.2.8 The Limits to Development are defined on the Charnwood Local Plan 2004 Policies Map (**CD6.06**). ALS-D physically separates the Limits to Development of Sileby and Cossington, which I estimate as follows:
- the ‘width’ of the narrowest part of the AoLS west of Cossington Road, between the Limits to Development of Sileby and Cossington extends to approximately 165m;
  - the ‘width’ of the narrowest part of the AoLS east of Cossington Road, between the Limits to Development of Sileby and Cossington extends to approximately 270m; and
  - the ‘width’ of the AoLS between the Limits to Development of Sileby immediately to the west of the railway line and the northern edge of the Limits to Development of Cossington is 485m.
- 5.2.9 The resolution to grant planning permission for development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington (P/20/2393/2) will result in this settlement expanding in size and consequentially an extension to the Limits to Development of Cossington will need to be determined, with the following implications:
- Detailed designs are not available at present, but I do not anticipate that the physical width of ALS-D will be affected as a result of this additional area of housing;
  - However, the larger settlement at Cossington will result in a reduction in open countryside and more enclosure to the immediate south of ALS-D;
  - I estimate that the actual gap between the Limits to Development of Sileby immediately to the west of the railway line and new likely Limit to

Development to Cossington, east of Cossington Road / Main Street will reduce from approximately 485 to 430m (based on the FPCR Drawing 9300-L-03 'Indicative Layout' (CD7.05); and

- The visual perception of the gap between Sileby and Cossington will reduce for people using roads, footpaths and travellers along railway, as well as existing and new / future local residents (new potential views over the ALS-D from new dwellings may be introduced).

#### Reduction of the Actual Gap

5.2.10 The proposed development would result in Sileby expanding in size southwards and consequentially an extension to the Limits to Development would need to be determined. Although detailed designs are not available at present, I estimate that the David Wilson Homes Site Location Plan / Sketch Proposals Drawing SIL/LOC/01 (CD1.02) shows the housing extending approximately 60m along Cossington Road and 160m along the western edge of the railway line.

5.2.11 I estimate that the proposed development would reduce the 'width' of ALS-D and therefore the actual gap between the Limits to Development of Sileby immediately to the east of Cossington Road and the northern edge of the Limits to Development of Cossington from 270m to 200m.

5.2.12 I also estimate that the proposed development would reduce the 'width' of ALS-D and therefore the actual gap between the Limits to Development of Sileby immediately to the west of the railway line and the northern edge of the Limits to Development of Cossington from 475m to 385m.

5.2.13 The proposal would cause a permanent loss of an important and prominent part of the AoLS.

#### Existing Character and Appearance of the AoLS

5.2.14 I have completed my own Site Audit of ALS-D following my site visits in January 2022 using the Sample AoLS Assessment Pro Forma, to inform my proof of evidence. This is presented in Table SH-30.

5.2.15 The AoLS between Sileby and Cossington (ALS-D) is divided into three key component character areas, consisting of:

- a single 'open' arable field on rising valley sides of the Appeal site east of Cossington Road;
- 'contained' pasture land on the flatter lower-lying floodplain edge, with smaller fields defined by hedgerows and trees west of Cossington Road; and
- 'enclosed' forms and setting of Brook Farm (historic barns and farmhouse), Derrys Nurseries (glass houses and sheds), associated vegetation, hedgerows and trees.

5.2.16 The farmland parts of the AoLS are a coherent landscape unit which is typical of the wider NCA 69 and Soar Valley LCA as defined in the relevant publications, whilst the built forms, vertical elements and parking areas associated with Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries are more ambiguous and impart an urban fringe / peri-urban character. This serves to reduce the distinction between the two settlements within the narrowest part of the AoLS.

5.2.17 ALS-D is appreciated principally by the following groups of people:

- local residents on the edge of Sileby and Cossington and on the edge of the AoLS, overlooking either the arable field, pasture land or Brooks Farm and Derrys Nurseries;
- travellers along the Cossington Road which pass through the narrowest part of the AoLS, and between the pasture land, Brooks Farm and arable field (including local residents);
- travellers along the railway immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary; and
- recreational users of the public rights of way to the south of Cossington Road and (which pass through the pasture land part of the AoLS), travellers along the Leicestershire Round and visitors to Cossington Meadows (which pass along the proposed revised western boundary of the AoLS).

5.2.18 The open undeveloped character of the arable field and pasture land is in part defined by the contrast with the existing Sileby settlement and individual dwellings and elements around its edges, including the ribbon development along the western side of Cossington Road.

5.2.19 There is also a tall strip of evergreen conifer hedgerow on the western side of

Cossington Road. A further strip of evergreen conifers extends east of Brook Farm and mixed deciduous trees follow the watercourse.

5.2.20 The railway line is on an embankment where it crosses the watercourse, but merges with the natural landform as it rises to the north-east of the AoLS.

5.2.21 The topographical containment of the land gives it a close relationship to the existing Sileby settlement edge and its open countryside character can be readily appreciated from the public right of way and Cossington Road. This only serves to heighten the importance of the Appeal site's contribution to the openness between Sileby and Cossington.

5.2.22 Situated within the narrowest part of the AoLS, fronting onto the eastern side of Cossington Road, is Brook Farm. This detached farmhouse also has several barns, tall vegetation and other boundary features, as well as vehicle parking, movements and access (for the model railway club meetings). Adjacent to this is Derry Nurseries with glasshouse and barns, extensive hard standing, signage and movements from staff and customers.

5.2.23 The height, enclosure and appearance of the Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries, reduces the visual perception of a gap between the two settlements for travellers along the road and footpaths in the vicinity (especially when the barn is being used by model railway club meetings and the car park is full):

- the narrowest distance between the corner of Brook Farm barn and property No.235 Cossington Road on the edge of Sileby, east of Cossington Road is 130m; and
- the narrowest distance between the corner of Brook Farm barn and property No. 188 Cossington Road on the edge of Sileby, west of Cossington Road is 30m.

5.2.24 For travellers along the Cossington Road and footpath, the narrow gap between the settlements of Cossington and Sileby is in part defined by the enclosure formed by Brooks Farm barns and farmhouse which face onto the eastern side of the highway and the contrast with the wide, open space of the Appeal site. West of the highway, there is also enclosure formed by roadside hedgerows and trees, creating a narrow corridor, which further contrasts with the wider, open space of the rising arable field within the Appeal site.

- 5.2.25 For walkers travelling along the public right of way, the gap between the settlements of Cossington and Sileby is in part defined by the contrast between the smaller scale and complex pattern of the pastures on the lower-lying land and the narrow gap between dwellings west of Cossington Road and the Brooks Farm barns and farmhouse east of Cossington Road and the wide, open space of the Appeal site.
- 5.2.26 The functionality of ALS-D is at risk of being compromised by future development, by virtue of its already narrow width, inter-locking pattern of enclosure from several landscape elements and features and resulting 'pinch point' associated with the corner of No. 188 west of Cossington Road and the car park entrance to Brook Farm, east of Cossington Road.
- 5.2.27 Overall, I agree with the 'Moderate' purpose score, as ALS-D provides the gap between Sileby and Cossington, preventing further ribbon development along Cossington Road and ensuring that the integrity of the gap is maintained.

**Table SH-30 – ALS–D Site Audit by S Higson following Site Visits in January 2021**

<p>Existing Uses and Density of Building</p>	<p>The only built development within the AoLS is Brook Farm barns and detached farmhouse buildings and greenhouses and sheds at Derrys Nurseries.</p> <p>The remainder of AoLS feels open, albeit with development along its northern and southern boundaries.</p> <p>The elements and activities associated with Brook Farm (model railway club parking) and Derrys Nurseries (signage, staff and customers) reduce openness and sense of rurality</p>
<p>Landscape Character and type</p>	<p>The farmland parts of the AoLS are a coherent landscape unit which is typical of the wider NCA 69 and Soar Valley LCA as defined in the relevant publications, whilst the built forms, vertical elements and parking areas associated with Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries are more ambiguous and impart an urban fringe / peri-urban character. This serves to reduce the distinction between the two settlements within the narrowest part of the AoLS.</p> <p>Moderate Condition - The AoLS east of Cossington Road is well managed high grade agricultural land, whilst the AoLS west of Cossington Road is pasture and in good condition (with clearly marked footpaths), good thick hedgerows and trees. Brooks Farm and Derry Nurseries have areas of hardstanding and parking. Although close to the settlements of Sileby and Cossington and well used by recreational visitors, there is limited negative urbanising influences (neglect, litter). The nursery has ancillary timber yard / hardstanding associated.</p>
<p>Landscape and other features</p>	<p>The dominant landcover is arable, with minor component of pasture land and other (Brook farm and Derrys Nurseries). The extension of the AoLS westwards as proposed in the submitted Core Strategy would increase pasture land such that it would be of similar proportion to the arable land.</p> <p>Other elements include clipped hedgerows along Cossington Road and garden boundaries, railway along eastern boundary, trees on the watercourse along part of the southern boundary and various fences. Post and rail around the Brook Farm car park.</p> <p>Tall strip of evergreen conifer hedgerow on the western side of Cossington Road and a further strip of evergreen conifers extends east of Brook Farm and mixed deciduous trees follow the watercourse.</p>
<p>Proximity to Neighbouring Settlements</p>	<p>The settlement edges of Sileby and Cossington are physically very close, yet there remains a clear sense of separation provided by the AoLS.</p> <p>The settlements of Sileby and Cossington can be seen from the AoLS, with varying degrees of sightlines / vistas from different locations along the road and footpaths.</p> <p>Key views exist from the Leicestershire Round looking north wards over the AoLS and with the edge of Sileby to the left and Cossington (including Conservation Area and Church of All Saints) visible to the right. Pasture land is in the foreground and arable is in the distance, with Brook Farm barns also visible.</p>

	<p>Important views looking out from the site across the wider landscape, include expansive views north-westwards over the Soar Valley and up to Charnwood Forest</p>
Visual Assessment	<p>Scale: Large scale arable field in north-east, Medium to Small scale pasture fields to west, Small scale Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries through centre</p> <p>Enclosure: Open arable field in north-east, Enclosed pasture fields, Enclosed Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries</p> <p>Remoteness: Active along Cossington Road, footpaths and around Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries (to varying degrees).</p> <p>Unity: Interrupted to Fragmented due to interlocking elements and features and contrast in character between arable field and smaller pasture fields and hedgerows</p> <p>Visual Dynamic: Sweeping arable field, contrasts with more channelled pasture fields, Brook Farm and Derrys Nurseries</p>
Nature and Extent of Urban Edges	<p>The AoLS is bounded by defensible features to the north, south and east, consisting of the hard settlement edge of Sibleby, a small brook and the railway line. The boundary to the west is weakly defined and does not appear to follow a logical or readily recognisable feature.</p> <p>An alternative defensible boundary has been proposed by extending the western edge of to the stronger alternative boundary formed by the mature trees along the Leicestershire Round and entrance point to Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve</p> <p>The AoLS forms part of the setting to the Cossington Conservation Area and Church of All Saints.</p> <p>The resolution to grant planning permission for development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington (P/20/2393/2) will result in this settlement expanding in size and introducing additional development within the local setting of the AoLS</p>
Recreational opportunities and Public Access	<p>Public right of way in southern part of AoLS connects to footpath alongside Cossington Road and also public car park by Church of All Saints to the south. All paths are well used.</p> <p>The proposed extension of the AoLS boundary to the west would include the Leicestershire Round and entrance point to Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve</p>
Transport Infrastructure	<p>Cossington Road passes through the centre of the AoLS, creating movement and access to a wide range of viewers</p> <p>The railway embankment along eastern boundary presents a physical barrier on the south east, the landscape visually connects north-eastward beyond.</p>

### Reduction of the Perceived Gap

5.2.28 There is currently a clear entry / exit point to Sileby settlement between No. 235 and No. 164 on either side of Cossington Road, where north of this point the road corridor is flanked by housing on both sides ('urban street'), whilst south of this point the road corridor is flanked by housing to the west and open countryside to the east ('ribbon development').

5.2.29 In addition, for travellers along the railway line looking west, the properties around No. 143 Chalfront Drive, define the entry / exist point to Sileby settlement.

5.2.30 The open countryside of the Appeal site forms part of the settlement gateway and a clear sense of arrival to Sileby.

5.2.31 The existing character edge of Sileby, east of Cossington Road is defined by:

- an obvious, straight line extending perpendicular to the route of the public highway, defined by clipped hedgerows and other garden boundaries to the rear of properties along Chalfront Drive (No.2 to No. 155);
- a mix of bungalows and two storey dwellings, stepping up as built forms;
- a wide sweep of a single arable field adjacent to the garden boundaries on a rising, visually prominent slope, which is simple and contrasts with the complexity of the built forms; and
- a wide skyline to the east of the railway line which is undeveloped (except for distant and indistinct collection of buildings around Ratcliffe College at over 2km away).

5.2.32 The existing character edge of Sileby, west of Cossington Road, is defined by:

- a relatively short stretch of ribbon development which extends along the route of the highway (and faces onto the Appeal site);
- Properties No.188 to 186 Cossington road are detached bungalows, whilst No. 184 to No. 158 are three blocks of two-storey terraced properties, with open front gardens and driveways;
- As the topography slopes away over the floodplain further west of the road,

there is wide sky beyond the roof tops of these properties.

- 5.2.33 Based on the Golby and Luck Illustrative Masterplan Drawings GL1400 13 and 13A (CD1.03 and CD2.06), the addition of the proposed development east of the Cossington Road would move the existing entry / exit point to Sileby settlement southwards and create an extended section of 'urban streets' along the highway and a reduced section of 'ribbon development', and overall reduction in the wide, open space of the Appeal site. There would also be a loss of open undeveloped skyline to the east.
- 5.2.34 A green corridor of landscaping and infrastructure is shown extending perpendicular to the road along the southern part of the Appeal site which I estimate would range between about 60m wide adjacent to the Cossington Road and 130m wide adjacent to the railway line.
- 5.2.35 This new corridor is shown as including locally equipped area for play (LEAP), structural and buffer planting, attenuation ponds (as wet meadow), species-rich meadow grassland and bound gravel cycle path/footpath. I would also anticipate that fencing, signage, bins and other hard landscaping elements would be introduced into this new corridor. These new elements and features would add variety of textures, colours, movement and other aesthetic aspects and reduce the sense of scale and openness.
- 5.2.36 Based on the description of structural landscaping and softening of views of the new housing, as described in GLLVIA, the new green corridor of land may not result in as clear and obvious an edge to the settlement, as existing (with the contrast of built form and the simple open arable field).
- 5.2.37 As the proposed landscaping matures, views of the development would still remain. In particular, parts of dwellings, rooftops, infrastructure, access road, lighting and car headlights, especially in Winter months.
- 5.2.38 The new green corridor would be strongly influenced by built development around the northern and western edges and is unlikely to be of sufficient width to maintain the sense of a gap of open countryside for those travelling alongside.
- 5.2.39 I would therefore expect that it would therefore be perceived more as an 'urban greenspace' corridor between built up areas, a road and railway line and extend the 'peri-urban' / urban fringe character of Brooks Farm and Derry Nurseries.
- 5.2.40 Furthermore, for travellers in vehicles the presence of the corridor may not even be

apparent. I would estimate that it would take approximately 4 seconds for a vehicle travelling at 30mph along Cossington Road to pass by and with attention being on the road corridor in front.

5.2.41 Consequently, the proposal (including the development and open space) would have a harmful effect on the visual component of the AoLS openness. Moreover, given the scale of the development, the loss of spatial openness cannot be fully mitigated through siting, landscaping, and design. The proposal would cause a permanent loss of an important and prominent part of the AoLS.

5.2.42 For these reasons, I do not consider that the proposed development would maintain a satisfactory area of separation.

5.2.43 With reference to Policy CS11, Policy CT4/2 and Policy G2 the proposed development would not retain the predominately open and undeveloped character of the Appeal site and would reduce the already narrow gap between the settlements of Sileby and Cossington.

#### Potential Effect of Planting Enhancement within the Site

5.2.44 The Appellant's Statement of Case also referred to the potential effect of planting enhancement within the site and the characteristics of the wider countryside in this location and any new vistas on land which is not currently accessible to the public. I have therefore considered each of these points below.

5.2.45 The characteristics of the wider Soar Valley countryside within and around the Appeal site are defined by the distinctive flat floodplain and rising valley sides which have a well-defined and recognised contrast, summarised as follows:

- Flat floodplain with small to medium sized riverside pastures which are enclosed by thick hedgerows and trees to form a small-scale, complex, textured, with muted greens and reflective standing and running water; and
- Rising valley sides with larger-sized arable fields which are large-scale, more open and visually prominent. The land cover is also simple, smooth, with muted greens and browns.

5.2.46 The potential effect of planting enhancement within the Appeal site is likely to result in increased enclosure, an associated reduction in scale, complexity, texture and colour.

- 5.2.47 Whilst this may have the potential to reflect the characteristics of the flatter floodplain areas (depending on the planting design and species specifications), it would not reflect the characteristics of the rising valley sides.
- 5.2.48 The development has the potential to introduce new vistas on land which is not currently accessible to the public. The masterplan shows gravel bound footpaths and cycleways extending west to east at contours between 47m AOD and 50m AOD, with a spur to the edge of the housing at 51m AOD. A second grass path appears to extend east west nearer to the watercourse at 47m to 49m AOD. This is at least 5m below the crest of the railway embankment (at 55m AOD) and as such will be enclosed and of small scale. The new vistas along these paths are unlikely to represent local countryside character due to the influence of the built forms, LEAP and other elements and features.
- 5.2.49 Planting within and around the new residential development at the Appeal site would benefit the new inhabitants, in terms of creating a more pleasant place to live and new structural planting may potentially provide screening and obscuring of the new built elements. However this would not mitigate for the loss of the open arable field and the reduction of the undeveloped character and gap between the two settlements.







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