

Land at Queen Court Farm, Ospringe, Faversham

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

for

Shepherd Neame Ltd

July 2022

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

- 1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared on behalf of Shepherd Neame Ltd by The Landscape Partnership (TLP).

1.2 Objectives of this report

- 1.2.1 This report provides an assessment of the site within its landscape context which comprises both the village of Ospringe and the surrounding rural landscape.

- 1.2.2 The report includes consideration of:

- the character and the site and its immediate context
- landscape character context
- landscape related designations
- the extent to which the site is currently visible
- the proposed development
- the likely effects on site features and landscape character
- the likely effects on views

- 1.2.3 An earlier version of this report was initially produced in March 2021 as a Landscape Statement to inform Pre-Application discussions with Swale Borough Council. A further version was produced in November 2021 to inform consultation with English Heritage. This version has been updated and developed following the prior consultation process to inform a planning application comprising 7 residential units to the east of the site together with associated access from Water Lane and areas of open space to the west and north east. For clarity this report is not a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) as would be required for EIA development but still draws from the principles within Guidelines the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Edition 3 (GLVIA3). These include consideration of landscape character and visual receptors as separate topics and consideration of sensitivity and likely magnitude of change and significance of effect. This report is termed an ‘appraisal’ with the approach being proportionate to the scale and context of the project. The use of proportionality in carrying out LVIA’s and appraisals is supported by GLVIA (GLVIA para 1.20).

- 1.2.4 A site visit was carried out by Jonathan Billingsley (CMLI) in February 2020 on a clear and dry day. A number of photographs were taken from public locations on the site visit and are reproduced within Appendix 1 to this report. The presentation of photographs A-P in Appendix 1 is not in accordance with Technical Guidance Note 06/19 but it is considered they provide a fair representation of views of and to the site and the local context being taken in the winter months which represent the most open situation.

- 1.2.5 This report has also been informed by the work of other consultants in Shepherd Neame’s design team including:

- On Architecture - Architecture and site layout
- Odyssey - Hydrology
- Simon Milliken – Planning
- Lee Prosser- Cultural Heritage
- RGP- Transport Planning

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The detailed application of the GLVIA Guidelines, the criteria and categories used, and the assumptions and limitations applied for this project are set out in Appendix 2, Methodology. The assessment approach sets out the anticipated significance of the changes to the landscape and views, should the proposed development proceed. This is achieved by first understanding the relative sensitivity of the character of the landscape and the view being experienced and then combining this with the magnitude or extent of change that would result from the proposed development. Changes can be experienced as an adverse, beneficial or neutral influence. These three variations are sometimes termed the 'nature of the effect.' Other considerations are also taken into account such as seasonal variation, direct or indirect effects and comparison of effects in the first year at winter following completion and those after a period of time once any proposed planting has established. For this study a second assessment date of summer Year 15 from completion has been used. Changes would also be incremental between Year 1 up to Year 15 and this is noted where relevant. Vegetation would continue to grow beyond Year 15.

1.3.2 The following assumptions have been made in respect to the assessment of effects:

- The assessment Baseline year is 2022.
- The development would be a long term, permanent development.
- The proposed tree and hedgerow planting would grow at a rate of approximately 300-400mm/year, based on the average expected growth rates for the selected species and planted size growing on the local soil type. Predicted growth is also based on the assumption that no growth will take place in the first year, as the plants adjust to their new growing environments.
- A receptor for a view from footway, public rights of way, public open space and within a residential property is an adult standing with an eye height of 1.6m.
- Visual effects are assessed based on good visibility. Visual effects can be expected to vary e.g. poor visibility at times of low cloud, rainfall and dusk. At these times, a reduction in visual clarity, colour and contrast would be experienced. Reduced visibility would limit the extent of view possible particularly from mid to long distance views. Consequently, the assessment of effects is based on the worst-case scenario, where the proposed development would be most visible.

2 Site description and features

2.1 Site description

- 2.1.1 The Site is located to the south of the village of Ospringe forming part of Queen Court Farm. The site location is shown on Figures 01 – 05 within Appendix 1. The red line of the planning application comprises the access road, 7 residential units and associated private gardens and parking areas, parking barns and areas of hard surfacing. The remainder of the site (also within Shepherd Neame's ownership) comprises the surrounding land that will be restored to open space uses for both the community and local residents. These two parts of the site are closely related in purpose and so described as the 'site' in this report.
- 2.1.2 The site is located to the north of the Queen Court listed farmhouse and the two timber framed listed barns. The barns have planning permission for conversion into residential accommodation and the curtilage of these barns form the south west boundary of the site.
- 2.1.3 The western boundary of the site is marked by Water Lane and along the boundary there is a length of over mature elm hedgerow to the south and chestnut pale fencing to the remainder including opposite properties fronting Water Lane.
- 2.1.4 The northern boundary of the site follows Mutton Lane for approximately 50m, with the boundary marked by continuation of the chestnut pale fencing and then follows the side and rear boundary of a pallet packing store business and continues along the rear garden boundary of Laurel Cottage (listed) a detached residential property before connecting again with Mutton Lane to the east.
- 2.1.5 The south-east boundary of the site runs perpendicular from Mutton Lane along the side garden boundary of The Old Barn (located on the junction of Mutton Lane and Vicarage Lane) up to the edge of the structures at Queen Court Farm.
- 2.1.6 In terms of land-use the central and southern part of the site comprises a number of redundant agricultural structures, including open sided barns and some concrete block and brick structures. These buildings are without exception in a poor state of repair and although until relatively recently utilised for agriculture are visually unattractive structures. The buildings sit within areas of hardstanding
- 2.1.7 The north-west of the site comprises an area of open land covered in rank vegetation. The eastern part of the site, from the existing farm buildings up to Mutton Lane, comprises areas of further rank vegetation and some areas of exposed chalk.

- 2.1.8 Queen Court Farm sits within the Nailbourne Valley. The historic alignment of the seasonal watercourse, the Nailbourne, ran from south to north across the site and to the east of the main grouping of farm buildings. The former watercourse passed under Vicarage Lane, where a brick bridge provides evidence of the previous stream alignment and leaves the site via a culvert under Mutton Lane to the northern boundary. The alignment of the Nailbourne followed a reasonably straight route through the site as evidenced by historic OS plans (see below for extract from the 1906 OS plan). To Nailbourne historically crossed Mutton Lane via a ford and then on to a Mill Pond, which has now disappeared.



- 2.1.9 The landform to the west of the former watercourse is relatively flat in character (c 12-14M AOD), while to the east of the former watercourse the topography rises up more steeply towards Mutton Lane (c 21m AOD) and beyond towards Mount View.
- 2.1.10 Trees and vegetation within the site include a number of features. To the western boundary with Water Lane there is a length of over mature elm hedgerow (approximately 60m) much of which is dead or dying (see photograph D). Following the approximate alignment of the former Nailbourne stream there are a group of taller poplar trees and areas willow scrub to the north-east boundary. Other groupings of trees are present to the rear of the two properties to the north east on Mutton Lane and also following close the boundary of a section of Mutton Lane. The majority of the remainder the site is clear of woody vegetation or hedgerows apart from small areas of self-set elder scrub.

2.1.11 In terms of assessing landscape value of a site, Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 provides a list of criteria, which are considered below in relation to the contribution of the site to the local area.

- **Landscape Quality** (condition) – This criterion relates to the physical state of the landscape and the intactness and condition of the individual features. The majority of the site including both the existing buildings and surrounding land are in a poor state of repair and condition with no obvious signs of management. The landscape condition is considered to be **Low**
- **Scenic quality** – The site has a few features that could give rise to scenic quality including established trees and the rising ground to the east. However, these are currently compromised and offset by a number of detracting features. The existing scenic quality of the site overall is considered to be **Medium/Low**, but with the potential to increase to Medium/High.
- **Rarity and representativeness** – The site is considered to be a poor representation of the landscape character as defined in published assessments at a District scale.
- **Conservation Interest** – the site is fully located within the Ospringe Conservation Area. However, there are no features on the site itself of particular conservation merit. There are however a number of listed buildings within the vicinity most notably the Queen Court Farmhouse and listed barns directly to the south-west of the site and properties fronting Water Lane. The conservation interest of the site is therefore currently **Medium**, but with potential to increase.
- **Recreation Value** - there are no public rights of way across the Site and no informal access for the public. However, a promoted circular walking route ‘Faversham-Footsteps of Romans and Royalty Walk¹ follows Water Lane past the site (see Figure 04). As a result, recreation value is currently considered to be **Medium/Low**.
- **Perceptual aspects** – This criterion in the GLVIA relates to experience of wildness and tranquillity. Water Lane and Mutton Lane are relatively quiet locations. Perceptual aspects are considered to be **Medium**.
- **Associations** – this criterion relates to associations typically with writers or artists. Non-are known for the site. However, Queen Court Farm is known to belong to Odo, a half brother of William of Normandy.

2.1.12 Based on the above considerations, it is considered that the site currently has a **Medium/Low** landscape value. The site is not considered to be a ‘valued landscape’ (or part of one) in accord with Paragraph 174b of the NPPF. However, due to its position within the Ospringe Conservation Area the landscape value of the site has the potential to increase subject to enhancements on the site.

¹ <https://explorekent.org/activities/footsteps-of-romans-and-royalty-walk-faversham/>

2.2 Landscape features and their sensitivity

2.2.1 Details of the individual Site landscape features and their sensitivity to change are set out in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Site landscape features

Site feature	Description	Landscape sensitivity: value	Landscape sensitivity: susceptibility to change	Overall landscape sensitivity
Landform	See above	Medium	Medium	Medium
Land Use	See above	Low	Medium	Low
Vegetation	See above	Medium	Medium	Medium
Public access	See above	Medium/Low	Medium	Medium

3 Landscape character

3.1 Published landscape character assessments

3.1.1 The importance of understanding the landscape character of all landscapes in England is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 170), which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to the natural environment by: *“recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services”*. Landscape character assessment is the process which can identify these intrinsic values and unique characteristics of the diverse landscapes in the UK.

3.1.2 Landscape character assessments enable landscapes to be described and understood by mapping natural, physical and cultural features in order to define different landscapes and demonstrate what makes them special. Landscape character types share similar characteristics, such as underlying geology, soil type, topography and landform, the pattern and type of land/field enclosure, historic land use, the pattern of settlements and types of building that these comprise, tree and woodland cover and the general visual experience of the area. Landscape character areas are specific geographic areas that exhibit a generic landscape character type which can be found in different locations.

3.2 National level

3.2.1 Natural England has divided England into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCA) that define the landscape character at a national scale. The Site lies within NCA 113 North Kent Plain. The next closest NCA's are 119 North Downs which lies to the south of the M2 and NCA 81 Greater Thames

Estuary which lies to the north of Faversham. There is no inter-visibility or connections between the Site and NCA 119 or NCA 81 and therefore these areas are not considered further. The character of NCA 113 is summarised as follows:

The North Kent Plain National Character Area (NCA) is the strip of land between the Thames Estuary to the north and the chalk of the Kent Downs to the south. The area is open, low and gently undulating. It is a very productive agricultural area with predominantly high-quality, fertile loam soils characterised by arable use. Traditional orchards, soft fruits and other horticultural crops exist in central and eastern areas giving rise to the use of the title 'Garden of England'. There is an extensive area of ancient woodland around Blean, plus significant ancient woodlands further west. However, it is generally an open landscape: characteristic shelterbelts occur within the fruit-growing areas, but the agricultural land is mostly devoid of hedgerows.

- 3.2.2 Within the NCA profile for the North Kent Plain a number of statements of environmental opportunities are set out and of these the two most relevant to the Site are SEO1 and SEO4 as follows

SEO 1: Maintain the historic character and long tradition of a farmed landscape, creating habitats to establish more resilient and coherent ecological networks within the farmed and peri-urban areas, benefitting biodiversity and geodiversity, and helping to regulate water and soil quality. Protect traditional practices including the longstanding associations of the fruit belt, maintaining a strong sense of place and reinforcing Kent's reputation as the Garden of England.

SEO 4: Protect and enhance the strong character and heritage of the urban areas. Plan for the creation of significant new areas of green space and green corridors to provide a framework for new and existing development in urban areas and along major transport routes.

3.3 County Level

- 3.3.1 At a County scale the relevant character assessment was prepared by Jacobs Babbie for Kent County Council (2004). Within this study the Site falls within the Eastern Fruit Belt character area, which extends around most of the west, south and east of Faversham. See Figure 02 in Appendix 1. The next closest character area at the County scale is the Faversham Fruit Belt: Mid Kent Downs, which is located to the south within c.700m of the Site beyond the M2.

- 3.3.2 The county study identifies that for the Eastern Fruit Belt the characteristic features include:

- the rural character, sense of remoteness and privacy;
- enclosed and diverse;
- strong woodland blocks;
- orchards and hops, shelter belts;
- large pockets of open farmland; and
- undulating landform

- 3.3.3 The condition of the character area is identified as 'poor' on account of the fact it has, '*lost the diversity of form associated with widespread fruit growing and has a degraded aspect resulting from*

detracting features such as post and wire fencing, redundant hedged field boundaries and dead elms.'

3.3.4 The sensitivity of the landscape is considered to be 'low'. This is on account of, amongst other things, *'natural elements within the landscape such as field boundaries and woodlands are no longer distinctive, and the use species such as alder and poplar in the remaining shelter belts also reduces the historic value. Visibility is moderate as, although the landscape is relatively open, the landform is not a dominant feature in the view'.*

3.3.5 The landscape change within the character area and local to the Site can be identified from aerial photographs taken from Google Earth, at 1940, 1960, 1990, 2003 and 2008. These images illustrate changes in the location and presence of hedges and orchards along the Nailbourne. At Queen Court Farm the grouping of agricultural buildings was more compact in 1940 (see aerial photograph below) with grazing land to the north and east of the farm buildings. Agricultural structures progressively expanded to the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st-century on parts of the Site, with loss of boundary features and reduced influence of planting along the Nailbourne. The image below from 1940 is the last aerial record of pollard willows along the route of the Nailbourne.



- 3.3.6 The resultant strategy for landscape action within the Eastern Fruit Belt LCA is to *'create'* a new landscape pattern. This includes creating *'enclosure for rural lanes'* and *'areas of less intensive cultivation'*. It is noted that according to the County assessment that the Site falls within an area that is the lowest end of the spectrum in terms of both condition and sensitivity.

3.4 District Level

- 3.4.1 At a District scale the Site is located within the Area 20 - Faversham and Ospringe Fruit Belt as identified within the Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal SPD (referenced within Policy DM24 of the adopted Local Plan, Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017). Character Area 20 stretches across a large area of land to the south of Faversham. See Figure 02 in Appendix 1.
- 3.4.2 The landscape structure is described as generally strong and intact with many mature specimen trees in associated with farms and villages whilst shelterbelts are used to enclosed former and existing hop gardens and orchards. The character area is described in summary as being, *'a tranquil landscape with a strong traditional character. It contains many fine historic properties and ancient lanes. It is also a valuable landscape in terms of biodiversity due to the varied habitats and wildlife corridors that exist here'*.
- 3.4.3 The character area is considered to be in good condition. However, it is noted that in places hedgerows have become fragmented and supplemented with post and wire fencing. The character assessment also notes that the landscape contains few visual detractors, but that, *'some derelict buildings, farm buildings and poorly constructed stable blocks are occasionally seen.'* On the whole it is noted that there are consistently high quality of traditional buildings scattered throughout the area with modern development limited in extent and being well integrated. Landscape sensitivity is considered to be *'moderate'*. Visual sensitivity is overall considered moderate varying from *'high'* on the elevated open fields to *'low'* on the enclosed lower slopes, valleys and areas of orchards and hops. The assessment notes that built form has been somewhat eroded within the late 20th century expansion of farmsteads and the loss of many traditional farm buildings. The overall strategy for this area is to *'conserve and reinforce'*.

3.5 Local Level

- 3.5.1 The Swale Landscape Sensitivity Assessment² (SLSA) was produced by LUC for SBC in 2019 as part of the evidence-based for the emerging Local Plan. This provides an assessment of landscape sensitivity of the main settlement edges within SBC and identifies the site as falling within parcel FM3. This parcel (see pages 77-81 of the LUC study) extends from Ospringe to the north fanning out to the south beyond the M2 into the Kent Downs AONB. See also Figure 03 in Appendix 1 for the extent of FM3 near the site. Parcel FM3 includes substantial areas within land identified as existing AONB, Current Area of High Landscape Value and Proposed Local Landscape Designations

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https://services.swale.gov.uk/assets/planning%20policy%202019/full%20swale%20sensitivity%20v2_pdf.pdf

and AONB. However, the area north of the M2 around Ospringe and including the site is not covered by any of these landscape focused designations. However, the summary of Designations and Constraints (as illustrated on Page 77 of the study) identifies the boundary of the Ospringe Conservation Area, together with listed buildings within the settlement. Several areas within FM3 (see page 78) are noted as amongst the SHLAA Call for Sites, which includes the site subject to this study.

3.5.2 The SLSA describes the character and setting of Ospringe as follows, *‘Ospringe has partly developed along the A2 (Watling Street) and is strongly related to the edge of Faversham. Despite the presence of the busy A2 and proximity to Faversham, the landscape area around Ospringe has largely retained its rural character, including orchards and an intimacy of scale in part, and provides a scenic backdrop and setting to the village and the edge of Faversham.’*

3.5.3 The SLSA assesses the overall landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development (based on a typology of 2 to 3 storey housing over 2 ha) is High. However, this sensitivity is based on a defined scale and within the whole of FM3 which includes the substantial areas of FM3 with existing landscape designations. The red line of the planning application is <0.5ha with the remainder of the site being open space. Guidance notes are provided within the SLSA which include that any new development should be landscape led and consideration given to sensitive heritage assets including Conservation Areas and listed buildings specifically noting effects on the Church of St Peter and St Paul at Ospringe. There is also a requirement to ensure that new development is sensitive to local character and context in terms of scale, massing, style and materials and specifically that the rural approach to Ospringe along Water Lane and Vicarage Lane should be maintained.

3.6 Site scale

3.6.1 At a local level, the Site and its immediate setting can be further understood in the context of the immediate character around the site. See Figures 03 and 0-4 in Appendix 1. The immediate setting is considered to extend up to approximately 500m from the site and includes the majority of Ospringe Conservation area and the surrounding agricultural landscape to the west and south. This level of assessment is helpfully informed by the district scale assessment referenced above and the Ospringe Conservation Area Appraisal referenced in Section 4 below.

3.7 Summary of sensitivity of landscape character to change

3.7.1 Table 4.1 summarises the local landscape character areas and their sensitivity to change, as detailed above.

Table 4.1: Landscape character – sensitivity

Ref	Landscape Character Unit	Landscape sensitivity: value	Landscape sensitivity: susceptibility to change	Overall landscape sensitivity
National, County and District Landscape Character Assessments				
NCA 113	North Kent Plain	Medium	Medium	Medium
KCC	Faversham Fruit Belt: Mid Kent Downs	Low	Medium	Low
SDC LCA Area 20	Faversham and Ospringe Fruit Belt	Medium	Low to High	Medium
SDC SLSA	Parcel FM3	Medium to cause a job still waiting still waiting for reports High	Medium to High	High
In the vicinity of the Site				
	Local Level (0.5km)	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Site Level (see Section 3 above)	Low	Medium	Medium/Low

4 Designations

4.1 National Landscape Designations

4.1.1 The North Downs AONB is located within 700m to the south of the M2. The location of the AONB is shown on Figure 01 at Appendix 1. Due to the distance, intervening vegetation and marked barrier formed by the M2 corridor there is no interface between the AONB and the site or local study area.

4.2 County and Local Landscape Designations

4.2.1 The site is located near to two Areas of High Landscape Value-Kent Level as defined within the Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017 (ref Policy DM24). The extent and location of the designations are shown on Figures 01 and 03 in Appendix 1. The closest area to the west is focused on the Doddington and Newham Dry Valleys and include the grounds of Syndale Park which at their closest are approximately 350 m to the west of the site. However, the boundary of the Area

of High Landscape Value within Syndale Park is formed by a mature belt of trees which prevents any interface or views between the landscape designation and the site. The second Area of High Landscape Value is located to the south-east of the site in excess of 650 m distance beyond the M2 corridor. There is no interface between the site and study area and this designated landscape.

4.3 Conservation Areas

4.3.1 Ospringe Conservation Area (designated 1982) includes both areas of settlement, focused to the north along the A2 and Water Lane, and areas of more rural character along the Nailbourne Valley which extends to the south towards the M2. The extent of the Conservation Area is shown on Figure 03 within Appendix 1. Consideration of cultural heritage context and effects is covered in the separate report by Lee Prosser. However, there can often be an overlap between heritage and landscape considerations, particularly where a Conservation Area include areas of countryside. The description for the Ospringe Conservation Area includes a number of aspects that relate to landscape character and for this reason are included below.

4.3.2 The text for the Conservation Area Appraisal includes the following, *‘Watery meadows were at one time present along the bottom of the valley alongside Water Lane and willow trees grew beside the edge of the stream (one specimen still survives close to the Old Vicarage). By the end of the 20th century however, the stream had permanently dried probably due to water abstraction from nearby boreholes. The little red brick bridge in Vicarage Lane spanning the dry stream-bed now serves as a ghostly reminder of this one once picturesque watercourse. It seems that when the nailbourne stopped flowing part of the specialness of Ospringe vanished forever, so wherever occasional fragments of Nailbourne evidence still survive there of special interest³.*

4.3.3 The Appraisal continues, *‘Development along Water Lane is, by contrast, rather more open in appearance and more informally structured; its defining feature is the manner in which it embraces the transition character from ‘urban’ to ‘rural’⁴ and ‘South of Mutton Lane the environment turns distinctly rural in character with fields breaking through into the street frontage. Queen Court (just beyond Mutton Lane) is a large working farm complex where a prominent array of concrete-framed animal shelters and farm buildings now sit alongside the 15th century farmhouse. Until 1982 the farm supplied hops to the Shepherd Neame brewery in Faversham but the fields around are now predominately arable and part the farmyard appears to be rather sparingly used⁵.....’ Two timber-framed, aisled barns are still present on the western and southern edges of the otherwise modern farmyard; both had weatherboard insides set onto brick bases and both, and usually are still in agricultural use. The larger, partially obscured barn has a lofty steep pitch roof that was originally thatched but is now covered with corrugated iron. The smaller barn is set directly onto the roadside verge and is consequentially more prominent in the view along Water Lane;’ The rustic and functional nature of both these farm buildings plays a crucial role in the by-now rural character of the lane. By contrast, the 18th-century timber-framed card has opposite has (since the 1990s) being converted into two dwellings; here the domesticated appearance of the resulting building and the*

³ Paragraph 8 from Ospringe Conservation Area Character Appraisal -2004

⁴ Paragraph 22

⁵ Paragraph 26

suburban treatment of the associated curtilages have together caused much of the original agricultural character to be lost⁶.

4.3.4 The Appraisal continues, *'The western slope of Water Lane valley is relatively shallow and open in character (often with large arable fields but also including the large area of allotments), whereas the eastern side is rather sharp in profile with smaller parts of land sometimes interspersed with the remnants of an older pattern of small fields, hedgerows, woodland and orchards. Four pairs of matching, yellow brick houses in Mount View occupy a prominent position on the top edge of the valley slopes. Beyond Vicarage Lane the valley landform in the view to the south-east becomes noticeably more pronounced.'⁷.....'* The road edges abutting the arable and grazing fields are for the most part marked by lengths of hedgerow and soft verges, but in a number of instances these hedgerows are thin and gappy and in need of concerted management to promote their rejuvenation. The entrance to the Queen Court farmyard, shrouded by corrugated iron, is a decidedly utilitarian affair and detracts from the frontage to the farm.....' Mutton Lane and Vicarage Lane, both turnings off Water Lane to the east, climb the slope on the eastern side of the nailbourne valley. Overhanging trees and hedgerows accentuate their narrow, winding form and reinforce their distinctively rural character. They also help to define the sense of valley enclosure in the view from Water Lane. An old farm building (formerly with attached oasthouse roundels) is strategically positioned on rising ground to the junction of Mutton Lane with Vicarage Lane. Although somewhat neglected and apparently on use, the yellow brick ground floor and weatherboarding above are characteristically Kentish in appearance..... This unassuming building, comfortably settled into the slope of the valley, continues to make an important contribution to the rural scene.⁸'

4.3.5 The above extracts from the Ospringe Conservation Area Appraisal illustrate some key features of the landscape character, together with how historic buildings form key features and landmarks within it. These provide a more detailed assessment of the local study area than provided within the district and county character assessments.

4.3.6 It is noteworthy that the text records a few detracting features, a number of which relate to the site. However, the appraisal text is also somewhat dated (2004) and there have been a number of subsequent changes in land-use and management. These include:

- the old barn at the junction of Mutton Lane and Vicarage Lane has been converted into residential use
- Queen Court Farm has now ceased to operate as a working farm
- the two listed barns have been granted planning permission for conversion into residential use.

4.3.7 The likelihood of the site (which includes the remainder of the farmyard) being used again for agricultural use is remote. The remaining agricultural buildings on the site do not have a viable function or represent potential candidates for conversion. In any event these buildings are largely post 1960 in origin and were not part of the historic character of Queen Court or Ospringe (see OS map at paragraph 2.1.8 above). Nonetheless, an opportunity now arises from the changes in land

⁶ paragraph 28

⁷ Paragraph 31

⁸ Paragraph 33

management and land-uses to re-order the site. This could include removal of the dilapidated and unattractive late 20th century farm buildings and recreating some of the historic land uses and character to the western half of the site and also to the north-east corner. This would help to reinforce the rural character noted in the appraisal fronting Water Lane and Mutton Lane. An opportunity arises to create an enhanced meadow to the north-west of the site, redefine the alignment of the seasonal and now dry Nailbourne by forming a modest channel and to reinforce the route with tree planting. These improvements could provide an enhanced setting for the listed and historic buildings at Queen Court Farm including the listed barns that are to be restored and converted.

- 4.3.8 Syndale Conservation Area (designated 2008) lies c 350m to the west of the site and is associated with Syndale Park. There is no interrelationship between the site and Syndale Park and is therefore not considered further.

5 Visual context

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Fourteen representative viewpoints (A-P) have been selected to illustrate the public views of the Site. The viewpoints have been chosen from within the Visual Envelope. The extent of the Visual Envelope and location of these photographs is shown on Figure 04 and the baseline photographs are also provided in Appendix 1. Photographs A to P are provided by way of panoramas on A3 size sheets highlighting the extent of the site in the view and the degree to which it is visible.
- 5.1.2 The location and receptor types are set out in Table 5.1 below. An evaluation of the visual sensitivity is provided based on the combination of the susceptibility to change for receptors at each of the viewpoints relates to the change that would arise from the particular development type proposed (namely small scale residential development in a vernacular style) and the value of the view.

Table 5.1: Representative Viewpoints - sensitivity

Viewpoint No. and receptor type	Location and description	Visual sensitivity: value	Visual sensitivity: susceptibility to change	Overall visual sensitivity
Viewpoint A Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists 70m to the north of the site	View from Water Lane opposite Ospringe Primary School, Approach towards site along Water Lane within the Conservation Area. Some of the existing farm buildings are visible set back within the site. The Parish Church and Listed Barns at Queen Court Farm are visible on the skyline. Location on a promoted circular route.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint B Rep. of views for motorists,	View from Water Lane Close to junction with Mutton Lane	Medium	Medium	Medium

Viewpoint No. and receptor type	Location and description	Visual sensitivity: value	Visual sensitivity: susceptibility to change	Overall visual sensitivity
pedestrians and cyclists 15 to north-west of site	Northern part of site visible at close proximity beyond chestnut pale boundary fencing. Existing farm buildings visible within centre of site together with listed Barns forming a feature to the south on the skyline. Established trees and vegetation visible close to pallet store to the east. Rising ground to the east of the site leading up to Mutton Lane visible beyond farm buildings. Location on the promoted circular route.			
Viewpoint C Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists 7m to north of site	View from Mutton Lane Open view across northern part of site including range of farm buildings, listed barns and parish church. Established trees and hedges visible to the site boundaries. Vernacular buildings fronting Water Lane face the site to the west and areas of stacked pallets visible between vegetation to east.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint D Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists 5m to west of site	View from Water Lane View into site contained by overmature/dying/dead Elm hedgerow. Northern part of the site screened by boundary fencing. Location on a promoted circular route.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint E Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists 5m to west of the site	View from Water Lane Location at entrance into modern farmyard complex. Dilapidated fencing and over mature hedgerows to the road frontage, with agricultural farmyard buildings set back including the corrugated roof of the listed barns. Location on a promoted circular route.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint F Rep. of views for walkers west of site	View from Footpath ZF10 Location from footpath on valley slopes looking eastwards towards site. Foreground comprises a hopfield with field beyond. Existing barns within the site are visible on lower lying ground together with parts of the upper slopes rising to Mutton Lane to the east. Properties at Mount View prominent on skyline to the east of the valley.	Medium	High	High
Viewpoint G Rep. of views for visitors to	View from outside churchyard of St Peter and St Paul's	Medium	High	High

Viewpoint No. and receptor type	Location and description	Visual sensitivity: value	Visual sensitivity: susceptibility to change	Overall visual sensitivity
church 185m to south of the site	Queen Court Farmhouse visible in junction with Vicarage Lane and Water Lane precluding views into the site. Areas of vegetation to the east of the farmhouse and within the site visible rising up to Mutton Lane. Properties at Mount View and the black weather boarding on The Old Barn visible to the right of the site. Location on the promoted circular route.			
Viewpoint H Rep. of views for walkers 380 m to south of the site	View from Footpath ZF13 Elevated open views over arable fields into Nailbourne valley looking north-east towards site. Queen Court Farmhouse and listed Barns visible with tree groups to rear within site. Small part of site on rising ground the East visible leading up to Mutton Lane. Properties at Mount View visible on higher ground. Parish church visible further to the south. Location on the promoted circular route.	Medium	High	High
Viewpoint J Rep. of views for walkers. 215m to south	View from Footpath ZF 12 Open view over grassland /pasture within Nailbourne Valley looking north. Queen Court Farm and barn complex clearly visible. More recent agricultural buildings within site not visible. Trees within and on the boundary of the site visible the remainder of the view with no views to Ospringe village.	Medium	High	High
Viewpoint K Rep. of views for walkers, cyclists and motorists. 55m to south	View from Vicarage Lane View down Vicarage Lane towards Queen Court Farmhouse. Partially filtered views at the entrance of The Old Barn towards the range of agricultural buildings on the site. More distant and partial views towards properties at the edge of Ospringe .	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint L Rep. of views for walkers. 182m to south	View from Vicarage Lane Elevated and framed view through boundary hedgerow towards Ospringe set within the Nailbourne Valley. Queen Court Farmhouse visible together with agricultural buildings on the site. Distant views towards the A2 and development on the edge of the Faversham with woodland on skyline.	Medium	Medium	Medium

Viewpoint No. and receptor type	Location and description	Visual sensitivity: value	Visual sensitivity: susceptibility to change	Overall visual sensitivity
Viewpoint M Rep. of views for walkers and pedestrians, 5m to east	View from Mutton Lane Views into site and Queen Court Farm over vegetation to the boundary of Mutton Lane. Vacant character of site clearly visible. Fields on rising ground to the west leading towards wooded horizon around Syndale Park visible on the skyline.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint N Rep. of views for residents, 20m to east	View from Mount View View over Nailbourne Valley from parking areas to the front of residential properties. Roofscape of agricultural buildings within site visible within the valley and rising fields on valley slopes. Ornamental planting around Syndale Park form the horizon.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint P Rep. of views for motorists, walkers and pedestrians, 5m to east	View from Mutton Lane Open views for a short section of Mutton Lane into site and Queen Court Farm. Vacant character of site clearly visible. Fields on rising ground to the west leading towards wooded horizon around Syndale Park visible on the skyline. Parish church and properties to the edge of Ospringe features within view.	Medium	Medium	Medium

- 5.1.3 The assessment of public viewpoints from the locality has identified that the site has a relatively localised exposure to public views.
- 5.1.4 Views from the north are contained along Water Lane until at a relatively short distance from the site near to Ospringe Primary School (see Photograph A). There are open views across the northern part of the site from both Water Lane and Mutton Lane (See Photographs B and C) where adjacent to the site boundary. While the listed barns with their relatively steeply pitched roof profile are a notable feature in these views the range of redundant utilitarian agricultural buildings to the centre of the site are a detraction to the character of this area within the Conservation Area. The existing boundary fencing and unmanaged character of the land is also a detraction. The character of the site frontage further south along Water Lane (See photographs D and E) also includes features in relatively poor condition including the overmature and dying elm hedgerow and the boundary fencing to the farmyard entrance.
- 5.1.5 Views from the west and south-west from public footpaths on the rising ground of the valley slopes (see Photographs F and H) provide glimpses to the site situated within the Nailbourne Valley and partial views of the roofscape of structures on the site, together with some of the established trees around the perimeter of the site.

- 5.1.6 In views from the south within the Nailbourne Valley (see Photographs G and J) Queen Court Farmhouse and listed barns form the primary built features within a largely rural view. The existing structures on the site are largely hidden from view behind the farmhouse and vegetation. Elevated views from Vicarage Lane (see Viewpoints K and L) provide intermittent views within gaps in roadside vegetation towards the grouping of redundant agricultural buildings on the site and further views across to Ospringe.
- 5.1.7 Views from the east are restricted by the rising ground to locations along Mutton Lane and existing residential properties including Mount View (see Photographs M, N and P) and The Old Barn. Vegetation along Mutton Lane restricts views primarily to the roofscape of existing agricultural buildings and their relationship with the existing listed buildings to the south. There is a section with more open panoramic views across the site and up to the rising ground to the west (See Photograph P). The dilapidated and functional character of the buildings detract from the character of the area and Conservation Area.

6 Proposed development

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 The proposals for the site are illustrated on the application drawings provided by On Architecture. Landscape Proposals are provided on Figures 05 and 06 at Appendix 1.
- 6.1.2 The proposals comprise the demolition and removal of all the disused mid to late 20th century agricultural buildings on the site together with areas of associated hardstanding and dilapidated fencing and enclosure. The brick built Victorian cart shed located to the south of the access road would be retained and reroofed.
- 6.1.3 An open channel would be formed through the site close to the course of the former Nailbourne stream within the site connecting to the existing culvert under Mutton Lane. This will carry surface water associated with any potential re-emergence of the watercourse at times of high rainfall/water table. Land beyond the new channel but still within the flood zone would be kept free of residential units to accommodate any more extreme flood events.

6.2 Built forms

- 6.2.1 A grouping of 7 residential units is proposed to the east of the former watercourse on the sloping ground that leads up to towards Mutton Lane which is outside the flood zone.
- 6.2.2 The proposed residential properties would reflect an agricultural courtyard grouping, with a mix of heights. Parking for residents and visitors would be provide in covered parking barns to the west of the residential units.
- 6.2.3 Elevations and building materials would reflect local vernacular styles and include black weatherboarding, red brickwork with clay tile and slate roofs (to reduce roof pitches and ensure the restored listed barns retain their prominence on the site and local area).

6.3 Hard and soft landscape

- 6.3.1 The vehicular access areas within the grouping would be surfaced in rustic style blocks suitable for vehicle turning including refuse vehicles.
- 6.3.2 The frontages of units would comprise a shared courtyard area with a rectangular lawn to the centre and with riven paving to pedestrian paths leading to the units. Areas of cobble paving would be located up to the building frontages to give a measure of privacy together with selected wall shrubs/climbers.
- 6.3.3 Modest private gardens to the rear of the properties would comprise paved areas and small areas for shrub planting. Localised retaining structures would accommodate changes in level with steps into the communal grass areas beyond.
- 6.3.4 The land beyond the private gardens there would be a communal meadow that wraps around the housing to the north, east and south with occasional tree planting to echo the historic rural land uses.
- 6.3.5 Access to the residential properties would be from Water Lane and comprise a shared surface track using a bound natural chipping surface. The section closest to adjacent to Water Lane would be slightly wider at 5.5m to accommodate passing vehicles and be surfaced in the same blocks as in the courtyard to prevent chippings getting onto Water Lane.
- 6.3.6 A culvert structure would be provided across the dry watercourse channel. The entrance to the built development would be marked by a section of brick walling with piers and gates to contain public views into the development.
- 6.3.7 The majority of the site to the west of the watercourse would be laid out as a wildflower meadow using species typical of the loamy soil type. The meadow would be managed by grazing or cutting to benefit biodiversity.
- 6.3.8 To the north and west frontages with Water Lane and Mutton Lane the dying Elm and chestnut pale fencing would be removed. A new native hedgerow (with hawthorn, field maple and hazel) would be planted to the road frontages and set back to the required sight lines at the access onto Water Lane. This approach would considerably improve views to the listed barns to the south.
- 6.3.9 Existing mature tree groups within the site boundary would be retained and new tree planting provided. The new features would include a row of lime trees following the dry channel to reflect the historic presence of trees along the Nailbourne. These trees could be pollarded (once established) to reflect the line of pollarded willows present when the channel was regularly wet. The use of lime also reflects the existing trees to the frontage of Queen Court Farmhouse.
- 6.3.10 Two groups of orchard trees (one group apples and one pears) on an open grid are proposed at the site entrance and east of the cart shed to provide a connection with the listed barns and former land uses. The orchard trees would be managed to retain the prominence of the listed barns. An area of native trees and shrubs would also be provided to the northern boundary and east of the dry channel adjacent to a property which contains number of unsightly pallets stacks.

- 6.3.11 Public access is proposed across the site via a new pedestrian link from the northern boundary on Mutton Lane and running south adjacent to the dry channel crossing at the culvert/ bridge and then to the south-east boundary to reconnect with Mutton Lane. This would be a mown grass path.
- 6.3.12 New native hedges are also proposed to the north of the footpath link up to Mutton Lane and to infill gaps in the hedge along Mutton Lane on the eastern boundary.
- 6.3.13 In summary, the site wide enhancements combine clearance of unattractive built forms, introduction of a sympathetic grouping of units to the east and landscape works to the remainder of the site. The strategy would result in a material improvement to the environmental conditions within the Conservation Area, by reinforcing the rural edge character on Water Lane, facilitate enhanced views across a reinstated meadow towards the restored Listed Barns and locating a sensitive new grouping of residential units to the east of the site.

7 Effects on landscape character

7.1 Predicted effects on site features

- 7.1.1 Predicted effects from the proposed development are described below and then summarised in Table 7.1.
- 7.1.2 The proposed development would involve some localised earthworks. These would include the forming of a suitable dry drainage channel through the site to accommodate high water events. The construction of the proposed residential units would involve localised earth works to fit the built forms into the rising ground to the east. Some retaining walls would be required to the outer edge of rear garden areas. However, these features would be kept to a minimum and aim to work with the natural slopes on the site. The changes to landform are assessed as resulting in a **Moderate adverse** effect at Year 1 of some changes to landform and a **Moderate neutral** effect by Year 15 as change to earthworks become part of the established setting.
- 7.1.3 There would changes to land-use from agricultural, albeit in a dilapidated and disused condition to a mix of residential/communal open space to the east of the site and open space to the west of the site. The open space areas would be landscaped such as to provide a naturalistic area of green infrastructure that would enhance the character of this part of the Conservation Area. The removal of the functional agricultural buildings and farmyard areas and its redevelopment as open space would bring about a major beneficial change to the character of the village and provide an enhanced foreground and setting in views from Water Lane and Mutton Lane looking south to the listed barns which are to be restored for residential use. The changes to land-use are assessed overall as a **Moderate beneficial** effect at Year 1 and Year 15 with a net improvement to the quality and character of the site through the change in land uses.
- 7.1.4 The proposals retain most established trees within the site including poplars close to the northeast boundary and other trees close to Mutton Lane. Areas of scrub elder associated with the existing agricultural buildings would also be removed. The overmature elm boundary hedgerow along

Water Lane would be removed and replaced with a new mixed native hedgerow and create a sympathetic boundary at the rural edge location. Native hedges are also proposed to be southern boundary providing a demarcation from the proposed footpath and to infill sections along Mutton Lane to the east. New tree planting is proposed across the site by way of a row of lime trees following the line of the dry channel, groupings of orchard trees to the south and informal groupings of trees around the proposed building elements to soften their presence within the landscape. Selected areas of ornamental planting would be provided close to the proposed residential units. The majority of the remaining land would be sold with native grassland species including wildflower mixes to create areas of meadow to the west of the site and around the perimeter of the residential developed. The changes to vegetation overall are considered to result in a **Moderate beneficial** effect at Year 1 and a Major/**Moderate beneficial** change at Year 15.

- 7.1.5 Currently there is no public access across the site. Therefore, by providing public access to the west of the watercourse this would be a net improvement for the local community. In addition a link to Mutton Lane east is proposed to the south-east of the site. This is overall considered to be a **Moderate beneficial** effect at Year 1 and Year 15.

Table 7.1 Effects on site features

Site feature	Description of effects	Year 1	Year 15
Landform Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Adverse	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Neutral
Land-use Sensitivity: Low	See above	Magnitude assessment: Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium/High Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment: Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium/High Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial
Vegetation Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: Medium Overall magnitude of effect: Medium/High Significance of effect: Moderate	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: Medium Overall magnitude of effect: Medium/High

Site feature	Description of effects	Year 1	Year 15
		Nature of change: Beneficial	Significance of effect: Moderate/High Nature of change: Beneficial
Public access Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: Medium Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: Medium Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial

7.2 Predicted effects on landscape character

- 7.2.1 Effects at the national scale on NCA 113 North Kent Plain and on the county scale Eastern Fruit Belt are anticipated to be **Negligible**. This is due to the combination of the relatively small size of the site and scale of development in comparison to the extensive scale of the NCA and CCA and the relatively enclosed position of the site. There would be some loss of poor-quality agricultural character, but this should be set against a number of improvements to areas of retained open space alongside the introduction of seven new residential units. As result the nature of changes considered to be **Neutral**.
- 7.2.2 Landscape effects at the District Scale on the LCA 20 Faversham and Ospringe Fruit Belt are assessed as being **Minor neutral** at Year 1 and **Minor beneficial** at Year 15. The site does not reflect the good condition recorded in the LCA for most of LCA 20 but is more representative of features of decay and character erosion, resulting from a loss of functioning farmsteads and poor boundary enclosure. The overall strategy for the area is to conserve and reinforce. This objective could be facilitated on the site through the proposed scheme which allows for the removal of redundant derelict buildings and the creation of enhanced habitats and landscape features over most of the site. The proposed building element is considered to be sensitively located to the east which would facilitate an improved understanding and setting for the listed barns when viewed from Water Lane and Mutton Lane. The proposed development would create a beneficial nature of effect on the locality.
- 7.2.3 The effects on neighbouring LCAs including the closest namely LCA 36. Doddington and Newham Dry Valleys would be Negligible due to the lack of any interface between the two-character areas.
- 7.2.4 At the more local scale the Swale Landscape Sensitivity Assessment provides a study of the landscape sensitivity based on relatively smaller parcels around established settlements. The SLA assesses the overall landscape sensitivity of the parcel FM3 to future change from residential

development to be High. However, this is based on an assessment across the whole of FM3 which includes a relatively high proportion of land designated for its landscape quality including and Areas of High Landscape Value the ANOB. However, the site is not included with any of these landscape designations. The SLSA assessment also uses criteria which assesses capacity based on residential developer and 2 to 3 storeys and over 2 ha. However, the built proposals for the site occupy less than 0.5 ha and unlimited two-storey. Furthermore, the SLSA does not allow for enhancements to landscape character which would follow on this site with the removal of discordant features and creation of substantial areas of open space of the character sympathetic to the setting. It is considered that there would be a **Moderate neutral** effect and Year 1 and a **Moderate beneficial** effect at Year 15 when the landscape proposals have become established across the site. Beneficial change on the site as result of its redevelopment for a mix of sensitive vernacular style architecture in a courtyard development to the east and introduction of an informal meadow style landscape to the east. The proposals would allow for a notable enhancement within the core of the Ospringe Conservation Area.

- 7.2.5 Within the local area up to 500 m from the site the proposals are considered to bring a **Moderate beneficial** effect at Both year 1 and year 15. The landscape setting of the conservation area would be notably enhanced with removal of discordant features in the creation of a purpose-built development to the eastern slopes. Removal of dilapidated structures and the creation of new meadow areas, a dry channel with single avenue of trees and orchards provide a much-improved setting for the listed barns is appreciated from views along Water Lane and various points on Mutton Lane. The arrangement of the proposed buildings would create a relatively subordinate grouping to the east. The location of the parking barns would prevent open views from the north and west into the core of the development retaining the primary views towards the listed buildings of Queen Court Farm. Landscape proposals would create restored and new habitats with public access into and through the site.
- 7.2.6 At the Site scale the proposals provide for the restoration of the site. The existing agricultural buildings and hard surfaced farmyard area are now derelict and becoming an eyesore. In addition, the surrounding areas of land lack any viable future in agricultural use. It is considered that the proposals would bring a **Major/Moderate beneficial** effect to the character of the site and the setting of the surrounding land uses at Year 1 and Year 15.
- 7.2.7 Overall the proposals are assessed as bringing beneficial effects to the village and landscape character through the restoration of the semi-derelict site which is located within the core of the Conservation area. In TLP's experience the proposals would bring a level of positive benefits to landscape character that are seldom provided through the introduction of residential development.

Table 7.2: Effects on landscape character areas (National to Local scale)

National Character Areas – (based on Natural England’s National Character Area profiles)			
NCA 113: North Kent Plain Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Very Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Neutral	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Very Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Neutral
County and District Scale Character Areas			
KCC Faversham Fruit Belt: Mid Kent Downs Sensitivity: Low	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Very Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Neutral	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Very Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Neutral
SDC LCA 20 Faversham and Ospringe Fruit Belt Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low

		Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Neutral	Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Beneficial Adverse
SDC SLSA Parcel FM3 Sensitivity: High	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Neutral	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial
Local/Site Character Areas (based on units identified the assessment in this LVA)			
Local Scale (0.5km) Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial
Site Sensitivity: Medium/ Low	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: High Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: High Significance of effect: Major/Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: High Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: High Significance of effect: Major/Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial

8 Effects on visual receptors

8.1 Predicted effects experienced from representative viewpoints

8.1.1 The effects on public views towards the Site have been assessed from a range of locations that reflect the presence of people in the landscape and where there is likely to be some visibility of the Site proposals. 14 representative viewpoints (A-3) have been assessed.

8.1.2 The visibility of the Site can be grouped into five groups as follows with levels of sensitivity, magnitude of change and effect recorded in 8.1 below.

Views from Water Lane and Mutton Lane looking south

8.1.3 Views from the north on Water Lane and Mutton Lane (See Photographs A, B, and C) would change with the removal of the unsightly chestnut pale fencing to the site boundary and the disused agricultural buildings within the site area. There would be more open views over a new native boundary hedgerow and across a wildflower meadow towards Queen Court listed barns which would again become the primary focal building from these locations. The proposed residential properties to the east of the site would be partly visible from Viewpoint B but less so from Viewpoints A and C. The changes are anticipated to result in be a **Moderate beneficial** effect The and C at both Year 1 and Year 15 on the existing views as a result of: unsightly features removed, existing focal points reinforced, and new built forms constructed from sympathetic vernacular materials and located on the valley slopes to the left of the view. The landscape treatment of the western part of the site would enhance the visual experience from within the Conservation Area. Effects on Viewpoint A generally considered to be **Negligible** due to the distance with the only notable changes being changes to perimeter vegetation along Water Lane with removal of dead elm hedgerow and addition of new native hedge.

Views from Water Lane to west of site access

8.1.4 Views to the west of the site access are represented by Photographs D and E. These illustrate the poor-quality materials at the site access including the dead/dying elm hedgerow, corrugated metal sheeting together with the dilapidated state of the listed barns into 2020. The proposals would bring a notable change to this aspect with enhanced views onto the site including: new native hedgerow, meadow, orchard planting and views along the side access road towards the proposed development at a distance of c 70m. The main view of the development from this direction would comprise outer face of the parking barns and flanking walls around the parking areas, which would represent a relatively agricultural appearance and one sympathetic to the location of the restored listed barns to the south at much closer distance. This considered that the effects would be **Moderate beneficial** from this location for both Viewpoints D and E Year 1 and Year 15. Views to the proposed built development would be in the middle distance with the wider enhancements to the land to the west be more prominent in the foreground.

Views from elevated ground to the west

8.1.5 Views from the wider landscape the west are illustrated by Photographs F and H. Views from the west and south-west from public footpaths on the rising ground of the valley slopes would experience change through the removal of existing farm buildings and the addition of new

residential structures on the rising ground to the east of the site. This would result in some **Moderate adverse** change at Year 1 reducing to **Minor neutral** by Year 15 as the associated planting begins to mature and the building materials settle into their setting.

Views from the south

8.1.6 Views from the south within the Nailbourne Valley (see Photographs G and J) would not be affected with the removal of structures on the site. It is likely that the proposed residential properties on the upper slopes to the east would be seen in these views set beyond the established vegetation to the east of Queen Court Farmhouse (which is the principal focal point and structure from these aspects). It is anticipated there would be at most a Moderate Adverse change at Year 1 reducing to Minor Neutral by Year 15.

8.1.7 From the more elevated views from Vicarage Lane (see Viewpoints K and L) the removal of the existing agricultural buildings within the site would be a noticeable change from the two localised viewpoints. It is noteworthy that other views from Vicarage Lane are much more enclosed by vegetation. The proposed residential properties and parking barns would be visible on the sloping ground to the east of the site. However, localised views would also be available into the western part of the site towards Ospringe and the properties fronting proposed meadow area. It is also noteworthy that the existing dilapidated barns on the site are a feature of the existing views from Photographs K and L and these would be replaced by the new structures which would have an improved appearance. It is anticipated there would be a **Moderate/Minor neutral** effect at Year 1 and Minor Beneficial effect by Year 15. The Beneficial changes would combine the new open space to the west of the site together with sympathetic vernacular style structures on the lower slopes replacing the unsightly agricultural buildings.

Views from Mutton Lane to the east

8.1.8 Views from the east along Mutton Lane and existing residential properties (see Photographs M, N and P) would experience notable change with removal of existing agricultural buildings and areas of rough excavation and their replacement with residential properties built in a vernacular style. From Mutton Lane there would be views towards the rear elevations and modest rear gardens but also views over the communal meadow areas around the properties and beyond to the meadow area to the west of the site and to Queen Court Farm and barns to the south. The level of effect is assessed as being **Moderate neutral** at Year 1 from Viewpoints M and N and **Major/Moderate beneficial** from Viewpoint P at Year 1. By Year 15 effect is considered to reduce as the proposed boundary hedge establishes along Mutton Lane to **Minor beneficial** from Viewpoints M and N and **Moderate beneficial** from Viewpoint P.

Residential Views

8.1.9 The proposals would be visible from a number of residential properties in close proximity to the site. The closest properties would be converted listed barns which would have an outlook to the north. There would be views across the access road and to the north-east towards the proposed parking barns. However, the majority of the development would be to the east and at an oblique angle. The majority of the view to the north would be over the restored meadow area through groups of orchard trees. In this respect proposals are considered to be a net enhancement. There will

- be limited views from Queen Court Farmhouse due containment by retained buildings forming part of the retained farm complex and tall conifer trees following the line of the former Nailbourne.
- 8.1.10 Properties fronting Water Lane and Mutton Lane would have close range views over the western area of open space. The proposed landscape changes including new hedgerows and wildflower meadow together with tree planting along the line of the dry channel would be a net enhancement. Views to the proposed development to the eastern side would be possible but set beyond landscape proposals and at a regional distance to not harm residential amenity.
- 8.1.11 Views from the rear of the two properties to the North-East on Mutton Lane would be limited towards the proposed built development by established vegetation within the rear gardens.
- 8.1.12 Views from the elevated properties of Mount View are largely over the site to the west of the Nailbourne valley. There would be a visibility of the upper sections of the proposed properties but also to the areas of open space created where the disused barns are currently. This is considered to be a neutral to beneficial change.
- 8.1.13 Finally the former agricultural building to the junction of Vicarage Lane and Mutton Lane would have some elevated views to the north-west towards the building development. However, this would be in excess of 70 m and unlikely to lead to any harm on residential amenity. In addition the removal of unsightly structures on the site would be a benefit.
- 8.1.14 It is considered that overall that the proposals are likely to result in a positive visual enhancement of the site and locality.

Table 8.1: Effects on Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Description of effects	Year 1	Year 15
Viewpoint A Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists 70m to the north of the site Sensitivity: Medium	See above.	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Neutral	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint B Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists 15 to north-west of site	See above.	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium

Viewpoint	Description of effects	Year 1	Year 15
Sensitivity: Medium		Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint C Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists 7m to north of site Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint D Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists 5m to west of site Sensitivity: Medium	See above.	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint E Rep. of views for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists 5m to west of the site Sensitivity: Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above. 	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint F Rep. of views for walkers west of site	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Medium	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Medium

Viewpoint	Description of effects	Year 1	Year 15
Sensitivity: High		Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Adverse	Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Neutral
Viewpoint G Rep. of views for visitors to church 185m to south of the site Sensitivity: High	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Adverse	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Neutral
Viewpoint H Rep. of views for walkers 380 m to south of the site Sensitivity: High	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Adverse	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Neutral
Viewpoint J Rep. of views for walkers. 215m to south Sensitivity: High	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Adverse	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Neutral

Viewpoint	Description of effects	Year 1	Year 15
Viewpoint K Rep. of views for walkers, cyclists and motorists. 55m to south Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor Nature of change: Neutral	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint L Rep. of views for walkers. 182m to south Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor Nature of change: Neutral	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint M Rep. of views for walkers and pedestrians, 5m to east Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Neutral	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint N Rep. of views for residents, 20m to east Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor

Viewpoint	Description of effects	Year 1	Year 15
		Nature of change: Neutral	Nature of change: Beneficial
Viewpoint P Rep. of views for motorists, walkers and pedestrians, 5m to east Sensitivity: Medium	See above	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: High Geographical influence: High Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: High Significance of effect: Major/Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial	Magnitude assessment Size/scale: High Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial

9 Conclusion

- 9.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal has assessed the site in its context to the edge of Ospringe village and within Ospringe Conservation Area. The site occupies an important location within Ospringe and in the Nailbourne valley.
- 9.1.2 Public views from the north, west and east are limited to those at close quarters from adjacent roads and lanes. Views from the wider setting, which extends to the south and south-west, including from rights of way, are more restricted by the presence of the listed Queen Court Farmhouse, associated listed barns and established vegetation within the valley setting.
- 9.1.3 The existing character and condition of the site is poor being notably influenced by a number of dilapidated and unsightly 20th century structures from the now redundant farm and associated vacant land. The site has negligible potential for continued use as an agricultural unit.
- 9.1.4 The built proposals include the removal of the unattractive built forms and areas of associated hard standing. This approach will emphasise and enhance the relationship between the open land to the west of the site with the restored listed barns to the south of the site. A new complementary grouping of 7 residential units in a sympathetic vernacular style and materials is proposed to the east of the site with access via a single track from Water Lane. The residential units would be largely screened by the proposed parking barns and a brick wall which would also be constructed in vernacular materials to respect the presence of the listed buildings.
- 9.1.5 A sensitive landscape strategy is proposed to reflect the historic character of the site and its context at the village edge within the valley. The landscape proposals include the creation of a wildflower meadow to the west of the site with a reformed dry channel following the course of the Nailbourne. Native hedging to Water Lane and Mutton Lane would enclose the site. A line of lime trees would follow the channel and groups of orchard trees mark the site entrance from Water Lane. Communal areas of open space around the residential properties also comprise areas of meadow with informal groups of trees and a simple courtyard with lawn and paving.
- 9.1.6 Public access would be significantly improved by the transfer to the north-west of the site to public uses and by the provision of a new route across the site bringing benefits for recreational amenity.
- 9.1.7 The strategy for the site has the potential to result in a material improvement to the environmental conditions and character of the site and thereby also to the Conservation Area and local landscape. The proposals would reinforce the rural edge character on Water Lane, facilitate enhanced views towards the restored Listed Barns and locate a sensitive grouping of residential units to the east of the site set within the context of an enhanced valley.