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Land North of Carisbrook Road, Mitcheldean

Landscape Proof of Evidence
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On behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd

September 2026

ON BEHALF OF GLADMAN
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Land North of Carisbrook Road,
Mitcheldean
LANDSCAPE PROOF OF EVIDENCE

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APPENDICES (in separate document: I0003650_DL02)

- A1. National Planning Policy Summary
- A2. Topography Plan
- A2. Development Framework Plan showing depth of green corridors and proposed woodland planting

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1.1 I am instructed by Gladman Developments Ltd to produce this Proof of Evidence in relation to the called-in Application on Land north of Carisbrook Road, Mitcheldean. My evidence is concerned with the landscape and visual related matters in putative Reason for Refusal 2. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.13) was submitted alongside the Application and should be read alongside my evidence.

1.2 The Site comprises an arable field on the northern edge of the settlement of Mitcheldean. It is bound by housing to the west and south, and employment development to the south east. To the north east and north the Site adjoins the open countryside. It is not covered by any designations for landscape or heritage value or quality, nor is the landscape/townscape immediately adjacent to the Site. It is not covered by any statutory designations for ecological value, although land north west of the Site on the opposite side of the road is covered by the 'Protection Zone' as per Neighbourhood Plan Policy E4 'Biodiversity'.

1.3 The LVIA concludes:

'Development would extend the edge of Mitcheldean onto the lower slopes of the ridgeline at Breakheart Hill. Despite this, it would be closely associated to the existing housing area and would broadly align with the northern edge of the settlement. New planting in the northern part of the Site would establish a robust boundary, embedding the proposed development area into the edge of the town and providing a definitive boundary to the wider countryside. The new development will be visible in middle distance views from the surrounding higher ground, however it will be seen in the context of existing development in Mitcheldean.'

The proposals will result in the loss of an arable field which forms a component of the wider countryside north of Mitcheldean. Development will extend Mitcheldean along the valley floor and will be closely associated with other development at the edge of the town. It will not extend housing onto the more sensitive valley sides above Mitcheldean, nor will it significantly impact on the farmland which extends along the valley floor to the north owing to the Site's containment in views from this direction. Accordingly, whilst the proposed development would result in a significant change in the character of the Site and would impact on a number of views, effects on the wider landscape character would be more limited.

The new homes would be well related to the existing settlement edge but would occupy an area of domed land opposite existing housing on the valley side. The new homes would be visible on the approach into the village on Bradley Close Road and the B4224 but would be seen in the context of existing settlement. The development would impact on the outlook from the edge of the village, but as new landscaping matures at the Site frontage this would assist in assimilating the new homes into the village edge.'

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- 1.4 The Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment (2002) sets out the key characteristics of the wider Landscape Character Type. I have considered the Site against these, noting that the Site is on the lower valleys which also include the settlement of Mitcheldean, and which are bound by the distinctive rounded ridges. The settlement and ridges reflect the north-south alignment characteristic of the area, and the proposed development will not change that. The Site is not located on the exposed ridges. The Application Scheme will not impact on the higher value landscapes mentioned within this LCT.
- 1.5 The Forest of Dean District Landscape Strategy (2004) notes that the wooded ridgelines are sensitive to built development, while the valley floors and lower slopes are visually more contained and more heavily settled, and are therefore less visually sensitive. I set out in Table 5.3 that the Application Scheme responds to the Outline Landscape Strategies for this LCT, by not siting new development on visually prominent ridge sides, and by conserving the linear character of the settlement and the setting of Mitcheldean.
- 1.6 While the Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of general references to the rural character, landscape setting and valued views associated with Mitcheldean, these references do not identify the Site as forming part of a specifically protected or elevated-value landscape. The Neighbourhood Plan does not provide evidence of a specific landscape constraint at the Site that would indicate an unacceptable landscape or visual effect arising from the proposed development.
- 1.7 The Mitcheldean Landscape Character Assessment which forms part of the Neighbourhood Plan considers four local landscape character areas, with the Site most likely located within the Bradley Court/Breakheart Hill area. The Application Scheme will be well related to the character of that area, being located adjacent to existing residential and employment development within the settlement on the valley bottom. The study also identifies 24 'valued landscape views'. The Application Scheme will be visible in only three of these: an indication of how localised the visual effects from the development would be. The Application Scheme will not have a significant effect on the identified views, and the proposed development will be seen within the context of the existing settlement which it adjoins, and experienced as part of the valley bound by steep valley sides.
- 1.8 The LVIA contains a thorough consideration of visual effects from public and residential receptors. I have noted that there will be high adverse visual effects from the adjoining and nearby roads and houses, and from limited other publicly accessible locations. The geographical area which will experience material visual impacts is limited to the immediate surroundings of the Site, and some views from the middle distance to the south, east and west from more sensitive viewers.
- 1.9 In the vast majority of instances, the development at the Site will be seen within the context of the existing settlement and built form, which is similarly visible from the Site's surroundings, and from

the higher ground around Mitcheldean. Where visible, the Application Scheme will not appear out of character.

- 1.10 The Application Scheme reflects the character of the settlement and its setting. Mitcheldean is located in the valley floor, bound by the steeply rising valley sides to the east and west, and the Site is located on the valley floor, alongside the majority of the existing settlement at Mitcheldean. While the Site rises up from two shallow valleys along the roads which bound the Site to the east and west, within the context of the settlement and the Landscape Character Area, the Site is still clearly located on the valley floor, and not on the visually prominent ridge sides, as illustrated on the Topography Plan in Figure 5.1 and in **Appendix A2**, and within the photographs in appendix C of the LVIA (CD1.13).
- 1.11 The proposed development will reflect the pattern of development which occurs west and south of the Site, with houses located on the rising ground. This housing is suburban in character, dating from the latter part of the 20th Century. The houses here are orientated along the slopes, especially to the west, with the buildings and streets appearing terraced on the rising ground, resulting in the houses within this part of the settlement around the Site being clearly visible, and forming a key feature of the character of the area. The proposed development will also face inwards towards the settlement, as opposed to out towards the north, as is again evident and characteristic within the surrounding built area.
- 1.12 The Application Scheme considers, respects, and responds to the identified landscape and townscape characteristics of the area, as set out within the various studies considered in Section 5. The boundary structural vegetation will be retained and enhanced as part of the proposals, as shown on the Development Framework Plan (CD1.3). The proposed layout respects the wider areas of higher ecological, landscape and heritage importance, and incorporates new green infrastructure within a network of connected open spaces around the new homes, with the green infrastructure designed to be multi-functional. The proposed development is set back from the retained hedgerows and trees, and new structural vegetation is proposed to be incorporated between the development and the boundary vegetation.
- 1.13 I have considered the effects of the Application Scheme on the landscape, and considered the findings of the LVIA submitted with the Application. I conclude that landscape effects will be highly localised, and while the character of the Site will change, this does not mean that the Application Scheme would be out of character or inappropriate. In fact, the development will be perceived within its setting which already contains much development, and therefore, the wider effects of the development beyond the immediate setting of the Site, are considered negligible and not material. I have considered the proposed mitigation proposed as part of the outline Application, and further mitigation measures can be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage, such as materials and planting species.

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- 1.14 In Section 6, I consider the Application Scheme against the landscape-related parts of the policies cited in the putative Reason for Refusal, as well as the relevant parts of the NPPF policies. While the Application Scheme conflicts with Core Strategy Policies CSP.4 and CSP.5 as a matter of principle, my assessment has found that the Application Scheme complies with the landscape-related parts of Core Strategy Policy CSP.1, and Allocation Plan Policy AP1. It also complies with landscape-related points within NPPF Policies N2, N3, and DP3.
- 1.15 Overall, there are no landscape or visual effects which would preclude development of the Site, and development can come forward in a well-designed manner which would reflect the context of the Site, and respect the wider countryside setting.

2. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 2.1 This Proof of Evidence has been prepared by Silke Gruner ((BHons) Landscape Architecture, CMLI), Director (Landscape) of Icen Projects. I have an honours degree in Landscape Architecture, and a Graduate Diploma in Urban Design and Place Shaping. I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute since 2007.
- 2.2 I am employed at Icen Projects who provide specialist advice in the fields of archaeology; built heritage and townscape; masterplanning and urban design; economics; engagement; Icen futures; impact management; and planning and transport. They work from regional offices within the UK and have a national project and client base. I have over 20 years of experience in undertaking landscape and visual assessments, and in masterplanning and urban design.
- 2.3 I have given landscape and urban design advice on numerous schemes, and I have given landscape evidence at Section 78 Inquiries as well as at Local Plan Examinations.
- 2.4 The evidence I have prepared and provide for this Inquiry is true and has been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 This Proof of Evidence has been instructed by Gladman Developments Ltd (the 'Appellant') in relation to the outline application at land north of Carisbrook Road, Mitcheldean ('the 'Site') for the erection of up to 180 dwellings (including affordable housing) with public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage system ('SuDS') and vehicular access (the 'Application Scheme'). All matters are reserved except for means of access. The Application has been 'called-in' by the Secretary of State for them to decide, after the Forest of Dean District Council's Planning Committee noted that they are minded to refuse the Application, and following a recommendation for approval from the Planning Case Officer.

3.2 Four putative Reasons for Refusal were noted by the Planning Committee. My evidence is concerned with the landscape and visual related matters in putative Reason for Refusal 2. The putative Reason for Refusal alleges:

'The proposal would be contrary to policies CSP.1, CSP.4 and CSP.5 of the Core Strategy, policy AP1 of the Allocations Plan and the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework in that it would create a suburban form of development in this rural location on the best and most versatile agricultural land and this would mitigate against the food security of the nation as advised by the government in the Government Food Strategy for England, considering the wider UK Food System (2025) which would be out of character with the surroundings and would therefore represent an unacceptable adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area.'

3.3 The Secretary of State has also noted that, for the purposes of their consideration, they wish to be informed about point (c): *'The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for conserving and enhancing the natural environment (NPPF Chapter 15)'*. Chapter 15 of the 2024 NPPF dealt with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. It also dealt with matters relating to habitats and biodiversity, and also ground conditions and pollution, both of which are outside of my area of expertise, and I do not consider the Application Scheme against these matters. The NPPF has since been updated in August 2026, and Chapter 19, 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' is now of relevance to my statement.

3.4 The Inspector, in their Case Management Conference Summary Note, set out in paragraph 9(c) that the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, including on landscape, is considered a likely main issue for determination of the Application.

3.5 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA'; CD1.13) was submitted alongside the Application and should be read alongside my evidence. It was produced by CSA Environmental. To inform my evidence, I have undertaken a site visit to make my own judgements on the effects of the

development, however, I have not produced a formal assessment as I am broadly in agreement with the findings of the submitted LVIA, as well as the comments from the Planning Case Officer within their Report to Committee (CD4.1).

- 3.6 I will also refer to the Development Framework Plan (CD1.3) and Design and Access Statement (CD1.4) that were also submitted with the Application.
- 3.7 The evidence of Michael Dinn deals with planning policy and considers the overall planning balance.
- 3.8 The Application was recommended for approval by the Council's Planning Case Officer and, as such, there is limited detail within the Case Officer's Committee Report in relation to the alleged landscape harms resulting from the development. The Committee Report contained no reference to consultation responses from either a Landscape Officer or an external landscape consultant, and it does not appear that such comments were sought, nor that any other additional expert landscape evidence was presented to, or given to, the Committee. The Council expands on the putative Reason for Refusal in their Statement of Case. I consider the alleged landscape and visual harms in Section 6 of my Statement and show why the Site is ordinary in character and value, and that the resultant landscape and visual effects on the character of Mitcheldean or the Site's landscape setting as a result of the proposed development, are not unacceptable.
- 3.9 I will show that the Application Scheme is well suited to the character of the surrounding area, with material landscape and visual effects confined to a localised area.

Methodology

- 3.10 The LVIA submitted with the Application was undertaken by CSA Environmental, and I am broadly in agreement with their findings. The CSA LVIA is in general accordance with the guidance contained in the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('GLVIA3'), and the methodology for the LVIA is contained within appendix G of the LVIA (CD1.13). I have visited the Site and surroundings during the summer, on a day with clear visibility.

4. CONSIDERATION AND SUMMARY OF LVIA

- 4.1 An LVIA (CD1.13) was submitted alongside the Application, undertaken by CSA Environmental.
- 4.2 The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape or heritage value or quality, nor is the landscape/townscape immediately adjacent to the Site. It is not covered by any statutory designations for ecological value, although land north west of the Site on the opposite side of the road is covered by the 'Protection Zone' as per Neighbourhood Plan Policy E4 'Biodiversity'. The Site comprises a single arable field, and two trees on the northern Site boundary are covered by Tree Preservation Orders.
- 4.3 I consider the Site against the relevant landscape character studies in Section 5.

Landscape Sensitivity and Effects

- 4.4 The LVIA assessed the Site as being of medium value, medium susceptibility, and medium sensitivity.
- 4.5 The wider landscape which encloses Mitcheldean was assessed as being of high landscape value, and high sensitivity. The neighbouring townscape to the Site was assessed as being of medium to low landscape/townscape value and sensitivity.
- 4.6 I agree with these assessments of sensitivity. No evidence within the various landscape character studies considered in Section 5 of my evidence indicates that the Site is of elevated value or susceptibility, and in fact, other parts of the wider surroundings are highlighted within the Neighbourhood Plan as being of higher landscape value.
- 4.7 Paragraph 5.2 of the LVIA (CD1.13) sets out the inherent mitigation measures which are incorporated within the outline scheme, and which will be developed further at the Reserved Matters stage. These measures show how the development has considered the environmental qualities of the land proposed for development, including its habitats, landscape character and natural beauty of the countryside, and how it has identified opportunities for those qualities to be conserved and enhanced, in line with NPPF Policy N2(1)(a) and (d).
- 4.8 Paragraph 5.21 of the LVIA (CD1.13) states: *'The proposals will result in the loss of an arable field which forms a component of the wider countryside north of Mitcheldean. Development will extend Mitcheldean along the valley floor and will be closely associated with other development at the edge of the town. It will not extend housing onto the more sensitive valley sides above Mitcheldean, nor will it significantly impact on the farmland which extends along the valley floor to the north owing to*

the Site's containment in views from this direction. Accordingly, whilst the proposed development would result in a significant change in the character of the Site and would impact on a number of views, effects on the wider landscape character would be more limited.'

- 4.9 The LVIA assessed the effects on the landscape character of the Site as substantial adverse at year 1, and substantial-moderate adverse at year 15. This is not unusual where development occurs on a green field site, as a large magnitude of change is experienced on the site when it changes from open land to a residential development. The effect is assessed as adverse, in recognition of the loss of the open land. This does not mean that the development will be unattractive or out of character within its setting.
- 4.10 The effect on the landscape character of the surrounding area is assessed within the LVIA as moderate adverse at year 1, reducing to moderate-slight adverse as the proposed planting within the development establishes and assists in embedding the proposals into the edge of the town.
- 4.11 The LVIA assessed the effects on the townscape character near the Site as moderate adverse at year 1, reducing to moderate-slight adverse at year 15.
- 4.12 I consider these assessments to be fair. As set out within the LVIA, the effects of the Application Scheme are greatest on the Site, with the effects on the wider landscape character more limited. I consider that there will be no material effects on the landscape character beyond the immediate surroundings of Mitcheldean and its valley sides. Effects on the townscape character will be limited to the northern part of the settlement, north of the steep turn in the road along Townsend/Bradley Court Road, near its junction with Old Dean Road.

Visual Effects

- 4.13 The LVIA includes a description of the baseline views in paragraphs 4.11-23, and viewpoint photographs are included in appendix C of the LVIA (CD1.13). It notes in paragraph 4.10: *'The settlement at Mitcheldean occupies the valley floor and lower valley sides and there are opportunities for views across the town from the surrounding higher ground. There are near distance views of the Site from the adjoining highway network and from the housing area which occupies the rising ground above Ross Road / Carisbrook Road to the west and south respectively.'*
- 4.14 Due to the undulating topography alongside the well-wooded nature of the area, views of the Site are limited to its immediate surroundings, and to middle distance views from the higher ground which contains Mitcheldean, in views within which the existing settlement is already visible.
- 4.15 Considering the LVIA, the greatest visual effects (substantial-moderate adverse) will be experienced by users of Carisbrook Road and Ross Road, which both adjoin the Site. Moderate visual effects will

be experienced by users on Wysis Way along Bradley Close Road at the eastern boundary of the Site, and also parts of the route to the south west of Mitcheldean (middle distance); as well as from viewers at Windman Hill (in the middle distance); and residents on Carisbrook Road and Ross Road. Lower level visual effects will be experienced by walkers on the footpaths in the middle distance on the rising ground of Breakheart Hill east of the Site, and residents on the rising ground south and west of the Site. The remaining receptors will experience non-material visual effects, with the proposed development forming a small part of wider views within which much development is already visible.

- 4.16 The geographical area which will experience material visual impacts is therefore limited to the immediate surroundings of the Site, and some views from the middle distance to the south, east and west from more sensitive viewers.

Conclusion

- 4.17 The LVIA concludes (paragraphs 5.20-22)

'Development would extend the edge of Mitcheldean onto the lower slopes of the ridgeline at Breakheart Hill. Despite this, it would be closely associated to the existing housing area and would broadly align with the northern edge of the settlement. New planting in the northern part of the Site would establish a robust boundary, embedding the proposed development area into the edge of the town and providing a definitive boundary to the wider countryside. The new development will be visible in middle distance views from the surrounding higher ground, however it will be seen in the context of existing development in Mitcheldean.

The proposals will result in the loss of an arable field which forms a component of the wider countryside north of Mitcheldean. Development will extend Mitcheldean along the valley floor and will be closely associated with other development at the edge of the town. It will not extend housing onto the more sensitive valley sides above Mitcheldean, nor will it significantly impact on the farmland which extends along the valley floor to the north owing to the Site's containment in views from this direction. Accordingly, whilst the proposed development would result in a significant change in the character of the Site and would impact on a number of views, effects on the wider landscape character would be more limited.

The new homes would be well related to the existing settlement edge but would occupy an area of domed land opposite existing housing on the valley side. The new homes would be visible on the approach into the village on Bradley Close Road and the B4224 but would be seen in the context of existing settlement. The development would impact on the outlook from the edge of the village, but as new landscaping matures at the Site frontage this would assist in assimilating the new homes into the village edge.'

5. CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE BASE

Site Context

- 5.1 A description of the Site Context, as well as the Site itself, is contained within the LVIA which was submitted as part of the Application (CD1.13), and I do not repeat it here.

National Planning Policy Context

- 5.2 The NPPF was updated in August 2026. The parts of Chapter 19 of particular relevance to my evidence are set out below. For completeness, a summary of the national planning policy context is included in **Appendix A1**.
- 5.3 Chapter 19 states that *'The objective of the policies in this chapter is to influence the design and location of new development to help drive nature's recovery and contribute to wider environmental outcomes, safeguarding our most important habitats, species and landscapes and recognising the centrality of natural capital to delivering sustainable growth'* (my underlining).
- 5.4 Policy N2(1) notes that to contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature's recovery, development proposals should, amongst others:
- (a) Consider the environmental qualities of land proposed for development, including habitats, landscape character and the natural beauty of the countryside, and identify opportunities for those qualities to be conserved or enhanced (including through requirements for biodiversity net gain where these apply);
 - (c) Take suitable opportunities to connect to and strengthen ecological networks that extend beyond the site, drawing on the measures proposed by Local Nature Recovery Strategies, National Forest Strategies and Community Forest Plans, where present, and other relevant assessments;
 - (d) Conserve and enhance existing natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value (such as established trees and hedgerows) where possible; and use appropriate landscaping to help create a well-designed place and integrate the development into its surroundings;
 - (e) Use green infrastructure provided as part of the scheme and nature-based solutions to secure multiple benefits: such as for biodiversity; surface water and pollution management (including maintaining flow rates and water quality); climate change mitigation and adaptation, and recreation;
 - (g) Ensure that green infrastructure and other features to support nature are located and designed to minimise risk of future failure, and that appropriate measures are in place for any necessary long-term management.

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- 5.5 Policy N3 deals with trees in new developments. Point 1 sets out that, in recognition of the benefits which trees can provide for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the character and quality of the built environment, development proposals should:
- (a) Make new streets tree-lined (unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate in specific streets), and incorporate trees in other suitable locations, such as in parks and through the provision of community orchards;
 - (b) Ensure that the selection of species and their placement is compatible with highways and other infrastructure requirements and the needs of different users of public spaces; and will be effective in helping to adapt to the effects of climate change and delivering other environmental benefits. Suitable arboricultural advice should be sought, and proposals discussed with highways and trees officers where necessary, so that the right trees are planted in the right places; and
 - (c) Make provision for the long-term maintenance of both existing and newly-planted trees which form part of the development.
- 5.6 Policy N4 deals with Protected Landscapes. The Site is not within or in the near vicinity of a Protected Landscape, and as such, I do not consider this policy further. The remaining policies within this Chapter of the NPPF do not relate to the Site or landscape matters
- 5.7 Chapter 14 of the NPPF is also of relevance, as it deals with achieving well-designed places. Policy DP3(1) sets out that *'Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings...'* I consider the context of the Site in further detail in Section 5 of my Statement, through discussion of the Landscape Character Assessments and Neighbourhood Plan. Point 2 of the policy sets out that to create well-designed places, development proposals should also reflect relevant aspects of a set of principles, as appropriate to the nature of the development and its location, with principle (c), 'nature', of relevance to my Statement. Point (c) states: *'incorporate and/or connect to a network of high quality, accessible, multi functional green infrastructure to provide opportunities for recreation and healthy living, strengthen habitats, improve climate change resilience and improve air and water quality. This should include maintaining and enhancing tree cover and incorporating sustainable drainage systems in accordance with policies N3 and F8'*.
- 5.8 I consider the Application Scheme against Policy N2(1), Policy N3, and Policy DP3(1) within Section 6.

Local Planning Policy Context

- 5.9 The submitted LVIA (CD1.13) includes a summary of the relevant landscape policy for the Forest of Dean District.

- 5.10 It should be noted that the Site had benefited from a draft allocation for about 180 dwellings within the emerging Local Plan 2041, however, that emerging Local Plan has since been withdrawn, and the Council are in the process of commencing work on a new Local Plan. The draft allocation was not removed because of any technical reason or constraints to development, but rather fell away with the withdrawal of the draft Local Plan.

Landscape Character Studies

- 5.11 NPPF Policy DP3(1) sets out that '*Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings...*' Below, I consider the Forest of Dean Council Landscape Character Assessment and associated documents, and the Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Plan and Landscape Character Assessment which describe the context and character of the Site's setting, and which may give an indication of the sensitivity and value of the Site. I also consider the Application Scheme against the guidelines set out within these documents, in order to aid in considering the effects of the proposed development on the landscape and visual character of the area, and to illustrate how the proposed development responds to its context.
- 5.12 A summary of National Character Area 105 ('NCA') Forest of Dean and Lower Wye Valley is included within the LVIA. However, the scale of the NCAs do not make it very useful in considering the landscape character on a site level, and I do therefore not consider it further.

Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment (2002; CD6.2)

- 5.13 The Site lies within Landscape Character Type ('LCT') 10: Ridges and Valleys, and within Landscape Character Area ('LCA') 10d: Breakheart Hill. LCA 10c: Edge Hill, lies west of Ross Road/Carisbrook Road, west of the Site. In Table 5.1 below, I consider the Site and Application Scheme against the description of the LCT and LCAs as set out within the 2002 Landscape Character Assessment.

Table 5.1 Landscape Character Assessment	
Key Characteristics of LCT10	
<i>Distinctive rounded ridge profiles rising above the neighbouring vale landscapes and bordering the wooded syncline.</i>	This description refers to the LCT, which extends much further southwards than the Site, with large parts of the wider LCT adjoining the vale landscape to the east. However, much of LCA 10d adjoins wooded hills to the east, and further ridges and valleys to the west, with only a small southern portion adjoining the vale landscape. LCA 10d also does not border the wooded syncline. The Application Scheme will have no effect on this characteristic of the landscape.
<i>The ridges are orientated north south which is emphasised by the orientation of hedgerow patterns and small woodland</i>	The Application Scheme will not impact the north-south orientation of the ridges, nor of the settlement within the north-south aligned valley. An east-west

<i>copses clinging to steeper slopes.</i>	hedgerow forms the Site's northern boundary, however, it is also bound by north-south hedges to the east and west. The Application Scheme will not impact on this characteristic.
<i>Mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland cloaks the ridge.</i>	The Application Scheme will change one arable field to housing, within the context of the edge of an existing settlement. It will not impact the woodland on the ridges.
<i>Extensive coniferous plantations are evident on the ridges.</i>	The Application Scheme will not affect these.
<i>Distinctive 'squatter' settlements on the upper ridge slopes close to existing woodland and the line of the Crease Limestone.</i>	The Application Scheme is located in the lower valley, and will not affect the character of the squatter settlements on the upper ridges.
<i>Extensive views over the surrounding lowlands are possible from exposed ridge top locations.</i>	The Site is in the valley, and is not on the exposed ridge top locations. In views towards the Site from the ridge tops, the proposed development will be seen within the context of, and adjacent to, the existing settlement at Mitcheldean, and will not appear out of character.
<i>A number of redundant quarries are located throughout the landscape.</i>	The Application Scheme will not affect this characteristic.
<i>Numerous transportation routes follow valleys created by streams and brooks as they weave through the ridges.</i>	The Application Scheme will not affect this characteristic.
<i>Range of species rich grassland habitats, heath and bog, old orchards and ancient semi natural woodlands.</i>	The Site comprises an arable field with hedgerow boundaries. The proposals include the creation of new areas of woodland and grassland.
Landscape Character of LCT10	
<i>Running through the north-south orientated ridges are a number of narrow, often settled, valleys. These either share the north south orientation of the ridges or pass through them east west. The valleys are typically wooded, intimate and settled and therefore offer stark contrast to the more exposed landscapes of the ridges. The valleys are also more intensively farmed and field patterns that climb the valley sides offer a textural contrast to the ridges above. The predominant farm type is pasture, many of the valley and ridge slopes being too steep for cultivation. Fields tend to be small, and defined by</i>	Mitcheldean is located within one of these settled valleys, which is relatively narrow. The settlement is also orientated north-south. The Application Scheme would be located on the northern edge of the settlement, bound by existing development to the west and south east, and would reflect this north-south settlement form. The settlement and lower valley sides at Mitcheldean are often wooded, and the proposed development includes new woodland planting along the northern and eastern boundaries of the Site, continuing this well-wooded character. There are few hedgerow trees within the north and east of the Site, with the western hedgerow outgrown and containing many trees.

<i>well maintained hedges, many of which contain hedgerow trees. Linear woods along streams and brooks and orchards contribute to the valleys' wooded character.</i>	
Physical Influences	
<i>Intensive arable and pasture farming practices and commercial forestry limit the nature conservation value of the area.</i>	In relation to biodiversity net gain, the Application Scheme can achieve a 27% habitat units gain, 27% hedgerow units gain, and 19% watercourse units gain, due to the proposed landscaping within the green infrastructure network within which the new homes are located.
Buildings and Settlements	
<i>The largest settlements in the landscape type are Mitcheldean and Drybrook. Both settlements have a historic core although they have been subject to much expansion.</i>	The Site is separated from the historic core and Conservation Area within Mitcheldean by modern development, with modern development bounding the Site to the west, south, and south east.
LCA 10c: Edge Hill	
<i>... It forms a setting for the town of Mitcheldean, within which new housing development may be identified climbing up the slopes of the ridge. Extensive woodland cover, particularly in coniferous plantations, is a feature of the landscape...</i>	The new housing development mentioned adjoins the Site to the west, and is located on the rising valley side. This development extends from around the 135m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD') contour line in the south east, to approximately the 170m AOD contour in the west. The Site, in comparison, also rises from around 135m AOD in the south, up to a high point at around 160m AOD in the north, and development on the Site will therefore be lower relative to the adjoining settlement to the west. In contrast, Breakheart Hill east of the Site rises to around 219m AOD, with the land west of Mitcheldean rising to 279m AOD within the woodland at Wigmore Common.
LCA 10d: Breakheart Hill	
<i>Breakheart Hill, rising to 219 m AOD, represents the highest point on the Brownstone ridge that extends from Chestnuts Hill in the south, northwards into Herefordshire. The ridge is predominantly agricultural, a strong pattern of hedged fields dividing up the landscape into a neat patchwork of pasture and arable fields. Similar to the Littledean Ridge character area, field patterns are generally aligned along the contours of the ridge and small linear deciduous copses cling to the steeper slopes, emphasising landform... On the western slopes of the ridge a large</i>	The Site lies within this LCA, and lies on the lower parts of this LCA, within the valley. Whilst the Site does slope up towards the north, it is still much lower relative to the high valley sides, which extend up to 219m AOD in the vicinity, and higher beyond it, such that it is still clearly located within the valley, and noting that this valley is settled. No copses on the Site emphasise the landform, and the hedgerows at the Site are not aligned along the contours, as in other parts of the LCA on the rising valley sides. These industrial areas extend north up to roughly the mid-point of the Site's eastern boundary, with industrial development on rising ground clearly evident south east of the Site. Within the south of

<i>industrial estate and post war housing development may be seen extending up the slope. The industrial area contains numerous large factory units including Rank Xerox which is the largest employer in the area...</i>	Mitcheldean, post-war and modern housing rises up to around 150-155m AOD, between Gloucester Road and Eastern Avenue, within this LCA. The proposed development at the Site will extend to around the 157-159m AOD, which is reflective of development within its surroundings and within this LCA.
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- 5.14 Considering my comments in Table 5.1, it is evident that the Site is able to accommodate the proposed development without resulting in material harm to the overall character of LCA 10d within which the Site is located, nor to the adjoining LCA 10c or the wider LCT, and the proposed development will not appear, nor be, out of character.

Forest of Dean District Landscape Strategy (2004; CD6.3)

- 5.15 The Landscape Strategy provides an overview of the forces for change affecting the landscape of the District, and presents a range of potential landscape and land management strategy ideas for the individual landscape character types. It should be noted that this report is very dated, and does not necessarily reflect the NPPF or its aims. Nevertheless, I have set out some key elements from the report, including built development as a force for change, landscape sensitivity, and outline landscape strategies.
- 5.16 The study sets out a series of forces for change of the landscape in the District, including built development. I consider some of the key issues in the table below:

Table 5.2 Built development as a force for change	
<i>The expansion of existing towns and villages and the disproportionate growth of settlements with good transport links.</i>	The settlement will expand northwards, in a manner characteristic of its current settlement form, which includes a north-south orientated settlement, development rising up the undulating topography within the valley and onto the lower valley sides, and development being contained overall within the steep-sided valley. The scale of the proposed development will not result in a disproportionate addition of built form, nor dwellings.
<i>Infill development in towns and villages which may be at odds with traditional settlement patterns.</i>	The proposed development is not infill, however, it reflects the settlement pattern in the area, with housing on rising land characteristic, and with the Site bounded by development to the west, south and south east.
<i>Standardised housing designs on the fringes of existing settlements which may compromise their distinctive characteristics and landscape setting and threaten to consume the characteristic intra settlement open</i>	At the Reserved Matters stage, the exact design of the houses will be agreed with the Council, to ensure they reflect the distinctive vernacular of the area. I have discussed the landscape setting of the Site earlier, and found that it can accommodate the Application Scheme without resulting in material harm to the wider area or

<i>spaces which define individual settlements, particularly those surrounding the central forest core.</i>	setting, although there will be a high level of very localised harm. I have also noted that the majority of the key landscape features will be retained within the development, such as the boundary landscape features and the topography. The development will not impact on the separation between settlements.
<i>The introduction of a profuse variety of building materials and styles and the lack of reference to traditional rural styles of siting and design.</i>	The exact design of the development will be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage in order to ensure it references the local styles.

5.17 Therefore, while built development is a force for change on the landscape, it can be managed and well-designed to minimise harmful impacts to the landscape and townscape, and to maximise beneficial effects on the landscape.

5.18 The Strategy describes the landscape sensitivity of LCT 10 as follows:

'The distinctive, often remote, wooded ridgelines are highly visible from many areas and as such, are sensitive particularly where change would introduce built elements to otherwise agricultural or forested landscapes. Existing ridgeline squatter settlements such as Viney Hill and Old Croft are sensitive to large scale and incremental development which would compromise the character and dispersed form of these settlements. By contrast, the valleys and lower ridge slopes are visually contained and more heavily settled and are therefore less visually sensitive.'

5.19 The Application Scheme would be introduced into a setting which contains residential and employment development to the west, south and south east of the Site, and would not impact on the dispersed character of the settlement form in the wider area. The development would be located within the valley and lower ridge slopes, which are visually more contained and more heavily settled, and therefore also less visually sensitive.

5.20 Outline landscape strategies to manage expansion of existing valley floor settlements are set out within the Strategy, and I consider the Application Scheme against these strategies in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3 Outline Landscape Strategies	
<i>Conserve the distinctive linear character of the valley floor settlements and avoid siting new built development on visually prominent ridge sides.</i>	The proposed development reflects the linear character of the settlement, and avoids the visually prominent ridge sides.
<i>Conserve the landscape setting of Mitcheldean and Drybrook.</i>	Mitcheldean is located on the valley floor, bound by steeply rising valley sides to the east and west. It is surrounded by agricultural land. With the Application

	Scheme in place, these characteristics will remain.
<i>Seek to enhance the setting of valley settlements through woodland planting that links to existing ridge-side woodlands.</i>	The proposed development shows how new woodland planting can be incorporated along the northern and eastern boundaries of the Site, to filter views of the new homes, while aiding in assimilating them into the surrounding landscape and settlement. These woodlands will link to the woodland to the east which rises up Breakheart Hill.
<i>Conserve stretches of presently undeveloped valley to prevent amalgamation of valley floor settlements.</i>	The Application Scheme will have no material impact on the separation of settlements.

- 5.21 Overall, the Application Scheme respects the landscape sensitivities in the area, and complies with the suggested landscape strategies for managing development in the settlements.

Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2026 (Made March 2020; CD5.3)

- 5.22 It should be noted that putative Reason for Refusal 2 does not cite policies from the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.23 Within this Section, I consider the contents of the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the character of the settlement, and what the Plan says about the landscape setting of the Mitcheldean, and also valued landscapes and views, insofar as it is relevant to the Site or the effects of the Application Scheme on the settlement and its landscape.
- 5.24 The Neighbourhood Plan is supported by a Landscape Character Assessment within appendix IV of the Plan, and I consider this Landscape Character Assessment further in Sections 5.27 – 5.34 below.
- 5.25 For ease of consideration, I have tabulated extracts from the Neighbourhood Plan, and added my comments on the Plan or the effects of the Application Scheme on it, alongside.

Table 5.4 Neighbourhood Plan Extracts		
p3	<i>Although change is expected, Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that infrastructure will grow with any increase in housing development and seeks to prevent expansion into the sensitive surrounding areas such as Abenhall/Castiard Valley, Wigpool, and the Gateways to the parish.</i>	It should be noted that the area at the Site is not included within the identified sensitive surroundings in this paragraph, as discussed later on. This reference to 'gateways' is one of only two within the Plan: there is no policy which references gateways, as set out later on in this table.

Sec 3, p11	<i>Abenhall is a unique area with landscape much valued by the local communities who live in and around this area. Abenhall stands at the head of the Castiard Vale, one of the most prominent, distinctive and historic features of the Forest of Dean's landscape both in terms of built and natural environment... Development on the Abenhall side of Gloucester road (A4136) would be an unacceptable encroachment into this important landscape.</i>	This section describes the character, shape, and some history of Mitcheldean. This is one of the only references in the Neighbourhood Plan to a landscape which is particularly valued by local communities, and it does not refer to the landscape at the Site.
Sec 3, p14	<i>Outside the main village the wider Parish is of a rural character of mixed arable and livestock farming, bounded by woodland...There are pleasant and valued views to be had from many view points in the village to The Malvern Hills to the north, to May Hill to the east, to Minchinhampton Common and the southern Cotswolds to the south east and from The Point at the top of Plump Hill across the River Severn again to the southern Cotswold Hills.</i>	From the roads adjacent to the Site, views towards the Malvern Hills to the north will not be affected as these are only available from a point adjacent to the north westernmost edge of the Site. May Hill is not visible from the roads adjacent to the Site, and where it is visible from the higher ground west of the Site, the hill will remain visible over the proposed development, and the views of May Hill will therefore remain with the Application Scheme in place. The remainder of the views mentioned are not publicly available from near the Site and will not be impacted by the proposed development.
Sec 3, p14	<i>High grade farmland (the best and most versatile soils), has been recorded on fields to the north of Carisbrook Road (Grade 1)</i>	Whilst this forms part of putative Reason for Refusal 2, my Statement does not consider the loss of the agricultural land.
Sec 5, p17	<i>Objective 1: To protect the local character not only of the village itself, but also the outlying open countryside and forested areas of Abenhall, Wigpool, Plump Hill, Wilderness, Jubilee Road.</i>	I would note that whilst several areas are specifically mentioned as areas to protect, the land at the Site is not specifically identified.
Sec 5, p18	<i>Objective 8: Not to support development in the sensitive outlying areas of the village envelope (including Wigpool, land adjoining Gloucester Road, Castiard Valley, The Wilderness, and land north of Carisbrook Rd) in order to protect the countryside, landscapes, rare ecology, valued views and character setting of the village.</i>	Whilst objective 1 specifically deals with protecting the local character for its own sake, objective 8 is worded differently. The objective mentions the Site individually amongst other sites, however, it states that the objective is to <u>not support development</u> in these areas of the village, in order to protect the countryside, landscapes, rare ecology, valued views and character setting of the village. While the Site is specifically mentioned, there is no further information on the value to be attached to it. I consider the 'valued views' later on in Table 5.5.
Sec 6,	<i>Mitcheldean Gateways In/Out of the</i>	This page identifies Gateways in and out of the

p24	<i>Village. 4) Bradley Court Road with the closed entrance to Vantage Point Business village to the left, approaching the junction with the B4224 Carisbrook Road. 6) 6 The B4224 Lea Road approaching the mini roundabout at the entrance to Lining Wood estate The mini roundabout on the B4224 with the entrance to Lining Wood estate on the right looking towards Mitcheldean.</i>	village, alongside photographs of these gateways. Gateways 4 and 6 are relevant to the Site. I would note that the plan shows number 7 to be adjacent to number 6, but in fact, the location of that gateway is much further south, on The Stenders, and views from it do not encompass the Site. It should be noted that these gateways do not relate to any policies within the Plan, nor is there any indication that these are valued or important features: they are merely noted as gateways. Whilst NP Policy H2 is titled ‘Gateway and outside settlement boundary (outside the village) (to be read in conjunction with Landscape Impact Policy, Business Policies and Environmental Policies)’, none of the text within that policy actually refers to the gateways. There is therefore no evidence that the identification of these gateways is anything more than fact, and there is no suggestion that these gateways have an elevated landscape/townscape value or sensitivity. I have noted that the only other reference to the gateways is in the executive summary on page 3. I consider these gateways again later on in relation to the Landscape Impact Policy.
Para 6.4.1-2	<i>Mitcheldean is a historic village set within an attractive rural area. The Parish is of a rural character being mixed arable and livestock farming, bounded by woodland. There are pleasant views to be had from many vantage points in the village to The Malvern Hills to the north, to May Hill to the east, to Minchinhampton Common and the southern Cotswolds to the south east and from The Point at the top of Plump Hill across the River Severn again to the southern Cotswold Hills. The rural aspect and topography of Mitcheldean need to be considered and retained in order to preserve the character of Mitcheldean notwithstanding the employment opportunities afforded by Vantage Point Business Village...</i>	I have mentioned that these identified views are not available from the Site, and will not be affected by the Application Scheme. It further sets out that the rural aspect, and the topography, need to be <u>considered and retained</u> in order to preserve the character of Mitcheldean. I note that this does not infer special value to these characteristics (i.e. rural aspect and topography). Furthermore, the rural aspect of the settlement will not be affected with the proposed development in place, as the settlement will still be surrounded by a rural landscape. The topography of the Site has been considered within the Application Scheme, and the overall topography will be retained, albeit with localised cut and fill as required to develop the land.
Para 6.4.8	<i>Character Assessment: The Parish Of Mitcheldean</i> <i>The rural parish of Mitcheldean is</i>	In describing the character of the Parish of Mitcheldean, the Plan sets out that it is located within a valley bottom, with land rising steeply to

	<i>set in a medium size valley bottom with land rising steeply to the east and west. To the south of the A4136 the valley widens out with Westbury Brook running along the centre. The village is located immediately to the east of the Forest Of Dean and extends from Bradley Farm on Bradley Court Road and Dean Common Farm (part) on the Ross on Wye road in the north to Shapridge Farm and Spout lane in the south, and from Abenhall Mill in the east to the lanes leading to The Rocks and to The Wilderness from the A4136 in the west.</i>	the east and west. I would note that the Site is, similar to the existing settlement within Mitcheldean, located on the valley bottom, between the steeply rising valley sides to the east and west as illustrated on the plan in Figure 5.1 later on in this section (and in Appendix A2), and the development at the Site will not affect this characteristic of the Parish.
Policy E3	<i>Protecting and enhancing local landscape character:</i> <i>• Landscaping proposals in new development should protect and enhance existing features which contribute towards the distinctive, ecologically sensitive and valued local landscape character around Mitcheldean.</i> <i>• Schemes should protect existing hedgerows and areas of ancient semi natural woodland and old orchards, and use locally appropriate native species in screening and landscape design.</i> <i>• Use of local materials such as forest stone and field/stock fencing in boundary treatments and new buildings will be supported.</i> <i>• Development proposals should be sited and designed to respect the identified significant views which are locally valued and which make an important contribution to the neighbourhood area's landscape character.</i>	This policy was not cited in the Reason for Refusal, and it follows that the Council consider that the Application Scheme complies with it. The 'valued local landscape character' around Mitcheldean is not specifically identified or defined, however, there are scattered references to valued landscapes and views within the Neighbourhood Plan, which I have extracted within this table. By considering the details within this Neighbourhood Plan, and also within the supporting Landscape Character Assessment, I am identifying what features could be considered to be of higher sensitivity or higher value, in order to assess the effects on the Application Scheme against these. I have noted that, as set out earlier within this section of the Neighbourhood Plan, the character assessment states that the Parish is located in a valley bottom, with land rising steeply to the east and west, and the proposed development at the Site will not change this characteristic. I consider the effects of the Application Scheme on the local landscape character areas as defined in Appendix IV to the Neighbourhood Plan, in Sections 5.27 – 5.34 later on. The Application Scheme includes illustrative landscaping as shown on the Development Framework Plan and set out within the Design and Access Statement. The Application Scheme retains all the trees and hedgerows, and incorporates them within deep areas of open space, as illustrated on the plan at Figure 5.2 below and within Appendix A3. Areas of open space, alongside areas of new structural planting (including woodland and trees) are

		proposed along the boundaries of the Site, to retain and enhance the existing structural landscape elements on the Site. These green corridors also allow the topography of the open land at the Site to continue to be understood. Recreational routes proposed within the green open spaces, especially along the east and west of the development, will allow additional public views over the settlement of Mitcheldean and the high valley sides around it, again allowing the experience of the valley settlement to be further experienced from additional vantage points. At the detailed design stage, additional vistas could be incorporated into the layout to allow focussed views southwards, such as to the church spire or the higher hills, further 'nestling' the development into its surroundings. The exact materials and boundary details to be used will be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage. I consider the identified views in relation to the Application Scheme in Table 5.5. The Application Scheme therefore complies with this policy. It should be noted that this policy makes no reference to the gateways.
Para 6.4.11	Natural Heritage and Landscape	I consider the Application Scheme against the Council's Landscape Character Assessments separately later on in this Section of my Statement.
Para 6.4.12	... In addition to the Districts Landscape Character Assessment the NDP has identified Plump Hill, Jubilee Road and the head of the Castiard Valley as having the same characteristics as 10c Edgehills with heritage landscape value of equal significance.	It should be noted that the landscape at the Site is not mentioned as one of these areas of higher heritage landscape value, and the Site does not lie within LCA 10c Edgehills.
Para 6.4.16	The NDP has identified <u>Protection Areas</u> in order to: • Preserve the distinctive local landscape character and views. • Protect the environmentally sensitive areas and support the Forest of Dean Bat Strategy. • Preserve the heritage "squatter settlements" and field patterns historically unique to the Forest of Dean. • Protect the Strategic Nature Area	The Neighbourhood Plan includes areas specifically designated as Protection Areas, and point 1 of the purposes of these Areas is to preserve distinctive local landscape character and views. It is important to note that the Site does <u>not</u> lie within these Protection Areas, as shown on the extract plan at Figure 5.3 below. This must imply that, whilst the Site has its own character and value, it has not been identified as one of the areas in the Parish which is of elevated value and which therefore requires specific protection.

	<i>as identified by the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership in line with Michael Gove's 25 Year Plan.</i>	
<i>Policy E5</i>	<i>Landscape impact of developments outside the settlement boundary - Development proposals outside the settlement boundary should have regard to the landscape setting of the neighbourhood area as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment.</i> <i>Where development proposals otherwise comply with other policies in the development plan, including Policy H2 of this Plan, they will be supported where they meet the following criteria insofar as they are applicable to the proposed development:</i> <i>• conserve and, where practicable, enhance the local character of the landscape;</i> <i>• conserve and, where practicable, enhance existing forested and woodland areas including forest waste;</i> <i>• conserve agricultural land and maintain, and, where practicable, enhance hedgerows and trees;</i> <i>• support the maintenance and, where practicable, the enhancement of horseshoe bat foraging and commuting landscapes;</i> <i>• conserve the topographical green landscape bowl setting around the village; and</i> <i>• conserve existing landscape heritage squatter settlement patterns.</i>	The Application Scheme is outside the settlement boundary, but it does not comply with Policy H2. Nevertheless, a consideration of the Application Scheme against the principles in this policy aids in assessing the landscape impacts of the Application Scheme. While the proposed development will change the character of the Site itself, there will be no significant effects on the character of the wider landscape, including the shape of the settlement (i.e. north-south orientated within the valley), the high valley sides to the east and west, and the existing modern settlement to the south east, west and south of the proposed development. I have noted how the proposals include new green corridors and structural planting, including woodland, to enhance the character of these parts of the Site. The new woodland planting on the north and east of the Site will enhance the treed character of the area, and the development will have no effect on the wider woodland or forests. The Application Scheme will result in the loss of one agricultural field, however, the existing hedgerows and trees will be enhanced with new planting. The new vegetation belts will also aid in supporting habitat for bats. The settlement will remain located within the valley floor bound by the steep eastern and western valley sides, and the Application Scheme will not impact this characteristic, being located between two areas of existing development within the settled valley. The Application Scheme will not impact the squatter settlement pattern.

5.26 In conclusion, while the Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of general references to the rural character, landscape setting and valued views associated with Mitcheldean, these references do not identify the Site as forming part of a specifically protected or elevated-value landscape. Although land north of Carisbrook Road is referenced in Objective 8, no further evidence is provided within the Plan to explain the landscape value of the Site or to indicate that it is of greater sensitivity than the ordinary countryside around the settlement. The Application Scheme would change the character of the Site itself, but it would retain and enhance existing hedgerows and trees, provide new structural

planting and open space, and would not materially affect the wider valley setting or the wider rural context of Mitcheldean. On this basis, the Neighbourhood Plan does not provide evidence of a specific landscape constraint at the Site that would indicate an unacceptable landscape or visual effect arising from the proposed development.

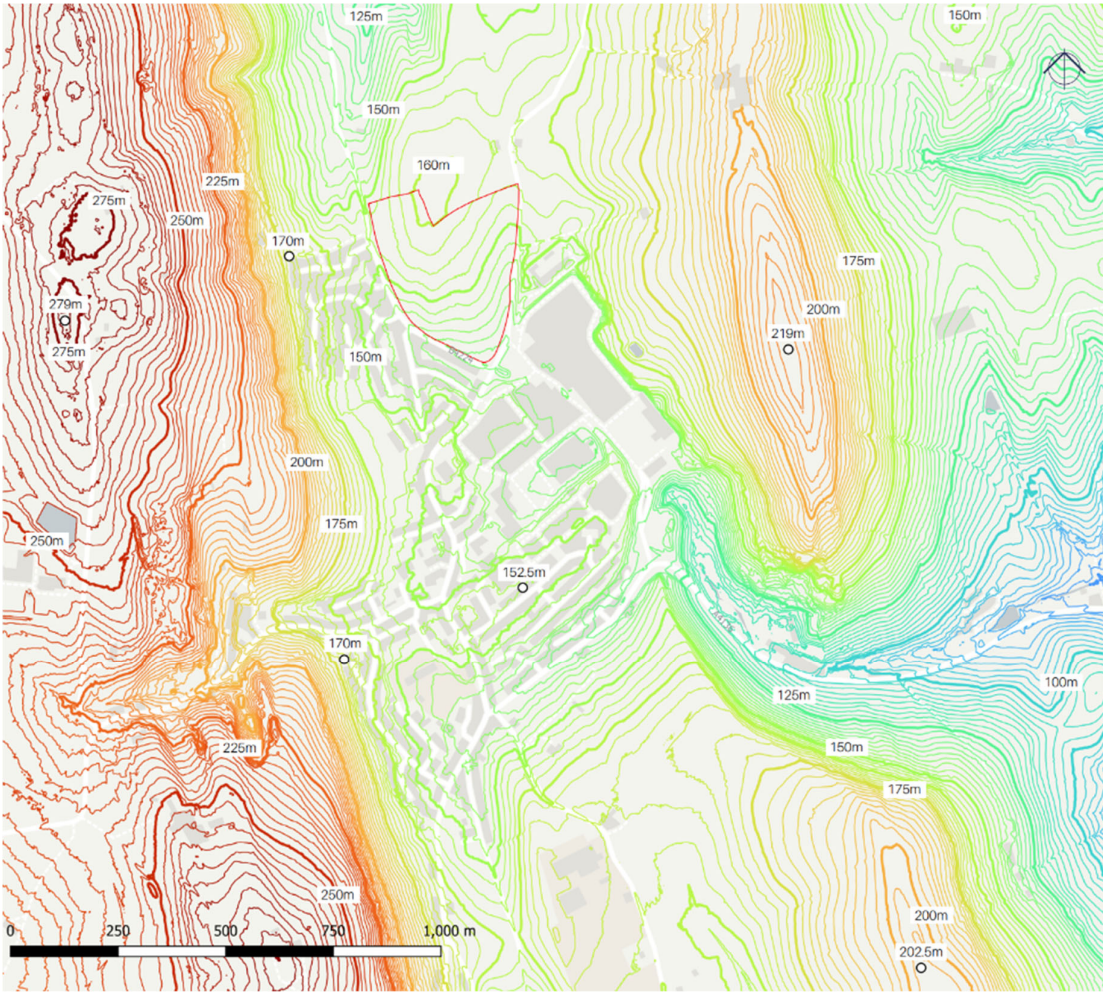


Figure 5.1: Topography plan showing the Site in red outline (also contained in Appendix A2).



Figure 5.2: Plan showing the depth of open space corridors and new planting on the edges of the Site (also contained in Appendix A3).

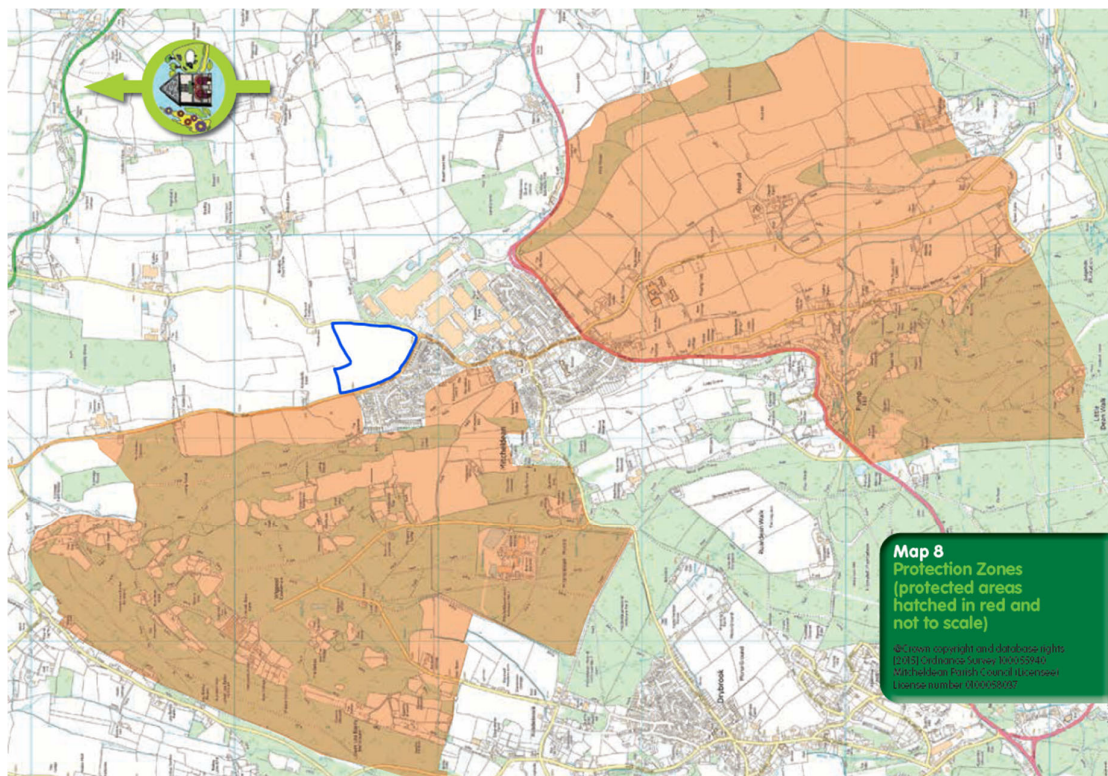


Figure 5.3: Extract from Neighbourhood Plan showing the Protection Areas in red, with the Site identified by the blue outline.

Mitcheldean Landscape Character Assessment: Appendix IV to the Neighbourhood Plan (CD6.7)

- 5.27 This Landscape Character Assessment supports Policy E5 of the Neighbourhood Plan. I would note that this Landscape Character Assessment does not include a map identifying the various character areas, although assumptions can be made from the text.
- 5.28 It sets out in paragraph 6.4.12 that the Parish lies within two character areas, and includes some key characteristics. It states: *'In addition to the District's Landscape Character Assessment, the NDP has identified Plump Hill, Jubilee Road and the head of the Castiard Valley [around Abenhall] as having the same characteristics as 10c Edgehills with heritage landscape value of equal significance.'* The Site is not included within this description of areas of higher heritage landscape value.
- 5.29 The assessment discusses four character areas: Castiard Vale, The Wilderness, Wigpool, and Bradley Court/Breakheart Hill (i.e. the character area most likely to represent the Site and/or its surroundings).
- 5.30 In relation to Bradley Court/Breakheart Hill, the assessment notes only the following:
- 'The landscape is one of larger hedged agricultural fields set in an elevated position. The fields slope down towards the settlement of Mitcheldean. Within this landscape is the listed barn, Lager's Barn, which is clearly visible and a prominent feature within the landscape (View 12). The Forest of Dean Landscape Character Document defines this landscape's character: "Area 10d Breakheart Hill. Characteristics of this area include ridges orientated north to south emphasised in the orientation of hedgerow patterns and mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland cloaks ridges. The ridge is predominantly agricultural, with a strong pattern of hedged fields dividing the landscape into a neat patchwork of pasture and arable fields." There are public rights of way within this landscape including The Wysis Way.'*
- 5.31 The Application Scheme will change one of these agricultural field on the valley bottom, to residential development, which will be located adjacent to the existing residential and employment development within the settlement. I set out below that Lager's Barn will remain visible. I have already considered the effect of the Application Scheme against the characteristics LCA 10d earlier in this section. The public rights of way within the landscape will be retained, and additional recreational routes on the proposed development will link these, and enhance access to green spaces. While views from some of the public rights of way will change, for the most part, the effects will not be material, with the new homes seen within the context of the existing settlement which is already visible. The Application Scheme will not change the overall character of this character area.
- 5.32 The Landscape Character Assessment includes a plan and photographs illustrating 24 'valued landscape views', as mentioned in paragraph 6.4.14 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and within Policy E3, which notes that development proposals should be sited and designed to respect the identified

significant views which are locally valued and which make an important contribution to the neighbourhood area's landscape character.

- 5.33 Of the 24 identified views, three include the Site. These are view 1 (similar to photograph 15 within appendix 3 of the LVIA (CD1.13); view 12 (similar to photograph 23 in the LVIA); and view 13 (similar to photograph 6 in the LVIA). I consider the impact of the Application Scheme on these views in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5 Key views		
1	<i>View from a public footpath on Breakheart Hill across the valley to Carisbrook Road Estate. Illustrating the rising topography, landscape and statutory forest. Environmentally sensitive Protection Zone in the foreground of the Grade 1 agricultural field and also the environmentally sensitive Statutory Forest of cultural and heritage significance behind.</i>	The proposed development will be seen in the middle ground of this view. While the open field partially visible in the middle ground will change to housing, the new housing will be seen in a view which already contains housing in the rear of the middle ground, and industrial development in the foreground. The overall character of the view will not change. The rising topography, Protection Zone and Forest will remain visible, although the agricultural field will change to housing. The proposed houses will not appear out of character in this view, and the proposed landscaping on the east of the Site will partially screen the development as it matures, thereby also partially screening some of the existing houses in the background, whilst maintaining views of the wooded rising land beyond. It should also be noted that a field's agricultural land quality is not visible to the naked eye, and the grade of arable land makes no difference to the character of a view.
12	<i>Listed Lager's Barn on Breakheart Hill (FODDC Landscape Assessment 10d). Taken from public footpath in the woods opposite.</i>	It should be noted that this photograph is zoomed in, and the barn therefore appears much clearer and nearer to the viewer on the opposite side of the valley, than in real life. Photograph 23 within appendix C of the LVIA (CD1.13) shows a view which is more representative of the actual view seen by people. In views towards the barn from the east-facing valley side, the proposed development at the Site will be visible in the middle ground, behind and adjoining the existing houses and employment buildings already visible in this view. Views to the barn will remain available over the new homes, and the proposed planting within the west and north of the Site will filter the new homes in these views.
13	<i>Uninterrupted views from the Sheep Field over the recreation field</i>	The proposed development will be visible in the middle ground of the view, seen adjacent to, and

	<i>(designated Green Space) across to Breakhart Hill, the listed Lagers Barn and the Malverns beyond. Views shows the character setting of Mitcheldean nestled in a bowl and the Grade 1 agricultural field rising up outside the settlement boundary opposite Carisbrook Road.</i>	behind the existing residential development and the employment areas. Additional tree planting in the west and south of the Site will filter the new homes in these views. The views will remain uninterrupted over the recreational field, and Breakheart Hill will remain visible over the proposed and existing housing, as will Lagers Barn and the Malverns beyond. As noted earlier, the fact that the land at the Site is higher quality arable land makes no difference to its visual character. Whilst the Site will change to housing, further fields beyond the Site to the east will remain visible rising up towards the high valley side east of Mitcheldean. The development at the Site will not appear incongruous, and the overall character of the view will remain.
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- 5.34 The Application Scheme will not have a significant impact on the identified views, and the proposed development will be seen within the context of the existing settlement which it adjoins, and experienced as part of the valley bound by steep valley sides. The Application Scheme respects and reflects the local landscape character area.

Forest of Dean District Council Landscape Supplementary Planning Document ('SPD'; 2007; CD6.6)

- 5.35 This SPD, which is now very dated, states as its purpose: *'In broad terms this document sets out important principles relating to the environment and more specifically, the landscape, and provides guidance for anyone with an interest in development, planning or design. Through adoption as Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the document will be taken into account by the District Council and other decision makers when considering all planning proposals, applications and appeals.'*
- 5.36 Whilst the Council refer to this document in their Statement of Case, they do not specify which part of it, if any, the Application Scheme does not comply with. The illustrative proposals shown within the Development Framework Plan (CD1.3) and Design and Access Statement (CD1.4) are a result of an iterative process, which considers landscape opportunities and influences, alongside a host of other technical matters which all need to be taken into consideration to ensure sustainable development.
- 5.37 The proposed development includes green infrastructure corridors along the east, north, west, and south of the Site, which allow space for the existing structural vegetation to be retained and managed. In addition, the proposals include new woodland planting within the north of the Site (around 15m

deep) and the east (around 10m deep). This woodland serves several purposes: it provides some visual screening and filtering of views of the new homes; it enhances the ecological function of the vegetation belts; and it provides habitats on the Site which can enhance and connect to adjoining areas of woodland. A large open area in the south of the development is proposed to be designed to be multi-functional, managing surface water run-off, whilst creating an attractive landscape feature which also has ecological and habitat benefits.

- 5.38 At the Reserved Matters stage, additional landscape details will be agreed with the Council, such as street tree species and such, to ensure the scheme is suited to its setting.
- 5.39 Overall, the outline Application Scheme complies with this SPD, and the detailed design and layout is also capable of complying with the SPD.

Conclusion on Landscape and Visual Character Evidence Base

- 5.40 The Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment (2002) sets out the key characteristics of the wider Landscape Character Type. I have considered the Site against these, noting that the Site is on the lower valleys which also include the settlement of Mitcheldean, and which are bound by the distinctive rounded ridges. The settlement and ridges reflect the north-south alignment characteristic of the area, and the proposed development will not change that. The development will not affect the distinctive squatter settlements, nor the redundant quarries or the coniferous plantations on the ridges. The Site is not located on the exposed ridges, and there are therefore not extensive views available from the Site. The Application Scheme will not impact on the transportation routes which follow the valleys, nor on the higher value landscapes mentioned within this LCT.
- 5.41 The Forest of Dean District Landscape Strategy (2004) notes that the wooded ridgelines are sensitive to built development, while the valley floors and lower slopes are visually more contained and more heavily settled, and are therefore less visually sensitive. It identifies 'expansion of existing valley floor settlements' as a local force for change within LCT 10. I have set out in Table 5.3 that the Application Scheme responds to the Outline Landscape Strategies for this LCT, by not siting new development on visually prominent ridge sides, and by conserving the linear character of the settlement and the setting of Mitcheldean.
- 5.42 Putative Reason for Refusal 2 does not cite any of the Neighbourhood Plan policies. While the Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of general references to the rural character, landscape setting and valued views associated with Mitcheldean, these references do not identify the Site as forming part of a specifically protected or elevated-value landscape. The Neighbourhood Plan does not provide evidence of a specific landscape constraint at the Site that would indicate an unacceptable landscape or visual effect arising from the proposed development. The Application

Scheme complies with Policy E3, and whilst it cannot comply with Policy E5 as a matter of principle, I have set out how it responds to the landscape character requirements within that policy.

- 5.43 The Mitcheldean Landscape Character Assessment which forms part of the Neighbourhood Plan considers four local landscape character areas, with the Site most likely located within the Bradley Court/Breakheart Hill area. I have set out that the Application Scheme will be well related to the character of that area, being located adjacent to existing residential and employment development within the settlement on the valley bottom.
- 5.44 The Mitcheldean Landscape Character Assessment identifies 24 'valued landscape views'. The Application Scheme will be visible in only three of these: an indication of how localised the visual effects from the development would be. None of these 24 views, nor any of the identified views which include the Site specifically refer to the trees on the northern Site boundary. The Application Scheme will not have a significant effect on the identified views, and the proposed development will be seen within the context of the existing settlement which it adjoins, and experienced as part of the valley bound by steep valley sides.

6. RESPONSE TO PUTATIVE REASON FOR REFUSAL 2, STATEMENT OF CASE, AND OFFICER'S COMMENTS

- 6.1 The putative Reason for Refusal 2 relates, in part, to landscape and visual matters, and I shall consider and respond to those in this Section. I also consider relevant comments from the Planning Case Officer (in their Report to the Planning Committee; CD4.1), as well as matters raised in the Council's Statement of Case. I consider the effect of the proposed development on landscape character and appearance of the area, as identified as a main issue by the Inspector.

Case Officer's Committee Report

- 6.2 It does not appear that the Council had a consultation response from a Landscape Officer or an external Landscape Consultant in relation to the Application, and instead, it appears that the Planning Case Officer relied on the submitted LVIA. I have already noted that I am in general agreement with the findings of the LVIA.
- 6.3 The Case Officer, in their Committee Report, considered the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. From considering their report, it is evident that the Case Officer had a good understanding of what landscape and visual effects may entail, and how they should be assessed. They correctly note that the arable field will no longer remain, but that the hedgerows and trees which are also characteristic of the area, would be retained. They note that development would be set back from the field edges and that there is opportunity for further planting within the Site.
- 6.4 They note: *'It is also the case that development would be located on the lower slopes as the existing development currently is'*. This is correct. While the Site does rise up from the south to the north, within the context of Mitcheldean and its landscape setting, the Application Scheme will be located in the valley, and not on the steeper rising valley sides which enclose the settlement to the east and west, as evident in the plan at Figure 5.1 of my evidence and within **Appendix A2**. In that regard, the Application Scheme will be reflective of the settlement form and landscape setting of Mitcheldean. The proposed development will extend to around 157-159m AOD, which is comparable to the development to the west which extends up to around the 175m AOD contour, and that south within the settlement which extends to around 155m AOD. The settlement at Mitcheldean does not face in one direction, and is not located on, for example, a south-facing slope. Instead, it is located on very undulating ground, with these undulations still all located within the valley bottom, bound by the steeper and higher valley sides: that is the characteristic of the topography of the settlement, as illustrated on the Topography Plan in Figure 5.1 of my evidence.
- 6.5 The Officer concludes that there will be impact to the landscape character as a result of the loss of the field, but that the impact will be mitigated to a degree in the medium term. I agree. I have

considered the various landscape character studies in some detail in Section 5, and found no evidence that the Site is of higher landscape value or sensitivity than most land within the surroundings of Mitcheldean. In fact, the studies specifically identify landscapes which are of higher sensitivity, and the Site is not one of these. In addition, the Site's character is influenced by the adjoining settlement to the west, south and south east, which is clearly evident from the Site, and which has an urbanising effect on the overall character of the Site, notwithstanding the fact that the field is open and undeveloped. This is not a field within the open countryside, and it is not particularly unique or particularly characteristic of the specific landscape of the area.

- 6.6 There is landscape harm as a result of the loss of the open arable field, but that does not mean that the proposed development would be unattractive or unsuitable to the landscape and townscape character of the area. In fact, as set out earlier, the landscape has played a key part in the proposed layout of the development, as well as in the proposed mitigation. At the Reserved Matters stage, additional detailed elements will be agreed with the Council, to ensure that the proposed development results in an attractive neighbourhood which reflects the local vernacular, utilises good place making strategies, and provides social and recreational benefits as well as ecological and structural landscape benefits.
- 6.7 Furthermore, this harm is very localised. As can be understood from the Neighbourhood Plan and other character assessments, the Site forms a small part of the wider Mitcheldean area and its immediate landscape setting. While the field at the Site will change, the change will not appear incongruous with the character of Mitcheldean's settlement form or townscape, nor with its landscape setting. As concluded in relation to the visual assessment in the LVIA (CD1.13), in medium and longer distance views, the Application Scheme will be seen within the context of the existing settlement, and will not appear out of character, nor fundamentally change the character of the views.
- 6.8 The Case Officer also considers the visual effects of the Application Scheme, noting that Neighbourhood Plan Policy E3 (which is not cited in the proposed Reasons for Refusal) requires development to respect the identified views, and that the policy does not require the views to be protected from development. I have considered these views, and conclude that the Application Scheme respects these views. It will not curtail them, nor will it be introducing an uncharacteristic element or feature within these identified views. It should also be noted that 24 views were identified, and the Application Scheme will only be visible in three of these, again illustrating the localised visual impact of the proposed development, with material effects even more localised.
- 6.9 The Case Officer also considers the visual effects on users of the adjoining roads, and from Wysis Way which runs along Bradley Court Road to the east of the Site. They correctly note that the development would be visible from these roads adjacent to the Site, and it should be noted that these views will change substantially from some parts of the adjoining roads. Similarly, views from some houses near the Site will change substantially. However, mitigation has been designed into the

proposed layout of the Application Scheme, with the built form set back between 30m and 90m from the Site's boundaries, and behind existing and proposed structural vegetation. The vegetation, alongside the set-backs, will screen some views during the summer, and filter or partial screen views in the winter. This vegetation will also aid in softening views of the buildings, where visible, and integrating them into the existing surrounding landscape and townscape. Substantial adverse visual effects are limited to those from along parts of the adjoining roads, including from adjacent to the southern parts of the Site. There will also be substantial adverse visual effects on some residential views, and in particular those nearest to the Site or where they have clear views of the Site. Material, but not substantial visual effects will be experienced by users of some of the middle distance public rights of way, however, beyond these receptors, visual effects will reduce to non-material. The Case Officer took these into consideration in the planning balance when coming to their recommendation on the approval of the Application.

- 6.10 I consider that the Case Officer was aware of the landscape and visual effects which would arise from the development, and that the submitted LVIA set out a clear assessment of effects. I agree within the comments made by the Case Officer in relation to the landscape and visual effects of the Application Scheme.

Form of development and character of surroundings

- 6.11 Putative Reason for Refusal 2 alleges that the development would create a suburban form of development in this rural location, and that it would be out of character within the surroundings. I have set out earlier that the Site is bounded by housing to the west and south, and by the employment area to the south east. The housing west and south of the Site is clearly visible from within the vicinity of the Site, and from the Site itself, with the housing rising up the valley sides to the west, and located on the undulating ground to the south. The Site is orientated towards the west, south, and east, and faces towards these existing developed areas. The Site is not in a rural location: it is on the edge of a settlement, and its character is influenced by the adjoining development which is clearly evident from it. The Site is not orientated towards the north, where the wider valley, and rural landscape continues beyond the settlement, and its character is therefore impacted to a much lesser degree by the open countryside to the north. To the east, the open rising ground on the steeper valley sides is evident from within the Site, and it has some influence on the character of the Site.
- 6.12 The proposed development will reflect the pattern of development which occurs west and south of the Site, with houses located on the rising ground. This housing is suburban in character, dating from the latter part of the 20th Century. The houses here are orientated along the slopes, especially to the west, with the buildings and streets appearing terraced on the rising ground, resulting in the houses within this part of the settlement around the Appal Site being clearly visible, and forming a key feature of the character of the area. The proposed development will also face inwards towards the settlement, as opposed to out towards the north, as is again evident and characteristic within the surrounding built area.

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- 6.13 At the detailed design stage, the new homes will be designed to reflect the historic vernacular, and will similarly appear to be terraced along the rising landform within the Site. The proposed development will not appear out of character within its context, and will be similar in overall scale and character to the adjoining houses.

Landscape Strategy

- 6.14 The Council's Statement of Case alleges that the Application Scheme would conflict with the landscape strategy for the relevant Landscape Character Area, which seeks to avoid development on prominent slopes and protect the settlement's landscape setting.
- 6.15 I have considered the Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment and the associated Landscape Strategy in much detail in Section 5.13 - 5.21. In Table 5.3, I considered the Application Scheme against the outline landscape strategies for LCT 10. I have set out that the Application Scheme reflects the linear character of the settlement and valley. I have noted that Mitcheldean is located in the valley floor, bound by the steeply rising valley sides to the east and west, and that the Site is located on the valley floor, alongside the majority of the existing settlement at Mitcheldean. While the Site rises up from two shallow valleys along the roads which bound the Site to the east and west, within the context of the settlement and the Landscape Character Area, the Site is still clearly located on the valley floor, and not on the visually prominent ridge sides, as also illustrated on the Topography Plan in Figure 5.1 and in **Appendix A2**, and within the photographs in appendix C of the LVIA (CD1.13).
- 6.16 I have considered the various landscape character studies as well as the Neighbourhood Plan, in order to identify the key characteristics of the setting of Mitcheldean. These include the high rounded ridges above the intimate and settled, medium size valley bottom which contains Mitcheldean, alongside the wooded character of the high ground to the west. It also includes the north-south orientated ridges around the settlement. LCA 10c is specifically mentioned as forming a setting to the town, within which new housing development may be identified climbing up the slopes of the ridge (i.e. the LCA west of the Site). The large industrial estate and post-war housing on the western slopes of Breakheart Hill are characteristic of the area. The rural character of the wider Parish is noted, and the mixed arable and livestock farming bounded by woodland. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies pleasant and valued views from points in the village, but this description does not include the Site. It notes that '*The rural aspect and topography of Mitcheldean need to be considered and retained in order to preserve the character of Mitcheldean...*'
- 6.17 As considered in detail in Section 5, the Site is capable of being developed whilst retaining the key characteristics of LCT 10 and LCA 10d, as well as the setting and character of Mitcheldean. The proposals have been designed to retain and enhance the key landscape features of the Site.

Visibility

- 6.18 The LVIA contains a thorough consideration of visual effects from public and residential receptors. I have noted that there will be high adverse visual effects from the adjoining and nearby roads and houses, and from limited other publicly accessible locations. The geographical area which will experience material visual impacts is limited to the immediate surroundings of the Site, and some views from the middle distance to the south, east and west from more sensitive viewers.
- 6.19 In the vast majority of instances, the development at the Site will be seen within the context of the existing settlement and built form, which is similarly visible from the Site's surroundings, and from the higher ground around Mitcheldean. Where visible, the Application Scheme will not appear out of character.
- 6.20 It is not clear from the Council's Statement of Case whether they have concerns about the visibility of the development in relation to the protected trees on the Site's northern boundary, or merely the development in relation to the TPO trees. I would note that the Neighbourhood Plan identified 24 important views, none of which were specifically of the Site, and none which specifically mentioned the TPO trees on the northern Site boundary. I have considered the visual effects of the development earlier on, and this is set out in detail within the LVIA (CD1.13).
- 6.21 Separately, I would note that Council's Assistant Tree and Countryside Officer, in their response to the consultation on the Application (dated 10 July 2025; CD3.7) raised no objection to the Application Scheme subject to conditions. They also noted that the Development Framework Plan (Rev G; CD1.3) suggested that the layout would provide adequate buffers to the trees along the boundary, including the TPO trees to the north of the Site.

Mitigation measures

- 6.22 The Council's Statement of Case refers to the '*limitations of mitigation measures given the site's elevated and exposed position*'. I assume the Council are referring to visual mitigation measures.
- 6.23 It should be noted that preventing views of new houses on the edge of an existing settlement, is rarely the correct means of mitigating development or visual effects of development. As I have set out earlier, housing within the surroundings of the Site, and indeed within the valley which contains Mitcheldean, is clearly visible from a range of viewpoints. Within that context, it would be out of character to try to screen the proposed development in views.
- 6.24 However, new woodland belts on the boundaries of the Site, as illustrated within the Development Framework Plan and in Figure 5.2, will aid in limiting views of the lower parts of the development, which are often visually the busiest (with rear fences, parked cars and such visible on the ground plane). It will also aid in softening the built form in views, so that the houses do not appear stark and

hard, but that they are partially hidden and their hard edges visually camouflaged, so that they integrate within their setting, which similarly comprises houses which are partially filtered, screened, and softened by vegetation.

- 6.25 The Development Framework Plan (CD1.3) illustratively shows a road leading through the development and following the contours where possible. This primary street will be tree lined, as is a requirement within the NPPF. The trees will therefore be located along the contours of the Site, in between the new homes. As they mature, they will aid in filtering the houses higher up the slope, and again soften the built form where visible, in the same manner as trees within the development west of the Site soften the built form.
- 6.26 It is therefore clear that effective mitigation planting can be incorporated within the development, to ensure the residual views are similar in character to those of housing within the setting of the Site, and to assimilate the built form into its landscape and townscape surrounding. This is considered effective mitigation, and any measures which attempt to screen the development from views would be out of character.

Policy CSP.1

- 6.27 The policy states: *'The design and construction of new development must take into account important characteristics of the environment and conserve, preserve or otherwise respect them in a manner that maintains or enhances their contribution to the environment, including their wider context. New development should demonstrate an efficient use of resources. It should respect wider natural corridors and other natural areas, providing green infrastructure where necessary'*. It sets out a list of criteria which will be considered, the only one which is of relevance to my evidence being:
- 'The effect of the proposal on the landscape including AONBs and any mitigation/enhancement that is necessary or desirable'*.
- 6.28 The supporting text notes that *'The policy is intended to promote local distinctiveness as well as good design and conservation. It does so partly by conferring protection on historic and natural features (whether designated or not) and by ensuring that development takes account of some key considerations.'* The 2026 NPPF does, however, not require protection of natural features, but instead requires environmental qualities of land proposed for development to be considered, and opportunities to conserve and enhance these qualities should be identified. Natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value (such as established trees and hedgerows) should be conserved and enhanced where possible.
- 6.29 I have set out earlier that the Application Scheme considers, respects, and responds to the identified landscape and townscape characteristics of the area, as set out within the various studies considered in Section 5. The boundary structural vegetation will be retained and enhanced as part of the

proposals, as shown on the Development Framework Plan, and the exact details of these enhancements can be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage. The proposed layout respects the wider areas of higher ecological, landscape and heritage importance, and incorporates new green infrastructure within a network of connected open spaces around the new homes, with the green infrastructure designed to be multi-functional. I have noted that the proposed development is set back from the retained hedgerows and trees, and that new structural vegetation is proposed to be incorporated between the development and the boundary vegetation. No structural vegetation requires removal to facilitate the development, although some crown lifting and pruning will be required to allow sufficient visibility at the new vehicular access point.

6.30 I have considered the effects of the Application Scheme on the landscape, and considered the findings of the LVIA submitted with the Application. I conclude that landscape effects will be highly localised, and while the character of the Site will change, this does not mean that the Application Scheme would be out of character or inappropriate. In fact, the development will be perceived within its setting which already contains much development, and therefore, the wider effects of the development beyond the immediate setting of the Site, are considered negligible and not material. I have considered the mitigation proposed as part of the outline Application, and further mitigation measures can be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage, such as materials and planting species.

6.31 Overall, the Application Scheme complies with this policy insofar as it relates to landscape and visual matters.

Policy CSP.4

6.32 The Application Scheme does not comply with this policy as a matter of principle, as the Site is located outside of the settlement boundary.

Policy CSP.5

6.33 The Application Scheme does not comply with this policy in principle, as it is not allocated for development.

Policy AP1

6.34 This policy deals with sustainable development. It notes that particular reference will be made to the guidance in the Core Strategy, Allocations Plan and NPPF/NPPG in making the required judgements on whether development is sustainable.

6.35 I have found that the Application Scheme complies with the landscape-related parts of Policy CSP.1, and that the proposed development has taken account of the landscape character of the area, as well as of the key structural landscaping on the Site.

6.36 I consider the Application Scheme against the relevant policies within the NPPF later on in this Section, concluding that the Application Scheme complies with those. Therefore, the Application Scheme complies with Policy AP1 insofar as it relates to landscape matters.

NPPF Policy N2

6.37 As set out within the Design and Access Statement (CD1.4) and the submitted LVIA (CD1.13), the landscape character of the Site and its setting, alongside the character of the vegetation and habitats on site, topography, views, and the wider ecological and historical setting, have been considered during the design process and in developing the Development Framework Plan. Opportunities to retain the structural vegetation and to enhance it were identified, alongside the opportunities to reflect the setting and character of Mitcheldean (i.e. the valley settlement) and its surroundings (i.e. the steeper valley sides). The proposals include new structural planting within the north and east of the development, and a wider green infrastructure network which allows for new planting and habitats in order to ensure a net increase in biodiversity.

6.38 These green corridors and new planting will form connections to wider areas of structural landscape features and habitats beyond the Site. The exact details of the landscaping scheme will be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage, however, the proposals include new street trees and scattered tree planting within the areas of open space. While the Site could be seen to have some visual value in that it comprises open land, the views of the Site are not of elevated value, and ordinary within the context of the Site's wider setting.

6.39 The green infrastructure will be multi-functional, incorporating space for habitats and new planting, sustainable drainage features (SuDS), recreational routes and play spaces, and trees and soft landscaping to aid in mitigating climate change. The green infrastructure is mostly proposed to be located in swathes around the new homes, and to form a connected corridor. This allows the widest range of benefits to be achieved through the amalgamation of open space, creating areas which are large enough to be successfully utilised and managed, and for successful habitats to establish. At the Reserved Matters stage, the exact species to be used will be considered to ensure their suitability and longevity. A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan will be agreed with the Council in the future, setting out the management regimes required to enable the habitats and landscape to succeed.

6.40 Overall, the Application Scheme complies with the landscape principles in Policy N2(1) to ensure the development positively contributes to the natural environment, and supports nature's recovery.

NPPF Policy N3

- 6.41 This policy deals with trees in new developments. The Development Framework Plan (CD1.3) submitted with the Application, as well as the Illustrative Masterplan within the Design and Access Statement (page 50, CD1.4) show how trees can be incorporated along the new streets within the proposed development, and the exact location, species, and management of these can be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage. The Application Scheme is capable of complying with this policy.

NPPF Policy DP3

- 6.42 Policy DP3(1) sets out that development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets.
- 6.43 I have considered the context of the Site in some detail in Section 5, with reference to the various studies of the area. The Design and Access Statement (CD1.4) and the LVIA (CD1.13) also consider the character of the Site and its context. I have noted that the Site is set within a context which already includes housing rising up higher ground, and also employment development to the south east, with open countryside to the north east and north. The proposed development specifically includes deep landscape corridors and new woodland planting along its northern and eastern sides, to create clear edges and separation between the proposed development and the wider countryside. The houses on the Site will front towards the existing settlement, and the new homes will appear terracing up the rising ground within the Site, in a similar manner to that in the vicinity of the Site and within the wider Mitcheldean settlement. At the detailed design stage, the exact layout of plots, materials and architectural features will be agreed with the Council to further ensure the development reflects and integrates with its neighbouring development, whilst reflecting elements of the higher quality vernacular of the area.
- 6.44 Point 2 of the policy sets out principles of well-designed places, with (c), nature, of relevance to my evidence. It sets out that development proposals should incorporate and/or connect to a network of high quality, accessible, multi-functional green infrastructure to provide opportunities for recreation and healthy living, strengthen habitats, improve climate change resilience and improve air and water quality. This should include maintaining and enhancing tree cover and incorporating sustainable drainage systems in accordance with policies N3 and F8. I have set out earlier that a network of green infrastructure corridors is incorporated into the proposed layout of the Application Scheme, including a larger area of open space in the south. These corridors include recreational routes and play areas, as well as new structural landscaping and areas for habitat creation, to provide opportunities for recreation and to strengthen habitats. The Application Scheme includes a sustainable drainage system which proposes a drainage basin within the southern area of open

space, and this will be designed to be an attractive landscape feature with ecological benefits, whilst managing and conditioning surface water run-off.

- 6.45 The outline Application Scheme complies with the landscape-related parts of this policy, and further detail will be agreed at a later stage to ensure the green infrastructure within the proposed development continues to be multi-functional.