

Proof of Evidence:

Landscape and Visual Matters

James W. Atkin.

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth

On behalf of Summix Developments Limited

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Contents.

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Qualifications and Experience..... | 1 |
| Terms of Reference..... | 1 |
| Evidence Structure..... | 2 |
| 2. THE APPEAL SITE..... | 4 |
| Site Description and Context..... | 4 |
| 3. BACKGROUND TO THE APPEAL..... | 10 |
| Planning Background..... | 10 |
| Officer’s Report to Committee..... | 10 |
| Reason for Refusal..... | 12 |
| Case Management Conference..... | 12 |
| Scope of Evidence..... | 13 |
| 4. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ANALYSIS..... | 14 |
| Masterplan progression..... | 14 |
| Existing Separation to Wigginton..... | 15 |
| Coalescence and Changes to Physical Separation..... | 16 |
| Coalescence and Perception of Visual Separation..... | 17 |
| Proposed Access off Brown’s Lane..... | 24 |
| 5. RESPONSE TO POLICY..... | 26 |
| National Planning Policy Framework..... | 26 |
| Development Plan Policy..... | 28 |
| Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy (2015)..... | 28 |
| Tamworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006–2031 (2016)..... | 29 |
| Wigginton Hopwas & Comberford Neighbourhood Plan (2016)..... | 30 |
| 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS..... | 32 |
| Terms of Reference..... | 32 |
| The Appeal Site..... | 32 |
| Main Issue..... | 33 |

Figures.

JWA-01 – Viewpoint Location Plan

JWA-02 – Updated Viewpoint Photographs

JWA-03 – Updated Landscape and Green Infrastructure Strategy

JWA-04 – Landscape and Visual Analysis of Settlement Separation



1. INTRODUCTION

Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1. My name is James Atkin. I hold the position of Senior Director (Landscape) in the Lichfield Office of the Pegasus Group. The Company undertakes all aspects of town planning, urban and landscape design and environmental planning. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Landscape Design and Plant Science and a Diploma in Landscape Management, both from the University of Sheffield. I am also a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (2005).
- 1.2. I have over 23 years professional experience specialising in the application of landscape and visual assessment. I have authored landscape and visual impact appraisals and assessments, based on best practice guidance, both in the UK and in the international context. I have also provided expert witness services, presenting evidence for appeal in respect of written representations, hearings and public inquiries; this relates to sites across the UK and a range of sectors.
- 1.3. Prior to joining the Pegasus Group I have worked in multidisciplinary consultancies, including Wardell Armstrong LLP and Atkins, advising on landscape and visual matters across a range of sectors including power, highways, rail, housing, waste, land reclamation and restoration, mineral extraction, commercial developments and renewable energy.
- 1.4. Since joining Pegasus Group I have completed numerous detailed landscape and visual impact assessments for development proposals, including residential development, mixed-use schemes, care home and retirement communities, renewable installations, commercial development and infrastructure.
- 1.5. As an inherent part of this work I apply an iterative process of landscape and visual appraisal and assessment to inform masterplanning principles to ensure landscape and visual constraints and opportunities are recognised and an appropriate scheme of mitigation applied.

Terms of Reference

- 1.6. This Proof of Evidence is written on behalf of Summix Developments Limited (the appellant) and addresses landscape and visual matters in respect of land to the north of Browns Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire (the appeal site).
- 1.7. The appeal site is primarily located in the administrative area of Lichfield District Council, however the application boundary of the site, related to the location of the proposed access, overlaps the neighbouring administrative area of Tamworth Borough Council.
- 1.8. My evidence relates to an appeal against Lichfield District Council's (LDC) refusal to grant planning permission of an outline planning application (LPA reference 18/00840), including:

"...Outline planning permission for up to 210 dwellings, public open space, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage, and associated infrastructure – with all matters reserved except access."

- 1.9. The outline application was submitted with a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) addressing the proposed development, prepared by Pegasus Group (**CD-1.2.2**) (the PG LVIA).
- 1.10. Much of the technical information in terms of baseline situation, analysis of constraints and opportunities, and subsequent assessment of impacts and effects are set out in the PG LVIA.
- 1.11. I will cross reference to that information where relevant, rather than repeat information here. However, it is useful to note that some of the most important information in the PG LVIA relates to the inherent mitigation which is embedded in the masterplan and has been informed by landscape and visual matters (**CD-1.2.2**, Section 5).
- 1.12. The LDC committee report (**CD-2.3**) recommended the application be refused, with the subsequent decision notice citing two reasons for refusal (**CD-2.1**).
- 1.13. In respect of the cross boundary element of the proposed access, Tamworth Borough Council (TBC) also resolved to refuse the application, with that decision notice citing a single reason for refusal (**CD-2.2**).
- 1.14. Pegasus Group have been commissioned to consider the proposed development and the reasons for refusal set out in the decision notice, subsequently presenting evidence in respect of landscape and visual matters.

Evidence Structure

- 1.15. This evidence is structured as follows, including this introduction (section 1):
 - i. At section 2, I give a brief description of the appeal site and its context, provided for context and to address any substantive change in the landscape since the PG LVIA was prepared (given this was in 2017). In this section I also set out a brief summary of the main findings of the LVIA in respect of landscape and visual impact;
 - ii. At section 3, I set out a summary of the planning background to the appeal in relation to landscape and visual matters (noting that these are limited);
 - iii. At section 4, I set out an analysis of landscape and visual matters, in respect of coalescence/separation between Tamworth and Wigginton and also the character and appearance of the proposed access off Browns Lane;
 - iv. At section 5, I briefly consider relevant policies in the context of landscape and visual matters; and
 - v. At section 6, I provide a summary and conclusions.
- 1.16. Principles and good practice for undertaking, and/or applying the principles of, LVIA are set out in the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA)



Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (2013) (GLVIA3)¹. The concepts and procedures set out in this guidance have been adopted where appropriate.

- 1.17. The professional judgements which are presented in this proof of evidence for this appeal (LDC references 18/00840/OUTMEI and 24/00004/REF) have been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (April 2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition

2. THE APPEAL SITE

- 2.1. A detailed description of the appeal site and surrounding landscape is included in the baseline section of the PG LVIA (**CD-1.2.2**), with representative photographs also included in that report (refer to **CD-1.2.2**, Figure 6, Viewpoint Photographs).
- 2.2. This section of my proof of evidence sets out a brief overview of the appeal site and the local landscape to provide some context.
- 2.3. For the purpose of this appeal, and to capture the most recent baseline situation, the site and surrounding area have been revisited, and an up to date set of viewpoint photographs are included for completeness (refer to **Figures, JWA-01 and JWA-02**). Additional photographic plates are included for illustrative purposes only.

Site Description and Context

- 2.4. The appeal site extends to ca. 12.65 hectares (ha) and comprises two medium sized fields of broadly regular shape, both previously in arable use at the time of the original application, but since reverting to rough grazing land.
- 2.5. The site is located on the north-east edge of Tamworth where it occupies an area of land that falls gradually to the north between levels of ca. +81m above ordnance datum (AOD) on the settlement edge of Tamworth, down to ca. +71m AOD at the lower points on the northern boundary. The slope is broadly even across this fall. Outside of the appeal site, to the east, the landform rises to a broad low plateau at ca. +80m AOD before it falls more steeply into the valley of the River Anker. To the west, landform has a more gradual profile, undulating across a relatively lower plateau with a more gradual fall toward the valley of the River Tame.
- 2.6. Turning back to the site, the southern boundary is located directly adjacent to the existing urban edge of Tamworth, which comprises a mix of late twentieth century residential development along with pockets of more recent modern housing. All situated along and off Brown's Lane. This includes the Taylor Wimpey 'Chestnut Walk' development which was in construction at the time the PG LVIA was prepared and submitted.

Plate 1: Existing properties off Brown's Lane along with the Taylor Wimpey site



- 2.7. Further to the south-east, beyond the railway line, lies another consented residential development which is currently under construction, Arkall's Farm. For the completed phases this development forms a prominent residential edge across the aforementioned topographical plateau.

Plate 2: Views across to the west, with residential development in construction (Arkall's Farm)



- 2.8. Adjoining the site to the west is Main Road, which forms the connecting route between Tamworth and the settlement of Wigginton. The northern section of the western boundary of the site is situated adjacent to the rear gardens of several properties which form ribbon development along Main Road on this southern edge of the village.

Plate 3: View along Main Road from the edge of Tamworth toward Wigginton



- 2.9. Field edges define the northern and eastern boundaries of the appeal site and a railway line also passes immediately to the east in a shallow cutting.
- 2.10. Further north, west and north-east is a network of agricultural fields on gently undulating ground which surround the main part of Wigginton village, characterised by a mixed agricultural mosaic, bounded by hedgerow field boundaries and with occasional hedgerow trees and tree belts.
- 2.11. In respect of access to the appeal site, this is proposed off Brown's Lane, within the administrative area of Tamworth Borough. Brown's Lane itself is characterised by mixed residential development, predominantly two storey but with occasional single storey dwellings. The route itself is broad with dwellings set back from the highway and separated by the footways and grass verges, including some street trees. Consequently, road junctions and driveways are a characteristic of the street scene, as per examples off Lyneham Close and Manston View (the latter providing the access to the Taylor Wimpey estate).

Plate 4: Brown's Lane street scene



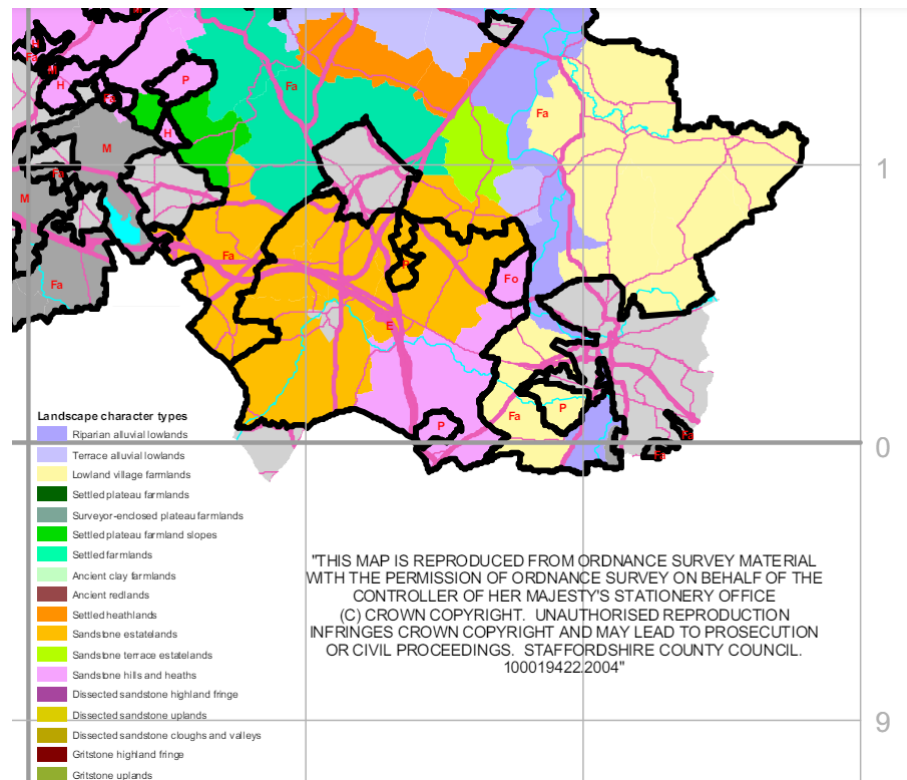
- 2.12. The proposed access for the appeal site is situated between properties 68 and 60 to the north of Brown's Lane. At this point the highway corridor broadens slightly, along the bend, with wider verges and additional street trees. The approach to the proposed site access comprises a remnant section of hedgerow with a clear break to accommodate field access. Existing dwellings stand either side.

Plate 5: Brown's Lane at the location of the proposed site access



- 2.13. The PG LVIA sets out a more detailed description of the landscape and visual baseline, including reference to published landscape character studies (CD- 1.2.2, paras 4.1 to 4.28).
- 2.14. Landscape character for the area is defined by 'Staffordshire County Council (2000), Planning for Landscape Change: Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011, adopted May 2001. The appeal site is located in an area defined as the 'Lowland Village Farmlands', and this is referenced in the PG LVIA.

Plate 6: Extract from published landscape character assessment



- 2.15. Since the PG LVIA was prepared and submitted, as part of the evidence base to the new Local Plan, LDC have prepared an 'Update of Landscape Character Assessment' (prepared on behalf of LDC by White Consultants and in association with Ashmead Price and Steven Warnock, 2019).
- 2.16. The LDC landscape character assessment update, does refer to Lowland Village Farmlands, but as an area on the edge of Lichfield. In respect of this study, the appeal site is in an area defined by the study as 'Estate Farmlands' (an extensive area extending to the north). This study does not specifically refer to Wigginton, not matters related to separation/coalescence between Tamworth and Wigginton.
- 2.17. Both published landscape studies include Wigginton as a 'washed over' village within the defined landscape character types, with the settlement pattern forming part of the landscape character rather than being excluded from it in the same way that more extensive urban areas or larger villages often are.

- 2.18. The LDC landscape character assessment update includes reference to inherent landscape sensitivity, defining the 'Estate Farmlands LCT' as 'moderate cultural' inherent sensitivity and 'moderate visual' sensitivity. Although I consider the approach taken to sensitivity in the LDC landscape character assessment update to be outdated, the conclusions to broadly align with those presented in the PG LVIA, which determine the sensitivity of the 'Lowland Village Farmlands' LCT as 'medium sensitivity' and the appeal site in its local landscape context as 'low to medium sensitivity' (keeping in mind more recent and local influence of the residential fringes of Tamworth).
- 2.19. With the context of the appeal site firmly in mind (in respect of both landscape context and the prominence of the settlement edge), the following section of this proof of evidence sets out the background to the appeal in relation to landscape and visual matters.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE APPEAL

Planning Background

- 3.1. The background to the planning application and appeal proposal is set out in the main Statement of Case of the appellant. This section provides a brief overview of the background relevant to landscape and visual matters.
- 3.2. The planning application was submitted to LDC in August 2027, but not validated until May 2028. For TBC, the application was registered in June 2018.
- 3.3. The outline application was submitted with a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) addressing the proposed development, prepared by Pegasus Group (**CD- 1.2.2**) (the PG LVIA).
- 3.4. During the course of the application, email correspondence from the case officer (dated 27th June 2019 and 10th July 2019) raised issues in relation to landscape and visual matters, specifically in relation to matters of coalescence with Wigginton (citing Wigginton, Hopwas and Comberford Neighbourhood Plan policy ref. WHC1).
- 3.5. Pegasus Group prepared a note in response to these comments (**CD-1.2.4**), concluding that coalescence between Tamworth and Wigginton would not occur, drawing on the PG LVIA to evidence the analysis and conclusion.

Officer's Report to Committee

Lichfield District Council

- 3.6. The LDC committee report (**CD-2.1**) recommended the application be refused, initially citing four reasons for refusal.
- 3.7. The report referenced consultation responses from the following parties:
 - i. Wigginton, Hopwas and Comberford Parish Council – objection related to various matters including conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan, detrimental impact on the character of the area including the coalescence of Tamworth and Wigginton and 'impact on landscaping;
 - ii. TBC and TBC Conservation Officer – raising concerns with the impact on the Wigginton Conservation Area;
 - iii. The Ramblers Association – noting the presence of the right of way on site and the careful consideration of this; and
 - iv. Letters of representation – citing various objections including detrimental impact on character of the area.
- 3.8. Sub-section 3 of the LDC committee report addresses matters of 'Design & Impact on Heritage Assets'. On the officer's assessment, paragraph 3.9 (**CD-2.3**) refers to landscape matters, stating that:

“...Matters relating to appearance, the layout of the site, landscaping and the scale and height of any buildings are reserved for subsequent approval and as such, are not for full determination at this time. Notwithstanding this, the proposal would represent a significant number of dwellings and built form located in open countryside, beyond the edge of existing development on the Northern edge of Tamworth. Whilst it is noted that appropriate landscaping may provide mitigation, this would be insufficient to screen the wider landscape impacts of further encroachment into the countryside and infilling the area between the village of Wiggington [sic] and the Tamworth urban areas from the proposed quantum of development. In principle, the landscape impacts associated with the development and the encroachment of land between Tamworth and the village of Wiggington [sic] would fail to meet with the design and appearance related policies contained within both the Local Plan Strategy and the Neighbourhood Plan.”

- 3.9. Sub-section 6 relates to ‘Arboricultural Impacts’ and here the officer concludes that, subject to conditions, in terms of arboricultural impacts the scheme at the outline stage is considered to be acceptable (Para 6.3, CD-2.3).
- 3.10. The overall conclusion of the LDC committee report notes that the outline planning submission is considered to be ‘unacceptable in principle’, referring to various matters but including reference to the ‘reduction in countryside between the built form of Tamworth and the village of Wigginton.

Tamworth Borough Council

- 3.11. In respect of TBC, the report to committee (CD-2.7) recognises the wider extent of the proposal and notes that the area within Tamworth Borough includes the proposed main pedestrian and vehicle access road (at a distance of approximately 85m in length and with landscaping either side).
- 3.12. Section 7 of the TBC report to committee addresses character and appearance. The report notes that there is an existing drop kerb, with access to the field crossing a wide section of verge and noting that there was historically a gated vehicular access to the site. Although the report goes on to state that the gate is no longer present, it should be noted that there remains a break in the hedgerow which affords access.
- 3.13. On character and appearance, the TBC report to committee states that (Para 7.2.6 and 7.2.7, CD-2.7):

“As the proposal is both functional with suitable provision for soft landscaping, it is considered it would meet the standards of design required for such an access.

Despite in isolation it would be an acceptable form of development, if approved and Lichfield refuse the larger housing scheme would create an discordant form of development and therefore not in compliance with Policy E5 Design of New Development of the Tamworth Local Plan 2006-2031 and the NPPF”.

- 3.14. The overall conclusion of the report states that (Para 8.2, CD-2.7), the application, if approved, would permit an access road to an unimproved development, resulting in a ‘road to nowhere’ and therefore out of character with the surrounding area.

Reason for Refusal

- 3.15. Following the LDC committee report, the subsequent LDC decision notice (CD-2.1) set out two reasons for refusal.
- 3.16. Neither reason is specific in its reference to landscape and visual issues or character and appearance in the typical sense. However, the second reason for refusal, primarily related to heritage matters, has some relevance as it references 'views' in respect of the Conservation Area. The reason states that:

"2 The proposed development would extend the northern edge of Tamworth much closer to the village of Wiggington [sic], of which the historic part is a designated Conservation Area. The proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area by virtue of causing detriment to its setting, in particular with regard to views in and out of the Conservation Area, which make a positive contribution to its setting. None of the public benefits associated with the proposal would outweigh this harm. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies CP1 (Spatial Strategy), CP3 (Delivering Sustainable Development), CP14 (Our Built and Historic Environment), BE1 (High Quality Development) and NR5 (Natural and Historic Landscapes) of the Local Plan Strategy 2015, Policy BE2 (Heritage Assets) of the Local Plan Allocations Document, the Historic Environment SPD, the Sustainable Design SPD, Policies W1, WHC1 and WHC3 the Wigginton Hopwas & Comberford Neighbourhood Plan (2016) and the National Planning Policy Framework."

- 3.17. Similarly, the TBC decision notice (CD-2.2) is not specific in its reference to landscape and visual issues in terms of landscape or wider countryside, however the reason for refusal does make reference to the 'character of the surrounding area', stating that:

"1. The area of the site within the boundary of Tamworth Borough Council is connected to a wider development which is not allocated for development. Approving this part of the development where Lichfield refuse their application would potentially permit an access road to a development site with no planning permission. The development therefore would be out of character with the surrounding area and not conform to Tamworth Borough Council Policy EN5 and the NPPF."

- 3.18. Given that this concerns to the proposed access, this relates to the character of the streetscape of Brown's Lane, off which the access would be taken.

Case Management Conference

- 3.19. In advance of the public inquiry, a case management was held on the 17th May 2024. The CMC included discussion on the main issues to be addressed during the appeal.

- 3.20. Matters of character and appearance were raised in respect of the extent to which this related to 'landscape and visual' issues, with the Inspector confirming that the scope of landscape and visual matters was directed to the issue of coalescence and separation between Tamworth and Wigginton, in so far as these relate to landscape character and views.
- 3.21. Furthermore, it was also confirmed that neither LDC or TBC propose to put forward a specific expert witness on landscape and visual matters. Consequently, the scope of my evidence focusses on this issue, rather than a more extensive review of the uncontested matters of landscape and visual impact.
- 3.22. The summary note from the CMC confirmed the main issues related to Appeal A (LDC) includes 'the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, with regards to spatial and visual separation of Wigginton' and for Appeal B (TBC, access) includes 'the effect of the proposed access on the character and appearance of the area' which, as noted, effectively relates to that of Brown's Lane.

Scope of Evidence

- 3.23. Considering matters raised in the various reports to committee, including consultation response, representations and then subsequent reasons for refusal, I intend to address the following issues in this proof of evidence:

In respect of Appeal A:

- i. The nature of the existing landscape between Tamworth and Wigginton (including the appeal site and nearby residential developments) with reference to the physical landscape attributes which are present and influences on the respective settlement patterns;
- ii. The extent to which these contribute to the existing physical separation between Tamworth and Wigginton currently and how this would change as a consequence of the proposed development;
- iii. Considering visual separation, the location and current experience of visual receptors in the area from where 'visual coalescence may or may not be perceived'; and
- iv. The extent to which visual coalescence would occur from these locations.

In respect of Appeal B:

- i. The physical characteristics of Brown's Lane currently and the extent to which the proposed access would be consistent with this or, if not, the extent to which this would constitute an unacceptable impact.
- 3.24. The reasons for refusal include reference to several planning policies relevant to landscape and visual matters. I briefly address these from the landscape and visual perspective in later sections of my evidence.

4. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ANALYSIS

- 4.1. In this section I turn to the detail of the RFR. The points raised in the RFR are used to form the structure of this section, with reference to the PG LVIA and supported by additional analysis as necessary.

Masterplan progression

- 4.2. During the course of the application, the masterplan has evolved as part of the iterative design process.
- 4.3. This includes changes to the proposed development, between Revision K of the masterplan (CD-1.1.2) and the subsequent layout for the 100% affordable housing proposal (prepared by Thrive, on behalf of Platform Housing Group) (CD-1.1.6).
- 4.4. However, each of these stages has retained the core principles of the landscape and visual mitigation, as set out in the submitted PG LVIA (Section 4, CD-1.2.2).
- 4.5. Figure 7 of the PG LVIA set out a clear strategy and reference for maintaining physical and visual separation between the proposed development (which would form part of the urban edge to Tamworth) and Wigginton.

Plate 7: Extract from PG LVIA Figure 7 'Landscape and Green Infrastructure Strategy'



- 4.6. The strategy sets out a clear aim of maintaining physical and visual separation between the edge of the development envelope and Wigginton, referenced on the supporting figure as 'retained open agricultural field with countryside views'.
- 4.7. Given the most recent layout related to the proposals for 100% affordable housing, the 'Landscape and Green Infrastructure Strategy' (Figure 7 of the PG LVIA, **CD-1.2.2**) has been updated to reflect the reduced development envelope required for the later proposal (refer to **Figure JWA-03** of this evidence).

Existing Separation to Wigginton

- 4.8. The existing separation between Tamworth and Wigginton is derived from the agricultural enclosures that are situated between the two settlements, both to the west and east of Main Road.
- 4.9. These generally comprise a mixed agricultural mosaic (some rough grazing, some arable) of medium scale and a mixed field pattern (some geometric but often irregular field patterns). The unifying attributes across this agricultural landscape are the pattern of well-defined hedgerow field boundaries (with occasional hedgerow trees) all set across the undulating topography.
- 4.10. The nature of the local topography is such that it also has some contribution to separation between Tamworth and Wigginton. This results from the fall in landform from the settlement edge of Tamworth (at ca. +83m AOD), down to ca. +77m AOD on the edge of Wigginton, before the gradual rise toward the more central parts of the village which reflects its position on a localised highpoint and low hill (at ca. +81m AOD). The changing topography is particularly evident when experienced from Main Road and from PROWs 'Wigginton and Hopwas 1' and PROW 'Wigginton and Hopwas 9'.
- 4.11. This consistent land use and character flows across the landscape from west to east, along the northern edge of Tamworth, and contributes to both the countryside context, as well as the physical separation with Wigginton.
- 4.12. The existing edge of edge of Tamworth is well defined by the edge of the residential estates, however there is some variation as to how enclosed this is by green infrastructure, with some sections being more prominent in the local landscape.
- 4.13. Wigginton extends south toward Tamworth along Main Road, forming a section of ribbon development on its southern edge, before the settlement pattern gains some depth in the central and northern parts of the village, albeit the settlement pattern is still generally centred along the route of Main Road. At its closest point, the southern extent of Wigginton is just ca. 108m from the edge of Tamworth (along Main Road, and accounting for approximate curtilages of dwellings, rather than actual built form).
- 4.14. Despite the relative narrowness of Wigginton's settlement pattern, the village edges are often prominent in the landscape, evident in the form of mixed dwellings, and with some variation as to the extent of screening or enclosure through existing green infrastructure.

- 4.15. Turning back to Tamworth, to the east and south-east of the site, the settlement edge has changed in recent years. Previously, where Brown's Lane turned to the south-east, the settlement edge followed. Now, modern residential development (the Taylor Wimpey 'Chestnut Walk' development) has extended the settlement edge further north, extending the strong east/west delineation of the settlement edge, but with a more exposed and modern residential edge (refer to **JWA-02, Viewpoint's 8 and 14**). Further east, the 'Arkall's Farm' development is under construction, and this has extended the settlement pattern of Tamworth considerably further north than the appeal site, albeit to the east of the railway.

Coalescence and Changes to Physical Separation

- 4.16. The appeal site comprises two field enclosures located to the north of Brown's Lane and to the east of Main Road. These are located directly adjacent to the settlement edge of Tamworth, adjacent to residential areas of Brown's Lane for the western field, and for the eastern field, to both Brown's Lane and the Taylor Wimpey 'Chestnut Walk' development.
- 4.17. The north-western edge of the western field abuts the southern edge of Wigginton.
- 4.18. The proposed access is located in the southern part of the western field enclosure. However, this is limited to a short section and small area of the field, where this extends between existing residential dwellings off Brown Lane; the access route turns immediately east, into the eastern field enclosure where it becomes subsumed within the overall development envelope. Illustrative proposals indicate that the section of the access route within the western field enclosure will be contained by proposed landscape planting.
- 4.19. Other than the access, the proposed development omits any proposed built form in the western field parcel. This approach is informed by landscape and visual constraints (including matters of separation and potential coalescence), with this element of the mitigation strategy documented in the PG LVIA, illustrated on the 'Landscape and Green Infrastructure Strategy' and explained further in the supplementary 'PG Landscape and Visual Note (**CD-1.2.4**)
- 4.20. In this context, there will be no merging or physical coalescence between Tamworth and Wigginton as a consequence of the proposed development.
- 4.21. Considering the extent of proposed development located in the eastern field enclosure, the landscape strategy also included additional mitigation in the form of a landscape buffer along the western edge of the field parcel. This included landscape proposals for native tree and woodland planting and areas of open space. Together these will reinforce the existing field boundary hedgerow which currently separates the two field enclosures and provide a strong physical vegetation edge to the proposed residential areas.
- 4.22. As noted in the supplementary 'PG Landscape and Visual Note' (**CD-1.2.4**), with the proposed development in place, physical distances between Wigginton and the emerging settlement edge of Tamworth will be between ca. 163m and 168m at their closest point (again, taken from the approximate curtilage of existing dwellings, rather than actual built form).
- 4.23. Turning to the revised proposals and 100% affordable housing proposal, the parameters for that layout has pulled the development further back from the western boundary of the

eastern field, with a consequent increase in the scale of the landscape buffer and proposed landscape planting and open space that can be delivered therein.

- 4.24. Consequently, considering the parameters of the 100% affordable housing proposal, physical distances between Wigginton and the emerging settlement edge of Tamworth would then be marginally increased. Irrespective of the distances on the ground, there remains the combined physical break of an agricultural field enclosure, plus the proposed landscape buffer, to maintain physical separation.
- 4.25. This retained gap between Wigginton and the proposed development provide clear and distinct physical separation. Those separation distances are greater than the existing gap between Tamworth and Wigginton (along Main Rad) of ca. 108m. Notwithstanding the physical distances, the context of the retained gap, and character of the landscape and settlement pattern is also a consideration.
- 4.26. That context is one of the agricultural mosaic which characterise the landscape along the northern edge of Tamworth, and which contributes to a consistent landscape character in across the areas of separation between Tamworth and Wigginton, and around Wigginton generally. This will remain intact by virtue of the retention of the western field enclosure of the site as a complete agricultural parcel and retained views across and through this to the wider landscape context.
- 4.27. Overall, the approach to the proposed development will ensure that a physical gap between the two areas of settlement is maintained and this ensures that there will be a clear distinction between the villages of Wigginton and the urban area of Tamworth.

Coalescence and Perception of Visual Separation

- 4.28. Whilst previous sections of my evidence focussed on the physical gap and demonstrates that physical coalescence will not occur, there remains potential for 'visual coalescence' from certain parts of the landscape, whereby areas of settlement may appear to join in a given view, even if physical space 'on the ground' is maintained between.
- 4.29. This is touched upon by reference to the consistent nature of the agricultural mosaic on the northern edge of Tamworth, and how retaining the western field of the appeal site as agricultural will maintain this consistent character.
- 4.30. Given that the perception of visual coalescence and separation relates closely to views, I address this matter with consideration to the main receptor groups and locations from where views are available, and where the perception of visual coalescence may or may not be experienced. These include:
- i. The agricultural landscape to the west of Main Road, namely the publicly accessible route of PROW 'Wigginton and Hopwas 9' but also with some reference to residential dwellings;
 - ii. Main Road, between Tamworth and Wigginton;
 - iii. Views from the eastern edge of Wigginton, related to the boundary of the Conservation Area (noting that I do not address these from the perspective of

heritage or setting, simply landscape and visual matters related to the perception of change);

- iv. The agricultural landscape directly between Wigginton and Tamworth, namely the publicly accessible route of PROWs 'Wigginton and Hopwas 9' and 'Wigginton and Hopwas 2';
- v. The landscape context to the north-east of the appeal site (and east of Wigginton), namely from the publicly accessible route of PROW Wigginton and Hopwas 3; and
- vi. Whilst a longer distance view, view from the north at Hog's Hill, where these experience a considerable and wide panorama (PROW 'Harlaston 8').

4.31. These are considered further in the following sections.

Wigginton Conservation Area Appraisal and Wigginton Hopwas and Comberford Neighbourhood Plan

4.32. Before proceeding to an analysis of visual separation from the locations noted above, it is worth making brief reference to the Wigginton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (**CD-3.1.9**) and Wigginton Hopwas and Comberford Neighbourhood Plan (**CD-3.1.3**).

4.33. Both of these documents make reference to views, but neither identify key views that are directly toward the appeal site or the immediate context of the appeal site (for example, Map 2 of the Wigginton Conservation Area Appraisal (the CAA), Page 20, **CD-3.1.9**).

4.34. The CAA also notes that 'there are important views of the conservation area from its surrounding rural hinterland and view back out from the village' and goes on to identify that for the purpose of the CAA, this appraisal three types of views have been identified, panoramic, specific and glimpses.

4.35. Panoramic views are noted by the CAA as long distance views across broad landscape vistas which are predominantly across rolling countryside and can be seen from a number of points when looking out from the conservation area. The CAA states that (Page 10 and 11, **CD-3.1.9**):

"Views to the east and north are of open countryside interspersed with trees, hedges and small clusters of buildings nestled into the landscape."

4.36. The illustrative image on Page 10 of the CAA, looking east, appears to have been taken from the rear garden of the Old Crown public house, a location with no direct view toward the appeal site. From this location, views to the south-east (which might include the appeal site) are actually screened by intervening vegetation, particularly that along Syerscote Lane.

Plate 8: View directly east from the garden area of the Old Crown Public House



Plate 9: View toward the site from the garden area of the Old Crown Public House



4.37. To the south of the Old Crown, the boundary of the Conservation Area sits to the west of the primary school ground, and consequently views are screened by the built form and vegetation associated with the school. Other locations on the eastern and south-eastern edges of the village which might have views to the south and south-east (toward the appeal site) are limited to the PROW network, slightly outside of the settlement itself.

4.38. In respect of the Neighbourhood Plan, Policy W1 sets out the need to 'maintain the visual separation and Conservation Area setting of Wigginton Village' and that new development must present a screen of trees and shrubs to the village view by new planting where necessary; Policy WHC3 requires that proposals 'do not disrupt the visual amenities of the street scene and impact on any significant wider landscape views'. Neither policy specifies the location or nature of a particular key view.

4.39. Essentially, the reference to views in respect of the landscape context to Wigginton or in respect of coalescence and visual separation are more generic and not related to any particular aspect of the village. This supports the approach taken to the following analysis, which considers views from the geography around the settlement and main receptor groups which might have views of the proposed development.

Areas west of Main Road (inc PROW 'Wigginton and Hopwas 9')

4.40. Available views from locations to the west of Main Road are limited to residential dwellings on the northern edge of Tamworth, residential dwellings on the south-western edge of Wigginton and users of the route of the right of way (Wigginton and Hopwas 9).

4.41. In respect of the northern edge of Tamworth, the rear aspect of these dwellings are generally oriented north, away from the appeal site. This, combined with screening vegetation on the property boundaries and along Main Road, will screen views toward the proposed development.

4.42. Similarly, dwellings on the south-western edge of Wigginton, whilst slightly elevated, generally have an aspect oriented directly south and south-west. Any oblique views to the south-east (and toward the western extent of the appeal site) would be screened by the ribbon development (including green infrastructure) on the southern edge of Wigginton along Main Road.

4.43. For the route of the PROW, this crosses the open agricultural field enclosure, across topography that falls across a very shallow valley between Wigginton and the A513 (further west). Views tend to be foreshortened by topography and vegetation at lower points, but some views across to the edge of Tamworth area visible from those points which are relatively more elevated. From such locations there are views of the dwellings which form the southern extent of Wigginton (along Main Road), a clear break comprising the open fields to the east and west of Main Road, and then views to the existing residential edge of Tamworth, generally filtered by green infrastructure at this point (refer to **JWA-02, Viewpoint 9**). There are some limited views to the upper sections of the roofline of dwellings at the Taylor Wimpey 'Chestnut Walk' development.

4.44. The built form of the proposed development may be partially visible to the fore of the existing dwellings of the Taylor Wimpey 'Chestnut Walk' development. However, this will be limited to the very upper sections of the roofline and will sit immediately to the fore of the existing dwellings. Otherwise the wider area of development on the appeal site will be screened by intervening buildings, vegetation and landform; part of the western field will remain visible and this forms part of the existing visual separation between Wigginton and Tamworth. Visual separation will be maintained as a result of vegetation around the area of the site entrance and around the properties between Main Road and Brown's Lane.

4.45. Overall, there will be no perception of visual coalescence from locations to the west of Main Road.

Main Road, between Tamworth and Wigginton

- 4.46. Between Tamworth and Wigginton, Main Road comprises the highway corridor with grass verge to the western side and footway and verge to the west. Both sides of the route are defined by continuous hedgerow and this vegetation largely screens views into the adjacent fields for people travelling along the route (both in vehicles and by foot) (refer to **JWA-02, Viewpoints 11 and 12**).
- 4.47. Although the western field enclosure of the appeal site abuts the route, the boundary hedgerow largely prevents views into this, and will screen views of proposed built form in the eastern field enclosure.
- 4.48. Consequently, there will be no perception of visual coalescence from this route.

Views from the eastern edge of Wigginton

- 4.49. On the central-eastern edge of the village (and Conservation Area), views are relatively enclosed by existing green infrastructure. Views to the south and south-east are screened, partly by built form on the fringes of the village (including the school grounds) but also by vegetation along Syerscote Lane.
- 4.50. Moving south, residential dwellings situated on the south-eastern edge of the village (those which form the ribbon development along Main Road) have a rear aspect which faces directly toward the appeal site. The rear boundaries are mixed, with some vegetated (and partly screened) but others more open and with more open views.
- 4.51. These locations have direct views across the immediate agricultural context up toward the emerging development on high ground of the 'Arkall's Farm' development. From these dwellings there will be views of the proposed development, set mainly in the middle ground. Whilst this would bring built form closer to the receptors, it would not extend any further north than the 'Arkall's Farm' area of development (which would form a backdrop to the appeal site) and there would remain a distinct area of separation due to the retained agricultural field and associated green infrastructure which is immediately adjacent to the village.

PROWs 'Wigginton and Hopwas 1' and 'Wigginton and Hopwas 2'

- 4.52. PROWs 'Wigginton and Hopwas' 1 and 2 pass through the landscape to the east of Wigginton, connecting Tamworth (at Browns Lane) to Syerscote Lane (east of Wigginton). From Tamworth, the route passes through the western field enclosure of the appeal site, crosses the northern boundary and traveling north passes through three more enclosures before reaching Syerscote Lane (refer to **JWA-02, Viewpoints 7 and 8**).
- 4.53. Receptors using the route will experience transient views, with users passing through the landscape and experiencing subtle changes in view along the route, including sections which have more open views or more contained views relatively to their position, topography and surrounding green infrastructure. The route currently passes through a transition from the settlement edge of Tamworth across the rural fringes, and into the more consistent countryside to the north.

Plate 10: Access from Brown's Lane to the public footpath



- 4.54. Views across this part of the landscape see both the filtered edges of Wigginton along with the settlement edges of Tamworth, some parts of which are more prominent in the landscape. These areas are currently separated by a series of agricultural fields, including those of the appeal site.
- 4.55. In relation to the appeal site, the route of the public footpath passes through the centre of the field enclosure, not alongside the field boundaries, so there remains a sense of distance to the east and west when travelling along the route. The proposed development would introduce built form to the east of the route, but this would be perceived beyond the remaining area of the field enclosure, and be situated beyond the retained field boundary and with the associated landscape buffer that comprises landscape planting and open space. This would soften and filter views, and prevent the proposed development being perceived as a more prominent and exposed edge.
- 4.56. As noted in the analysis and description of physical coalescence, there remains a break of ca. 160m between the settlement edge of Wigginton (to the west of the footpath) and the proposed development (to the east of the footpath). Consequently, particularly when considering the north/south orientation of the route, the footpath will continue to be contained within an open agricultural context, with clear views across the retained agricultural parcels to the existing settlement edge. View corridors along the route and to the views to the east and west will be maintained as open.
- 4.57. Overall, whilst built form of the proposed development may appear closer to the route (to the east) it will not close the gap and there will be no perception of visual coalescence from this route.

PROW 'Wigginton and Hopwas 3'

- 4.58. To the east of Wigginton, this PROW departs Syerscote Lane just east of the railway. In plan form, this route would appear to have the most potential for experiencing visual coalescence, as the angle of view is such that the northern edge of the development envelope and the southern extent of Wigginton would be very narrow.
- 4.59. However, on the ground, these views are not available due to the position of the PROW at a slightly lower elevation (with landform rising to the south) and the green infrastructure along the railway screening views (refer to **JWA-02, Viewpoints 3 and 4**). Further east along the route, where it begins to cross a slightly more elevated position and where views, these will be screened by the emerging built form on the northern edge of the 'Arkall's Farm' development.

Plate 11: PROW 'Wigginton and Hopwas 3' on the edge of the Arkall's Farm site



- 4.60. From this slightly more distant location, views are generally screened and visual coalescence will not occur.

Hog's Hill / PROW 'Harlaston 8'

- 4.61. There is some potential for visibility of the proposed development from a more distant, but elevated and open location, at Hog's Hill to the north/north-east of Wigginton (refer to **JWA-02, Viewpoint 1**).
- 4.62. From some sections of the route there are views back toward Tamworth which experience a greater breadth of the northern edge of the settlement, including the or contained residential edges along Gillway Lane (west of Main Road), Brown's Lane, the Taylor Wimpey 'Chestnut Walk' development and the 'Arkall's Farm' development. Wigginton is also visible, situated on its slightly more prominent topographical position.

- 4.63. From this route, the built form in the eastern field enclosure would be visible, with the existing settlement edge as a backdrop. The western field enclosure of the appeal site would also be visible, and would provide a clear break, agricultural in context, between the built form of the appeal site (also contained by existing and proposed green infrastructure) and the southern extent of Wigginton.
- 4.64. Visual coalescence will not be experienced from this route.

Proposed Access off Brown's Lane

- 4.65. Separate to the issue of visual coalescence, TBC raise the issue of the proposed access whereby, if granted permission in isolation from the main development, it would be 'out of character with the surrounding area'.
- 4.66. Whilst there would be a change to the street scene at a very localised level, I do not consider this would be entirely out of character.
- 4.67. Proposals include for a 6m wide carriageway with footways either side and verges to include appropriate landscaping.
- 4.68. The current route of Brown's Lane is characterised by similar elements, including wide verges, trees within the verges and footways.

Plate 12: Brown's Lane, wide verges and tree planting



- 4.69. There are several junctions to Brown's Lane which reflect similar dimensions and characteristics, including Lyneham Close, just to the west of the proposed access, and Manston View, further along Brown's Lane to the east. Both of these examples are framed by trees and adjacent dwellings, albeit the aspect of those dwellings varies.

Plate 13: Existing junctions off Brown's Lane



- 4.70. If the proposed access were to be implemented, it would create a short terminus of tree lined carriageway, consistent with the other junctions and driveways along the route. Reference to images captured prior to the implementation of the Taylor Wimpey 'Chestnut Walk' development, show Marston View having a similar context, with carriageway extending off Brown's Lane and terminating in a 'countryside view'.

Plate 14: 'Google Street View' of Marston View (ca. 2012)



- 4.71. Overall, whilst I note that there may be other more practical reasons why the proposed access would not be implemented in isolation (which lie outside of the scope of my expertise and evidence), reasons of character and appearance would not constitute an unacceptable impact to the degree that this supports a reason for refusal.

5. RESPONSE TO POLICY

- 5.1. In the context of the analysis presented in the previous section, I now go on to address the policy context. In terms of development plan policy and the planning balance, I defer to the main planning evidence of the appellant; my reference to policy is from a landscape and visual perspective.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has a presumption in favour of sustainable development. NPPF paragraph 8 defines three overarching objectives to sustainable development, economic, social and environmental.

Environmental objective

- 5.3. The environmental objective (c) is explained in the following terms:

“to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

- 5.4. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF sets out the aim to achieve the creation of ‘high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places’. Whilst the application was in outline, design principles can still be achieved by addressing the local landscape context and incorporating appropriate mitigation.

- 5.5. The submitted PG LVIA (as referenced in earlier sections of this evidence) discuss the approach to landscape and visual mitigation, and I consider the appeal proposal to be consistent with this part of the NPPF.

- 5.6. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF requires developments to, amongst several other points, ‘function well and add to the overall quality of the area’, be ‘visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping’ and are ‘sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting’.

- 5.7. I consider the appeal proposals to be consistent with this part of the NPPF on the basis of the incorporated mitigation and the opportunity for future detailed design stages.

- 5.8. It is also worth noting that the NPPF defines green infrastructure as:

“A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.”

- 5.9. Notwithstanding the loss of the agricultural enclosure to the development envelope, it is considered that the design of the appeal proposals, which incorporate mitigation (that includes replacement and new landscape planting through a range of open spaces), can

maintain a contribution to the green infrastructure network. This includes the retention of the western field enclosure with an agricultural character.

Trees

- 5.10. Paragraph 136 sets out the importance of trees, more in relation to the character and quality of urban environments, but noting their contribution to mitigating and adapting to climate change. It goes on to set out that policies and decisions should ensure that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees in developments, that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. The appeal proposals is consistent with this aspect of the NPPF.
- 5.11. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF requires 'design quality' to be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. This is an inherent part of the appeal proposals which have developed a robust strategy for mitigation to ensure that the proposed built form will reflect positively on this part of the settlement, situated as it is within a framework of proposed green infrastructure and open space. These aspects can be taken forward to later, detailed design stages and evolved further. I consider the appeal proposals to be consistent with this aspect of the NPPF.

Natural Environment

- 5.12. Paragraph 180 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (emphasis added):
- "a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);***
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland"***
- 5.13. To satisfactorily address this policy it is necessary to undertake an appraisal of landscape character making reference to published guidance, but also look more specifically at the appeal site and its local landscape character. This approach looks more closely at a landscape and enables the consistency of the contemporary baseline to be judged against published studies.
- 5.14. The PG LVIA, make reference to published landscape character assessment prepared at a national, regional and district level and also addresses local character by reference to the description of the appeal site and its immediate context.
- 5.15. This approach 'recognises' the intrinsic character of the local landscape context and responds appropriately through design to avoid or minimise impacts on those key characteristics.

Development Plan Policy

- 5.16. The policies of the development plan for the District are considered in the following section, specifically those raised in the reasons for refusal, where these specifically relate to landscape and visual matters and/or matters of coalescence and separation.

Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy (2015)

Core Policy 3 (Delivering Sustainable Development)

- 5.17. In setting out the approach to delivering sustainable development, the policy requires development to 'help minimise any environmental impacts', and includes reference to the need to 'protect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Lichfield District and its settlements'.
- 5.18. In respect of landscape and visual impacts, the submitted PG LVIA illustrates a clear process of analysis of the baseline information, consideration constraints and opportunities and formation of a landscape strategy which aims to avoid or minimise landscape and visual effects.
- 5.19. Any greenfield development (including allocated sites as part of the spatial strategy) will have some level of residual landscape and visual impact; however, the landscape and green infrastructure strategy forms an inherent part of the masterplan and will minimise these. Reference to landscape character at the local level also ensures that any distinctive characteristics are considered. In respect of the appeal site, this includes the maintained physical and visual separation between Tamworth and Wigginton.

CP14 (Our Built and Historic Environment)

- 5.20. This policy predominantly relates to heritage matters, which are outside of the scope of my evidence, however there is some overlap with landscape and visual matters where the policy notes that 'In conjunction with Policy NR5, landscapes that form the setting to the built and historic environment will also be conserved and enhanced.'
- 5.21. The policy also states that:
- "High quality design, tree planting, landscaping and green spaces will be required as part of new development and elsewhere, to improve quality of place..."***

- 5.22. The proposed development presents a strong response in respect of design and this can be dealt with further and secured at the reserved matters stages. Despite the outline nature of the application, the iterative process of design is apparent, whereby landscape and visual matters have influenced the masterplan. This includes provision of the robust landscape buffers on the western edge of the eastern field enclosure, creating an appropriate landscaped buffer, and provision of a high quality access (including tree planting) which is reflective of the existing street scene.

BE1 (High Quality Development)

- 5.23. This policy requires all development proposals to ensure that a high quality sustainable built environment can be achieved.

- 5.24. The policy refers to the 'natural environment' where it states that 'Effective hard and soft landscaping including tree planting will be required and should be implemented in an integrated manner, making use of green corridors for movement of people as well as for biodiversity'.
- 5.25. As noted above, despite the outline nature of the application, the parameters are such that landscape and visual matters are addressed in the design and layout of the masterplan, including landscape buffers and retaining the western field enclosure of the appeal site so as to avoid coalescence, but also to maintain the consistent agricultural context which sits across the northern edge of Tamworth.

NR5 (Natural and Historic Landscapes) of the Local Plan Strategy 2015

- 5.26. This policy states that:

"Development will be permitted where it does not negatively impact upon the geological, archaeological and historically important landscapes in the Lichfield District. The character and significance of the natural and historic landscape will be safeguarded through decisions which protect, conserve and enhance sites of international, national, regional and local importance."

- 5.27. The appeal site is not located in a designated landscape, nor is the landscape a valued landscape in the context of paragraph 180(a) of the NPPF.
- 5.28. The approach to mitigation within the masterplan has responded to the local landscape context, retaining and enhancing green infrastructure, whilst maintaining the agricultural character on this northern edge of Tamworth and surrounding Wigginton.

Tamworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006–2031 (2016)

EN5 Design of New Development

- 5.29. TBCs reason for refusal refers to the proposed development being 'out of character with the surrounding area', referencing Policy EN5 of the TBC Local Plan.
- 5.30. The policy states that:
- "High quality buildings and places will be achieved across Tamworth with particular attention paid to the enhancement of the town centre, conservation areas, the Sustainable Urban Extensions and Regeneration Priority Areas. Poor design or design that fails to take the opportunities available to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions will be refused."***
- 5.31. The policy goes on to set out a series of points which new development is expected to achieve. The reason for refusal refers to the proposed development being 'out of character with the surrounding area', a matter which relates only to specific criteria of the policy, not all.
- 5.32. The policy refers to 'respecting and reflecting local architectural characteristics' (policy point a) and also to being of a scale, layout and form which conserves or enhances the setting of development' (policy point c) which have some relevance, noting that there are numerous access points, junctions verges and driveways in the context of the proposed access and consequently the proposed access would not be out of character.

- 5.33. The policy also requires proposals to incorporate landscaping, using native species wherever possible (policy point I), also something that is included in the proposed access design and which would reflect existing urban tree planting that is present in the current street scene.

Wigginton Hopwas & Comberford Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

- 5.34. LBC's reason for refusal refers to Policies W1, WHC1 and WHC3 of the Wigginton Hopwas & Comberford Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy W1 and WHC1

- 5.35. Policy W1 states that:

"There shall be no coalescence of any development north of Tamworth with Wigginton and separation of new development should have regard to the need to maintain the visual separation and Conservation Area setting of Wigginton Village. Any new development must present a screen of trees and shrubs to the village view by new planting where necessary."

- 5.36. Policy WHC1 of the Neighbourhood Plan also relates to matters of separation, stating that:

"The existing rural environs of the Neighbourhood Plan Area shall be maintained to ensure that there is a clear distinction between the villages of Wigginton, Hopwas and Comberford and the urban area of Tamworth. Any proposed development shall have regard to this distinction and shall only be allowed where it is supported by evidence that the distinctiveness as defined is not adversely affected. There shall be no coalescence with Tamworth."

- 5.37. My evidence demonstrates that the proposed development will not result in physical coalescence between the northern edge of Tamworth and Wigginton. The landscape strategy forms an inherent part of the proposed development which includes the retention of the western field enclosure of the appeal site in agricultural use, maintaining both physical separation and consistent character. Within the eastern field enclosure, the proposed development includes a landscape buffer on its eastern edge; additional landscape planting on this open space will further reinforce existing field boundary vegetation to present a robust and enduring physical and visual screen.

- 5.38. Furthermore, my evidence has demonstrated that there will be no perception of coalescence in respect of views from the surrounding landscape context. The landscape and green infrastructure strategy, including the retained open character of the western field enclosure of the appeal site, will maintain visual separation where views are available. Otherwise, many views to the proposed development from the surrounding landscape are screened.

Policy WHC3

- 5.39. Policy WHC3 relates to the protection of assets of the historic environment and enhance and reinforce those characteristics, qualities and features that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the Plan Area's environment.

- 5.40. The policy states that:

"In particular:

(i) New development should be of a scale, mass and built form that responds to the characteristics of the site and its surroundings, care should be taken to ensure that building(s) height, scale, and form, including the roofline, do not disrupt the visual amenities of the street scene and impact on any significant wider landscape views.

(ii) Due regard shall be had of all identified heritage assets to ensure that new development does not detract from the designated and undesignated components of the historic environment, particularly where heritage assets are part of the visual character of the area."

- 5.41. Insofar as landscape and visual matters are concerned, the proposed development includes a positive approach to mitigation, avoiding loss of green infrastructure wherever possible and including for replacement planting and enhancements as part of the overall landscape scheme. The development envelope is restricted to ensure landscape buffers can be incorporated and with those areas subject to landscape planting and habitat creation.
- 5.42. Overall, this contributes positively to the aims of this policy.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Terms of Reference

- 6.1. This Proof of Evidence is written on behalf of Summix Developments Limited (the appellant) and addresses landscape and visual matters in respect of land to the north of Browns Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire (the appeal site).
- 6.2. The appeal site is primarily located in the administrative area of Lichfield District Council, however the application boundary of the site, related to the location of the proposed access, overlaps the neighbouring administrative area of Tamworth Borough Council.
- 6.3. The evidence relates to an appeal against Lichfield District Council's (LDC) refusal to grant planning permission of an outline planning application (LPA reference 18/00840), including:
"...Outline planning permission for up to 210 dwellings, public open space, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage, and associated infrastructure – with all matters reserved except access."
- 6.4. The outline application was submitted with a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) addressing the proposed development, prepared by Pegasus Group (CD-1.2.2) (the PG LVIA).
- 6.5. Principles and good practice for undertaking, and/or applying the principles of, LVIA are set out in the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (2013) (GLVIA3)². The concepts and procedures set out in this guidance have been adopted where appropriate.
- 6.6. The professional judgements which are presented in this proof of evidence for this appeal (LDC references 18/00840/OUTMEI and 24/00004/REF) have been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

The Appeal Site

- 6.7. The appeal site extends to ca. 12.65 hectares (ha) and comprises two medium sized fields of broadly regular shape, both previously in arable use at the time of the original application, but since reverting to rough grazing land.
- 6.8. The site is located on the north-east edge of Tamworth where it occupies an area of land that falls gradually to the north between levels of ca. +81m above ordnance datum (AOD) on the settlement edge of Tamworth, down to ca. +71m AOD at the lower points on the northern boundary. The slope is broadly even across this fall. Outside of the appeal site, to the east, the landform rises to a broad low plateau at ca. +80m AOD before it falls more steeply into the valley of the River Anker. To the west, landform has a more gradual profile,

² Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (April 2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition

undulating across a relatively lower plateau with a more gradual fall toward the valley for the River Tame.

- 6.9. The PG LVIA sets out a more detailed description of the landscape and visual baseline, including reference to published landscape character studies (**CD-1.2.2**, paras 4.1 to 4.28).

Main Issue

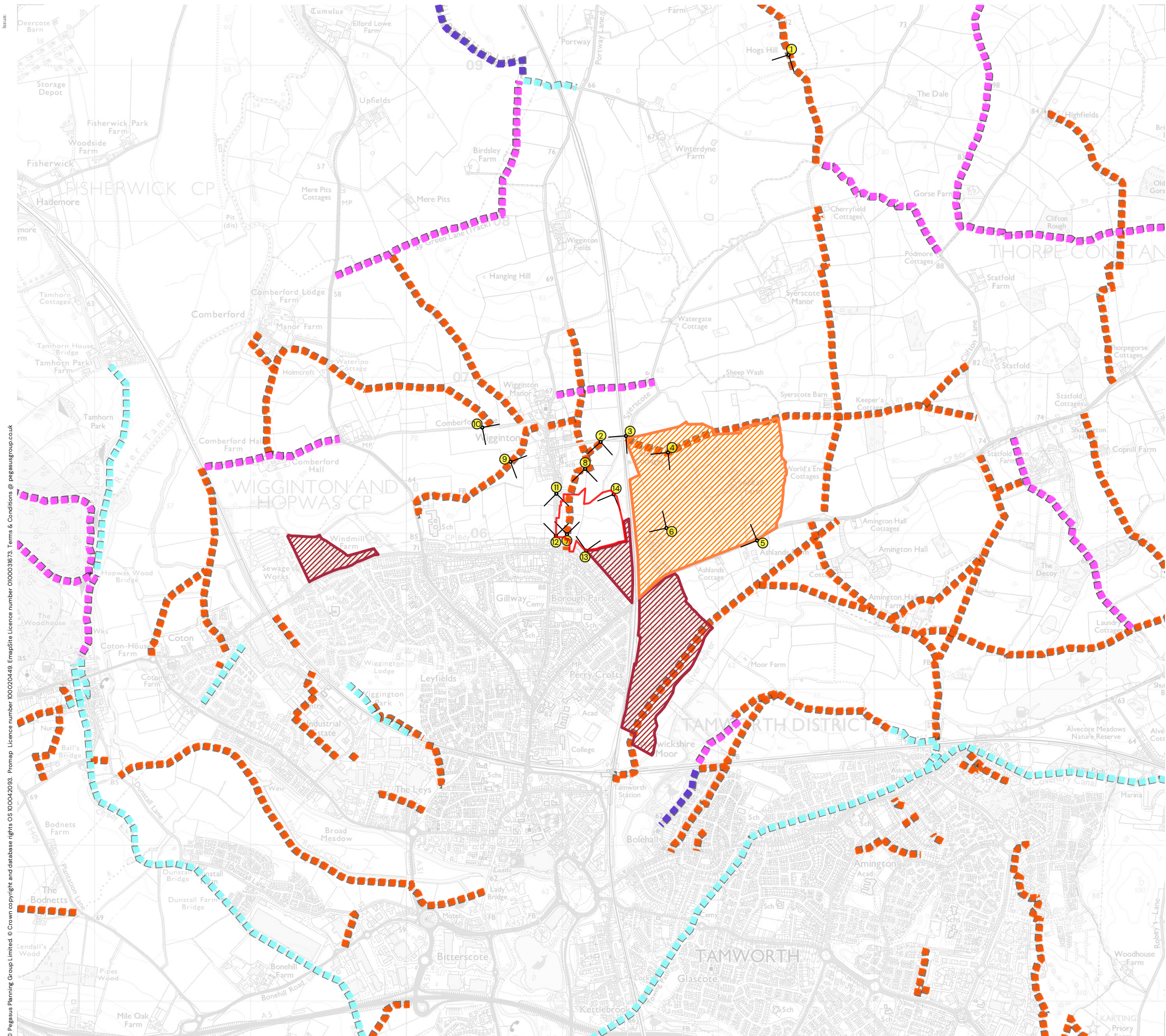
- 6.10. In respect of the main issue to be addressed at this appeal in respect of landscape and visual matters, this relates to the matter of physical and visual separation between Tamworth and Wigginton and also the nature of the proposed access within the administrative area of TBC.
- 6.11. Consequently, this evidence has addressed:
- i. The nature of the existing landscape between Tamworth and Wigginton (including the appeal site and nearby residential developments) with reference to the physical landscape attributes which are present;
 - ii. The extent to which these contribute to the existing physical separation between Tamworth and Wigginton currently and how this would change as a consequence of the proposed development;
 - iii. Considering visual separation, the location and current experience of visual receptors in the area from where 'visual coalescence may or may not be perceived';
 - iv. The extent to which visual coalescence would occur from these locations; and
 - v. The physical characteristics of Brown's Lane currently and the extent to which the proposed access would be consistent with this or, if not, the extent to which this would constitute an unacceptable impact.
- 6.12. This evidence has highlighted the process of landscape and visual analysis which was applied to the design evolution and is presented in the submitted PG LVIA (**CD-1.2.2**). In particular this reiterates the analysis of the landscape and visual baseline and subsequent development of a landscape and green infrastructure strategy. That strategy recognises the local landscape context and adopts an approach to mitigation as an inherent part of the proposed masterplan.
- 6.13. That strategy includes a contained area for proposed built form along with robust landscape buffers in key parts of the appeal site which, along with additional landscape planting, will physically and visually contain the development envelope. The strategy also maintains the western field enclosure of the appeal site as open and agricultural in character, consequently maintaining physical separation between the proposed development (and Tamworth) and Wigginton.
- 6.14. In the absence of any physical coalescence, there remains scope for the perception of merging, or visual coalescence, from certain receptors groups and locations. This evidence demonstrates that for many parts of the landscape the proposed development will not be visible, but where built form will be visible, this will not cause the settlement areas of Tamworth and Wigginton to merge.



- 6.15. In respect of the proposed access, the proposals are consistent with the existing street scene along Brown's Lane where there are other road junctions of similar scale and nature and various other consistent features in terms of tree planting and verges. Were the residential development within Lichfield District not to come forward, the access would not be entirely out of character and would read in a similar way to that of former cul-de-sac's which fronted out to the adjacent countryside.
- 6.16. On balance, landscape and visual matters in respect of coalescence between Tamworth and Wigginton, and impacts on the character of Brown's Lane are not considered to be sufficient to support refusal of the application.



Figures.



KEY

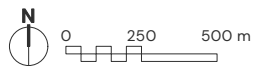
-  Site boundary
-  'Emerging' urban edge with planning consent
-  Arkall Farm Development
-  Representative viewpoints
-  Public footpath
-  Public bridleway
-  Byway open to all traffic
-  Other routes with public access

| | | |
|------------|----|---------------|
| 24/05/2024 | - | First Issue |
| DATE | NO | REVISION NOTE |

Viewpoint Location Plan

Land north of Browns Lane,
Tamworth

CLIENT
Summix Ltd



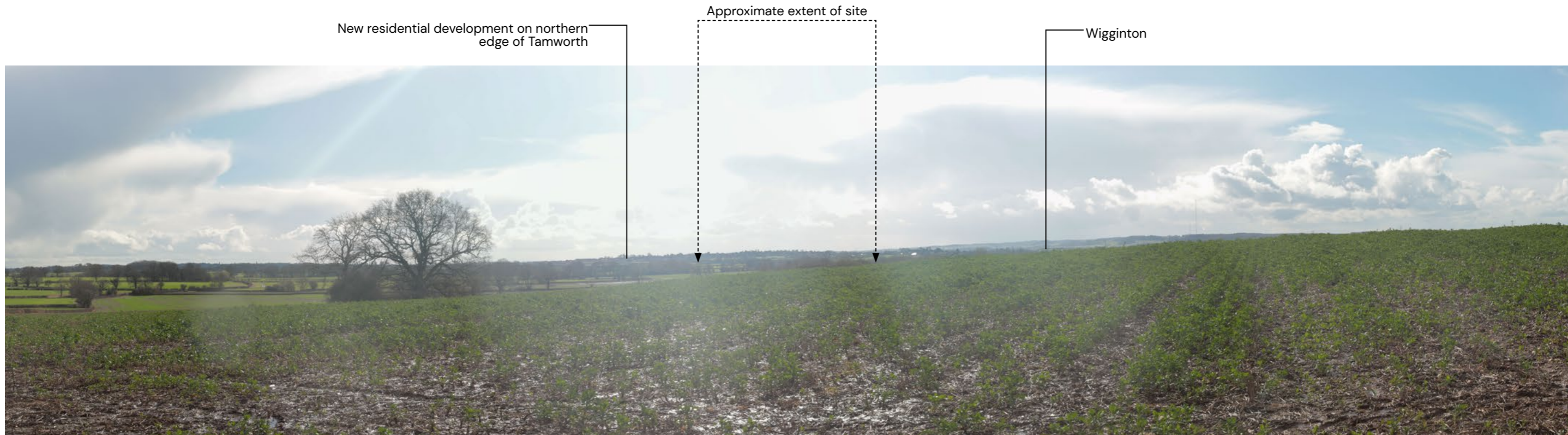
| | | | |
|------------|-----------|------|--------|
| DATE | SCALE | TEAM | APPRVD |
| 24/05/2024 | 1:2500@A3 | BR | JWA |

DRAWING NUMBER

P24-0348_EN_0021_-_1 VPLP



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Viewpoint 1: View from right of way at Hogs Hill, looking south-west.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 22517 09065 | c. 3000m (3km) | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.86.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |



Viewpoint 2: View from right of way at Syerscote Lane, looking south.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 21256 06595 | c. 350m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.71.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs
 Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth
 Client | Summix Ltd
 Drawing number | P24-0348_EN_0022_-_0001
 Date 28/05/2024
 Team BR
 App JWA





Viewpoint 3: View from bridge crossing of Syerscote Lane, looking south-west.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 21397 06622 | c. 400m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.76.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |



Viewpoint 4: View from right of way east of Wigginton looking south-west.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 21672 06519 | c.450m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.70.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs
 Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth
 Client | Summix Ltd
 Drawing number | P24-0348_EN_0022_-_0001
 Date 28/05/2024
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Viewpoint 5: View from B5493 near Ashlands Farm, looking north-west.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 22243 05964 | c. 900m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.76.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |



Viewpoint 6: View from Arkall Farm development, looking north-west.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 2176005765 | c. 400m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.78.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth

Client | Summix Ltd

Drawing number | P24-0348_EN_0022_-_0001

Date 28/05/2024
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Viewpoint 7: View from right of way on the edge of Tamworth, and on the southern site boundary.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 21014 06010 | On site boundary | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.81.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |



Viewpoint 8: View from right of way on southern edge of Wigginton, looking south.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 21147 06452 | c. 150m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.74.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth

Client | Summix Ltd

Drawing number | P24-0348_EN_0022_-_0001

Date 28/05/2024
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Viewpoint 9: View from right of way of Wigginton, looking south-east.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 20665 06476 | c. 400m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.69.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |




Viewpoint 10: View from Comberford Lane west of Wigginton, looking south-west.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 20469 06687 | c. 600m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.71.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs
 Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth
 Client | Summix Ltd
 Drawing number | P24-0348_EN_0022_-_0001
 Date 28/05/2024
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Viewpoint 11: View from the junction of Main Road and Walrand Close, Wigginton.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 20937 06391 | c. 50m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.76m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |



Viewpoint 12: View from Main Road on northern edge of Tamworth, looking north.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 20960 05932 | c. 50m | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.81.5m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth

Client | Summix Ltd

Drawing number | P24-0348_EN_0022_-_0001

Date 28/05/2024
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App JWA





Viewpoint 13: View from the permissive footpath on the southern site boundary.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 21144 05897 | On southern site boundary | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.75m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |



Viewpoint 14: View from the permissive footpath at the north-eastern corner of the site.

Viewpoint details:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Approx. grid reference:</i> | <i>Distance to site:</i> | <i>Date:</i> |
| SK 21304 06271 | On northern site boundary | 04.06.2017 |
| <i>Approx. elevation:</i> | <i>Camera type:</i> | <i>Approx. H FoV:</i> |
| c.66m AOD | Canon EOS 1300D (50mm lens) | 60° |

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth

Client | Summix Ltd

Drawing number | P24-0348_EN_0022_-_0001






Date 28/05/2024
 Team BR
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KEY

-  Site boundary
-  Existing vegetation
-  Existing public footpath
-  Proposed development cells
-  Public open space hierarchy
 - A: Retained open agricultural field with countryside views;
 - B: Semi-formal open space with equipped play areas;
 - C: Green corridors;
 - D: Focal point;
 - E: Natural open space.

Landscape Features

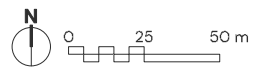
-  Native infrastructure planting
-  Hedgerow to follow alignment of access road
-  Footpath links between and across public open space
-  Tree lined streets
-  Locally equipped area for play (LEAP)
-  Feature hard landscape area
-  Balancing pond

| | | |
|------------|----|-----------------|
| 06/06/2024 | A | Client Comments |
| DATE | NO | REVISION NOTE |

Landscape and Green Infrastructure Strategy

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth

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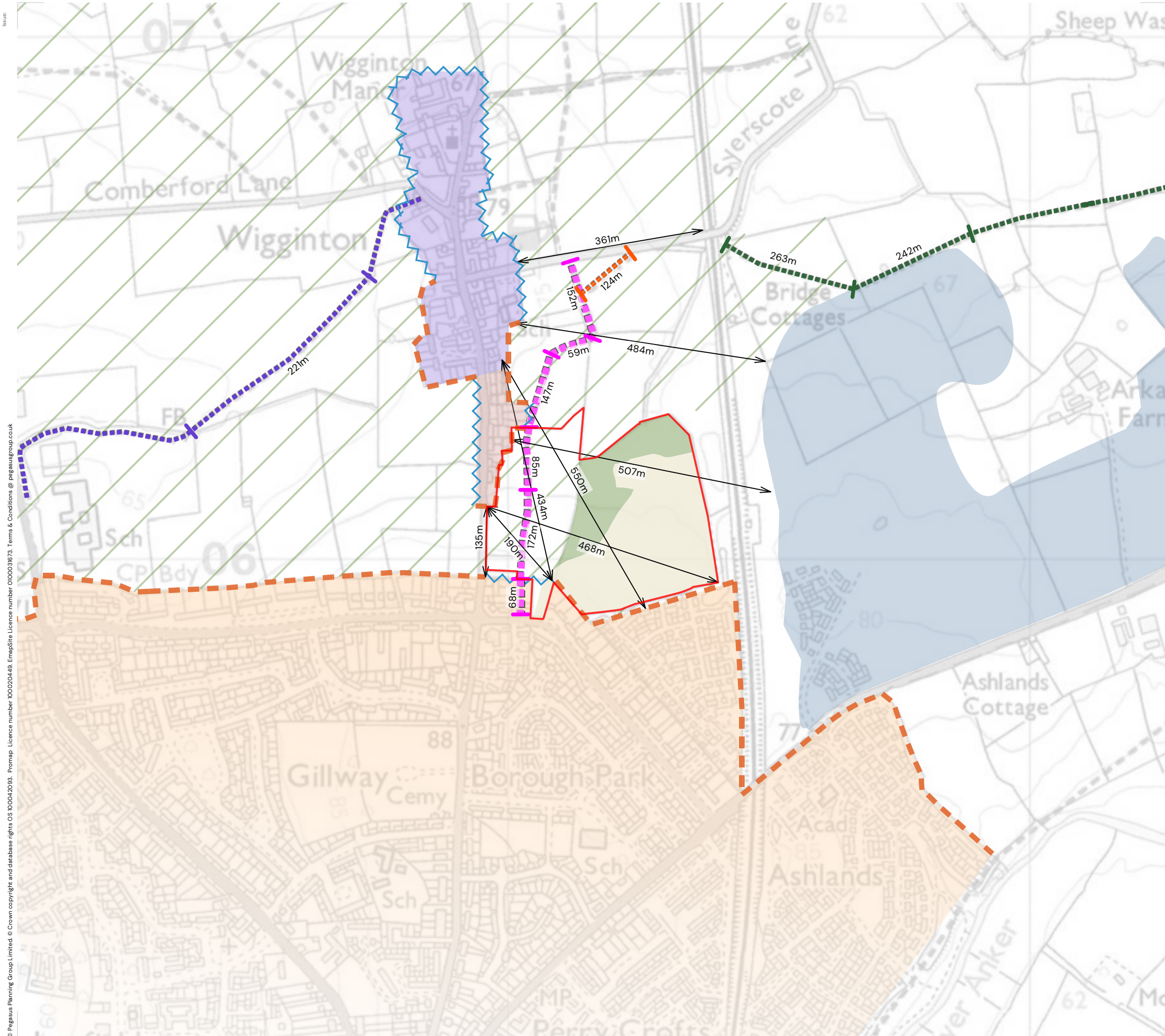


| | | | |
|------------|-----------|------|--------|
| DATE | SCALE | TEAM | APPRVD |
| 24/05/2024 | 1:2500@A3 | BR | JWA |

DRAWING NUMBER

P24-0348_EN_0023_A_1 LGIS





- Key**
- Site Boundary
 - Proposed Development Envelope
 - Proposed On Site Green Space
 - Wigginton Ribbon Development Along Main Road
 - Wigginton Settlement 'At Depth'
 - Tamworth Established Edge
 - Tamworth Emerging Edge
 - Settlement Edge More Exposed/Prominent
 - Settlement Edge More Discreet/Contained
 - Landscape Areas Maintaining Separation
 - Public Rights of Way**
 - Wigginton and Hopwas 1
 - Wigginton and Hopwas 2
 - Wigginton and Hopwas 3
 - Wigginton and Hopwas 4

24/05/2024 - First Issue
 DATE NO REVISION NOTE

Landscape and Visual Analysis of Settlement Separation

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth

CLIENT Summix Ltd

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|------|--------|
| DATE | SCALE | TEAM | APPRVD |
| 24/05/2024 | 1:7500@A3 | BR | JWA |

DRAWING NUMBER
 P24-0348_EN_0024_-_1 LVASS

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