

Thurlaston Meadows Care Home,
Thurlaston, Warwickshire

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

for

Thurlaston Parish Council

Planning | 11th February 2021

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Executive summary

Introduction

Eastdene Investments Limited has applied to Rugby Borough Council for outline planning permission for the development 40 bungalows for retirement living as an extension to the existing Thurlaston Meadows Care Home, Main Street, Thurlaston, Rugby, Warwickshire.

Planning application R20/1030 was registered on 27.11.2020 and is described as:

Erection of a Retirement Living Housing Scheme (Use Class C2) comprising of 40 bungalows with associated development together with alterations to existing access off Main Street (Outline - Principle, Layout and Access Only).

The application package is not supported by any assessment or appraisal of the likely effects of the proposed development on landscape character or visual amenity.

The Landscape Partnership has been commissioned by Thurlaston Parish Council to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of a proposed development consisting of 40 bungalows for retirement living at Thurlaston Meadows Care Home, Main Street, Thurlaston, Rugby, Warwickshire.

The Landscape Partnership has been instructed by Thurlaston Parish Council to undertake an independent Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the proposed development. The purpose of the LVA is to enable the parish council to understand and be fully informed on the likely landscape and visual effects of the extension to the care home when compiling its consultation response to the application.

The proposed development comprises a retirement living scheme for up to 40 bungalows and associated communal facilities. The proposed layout is shown on Chapman Design drawing number: 3703-101, dated September 2019. Matters of appearance, scale and landscaping would be the subject of a future reserved matters application.

Effects on site features

The effects of the proposed development on site features were considered at Section 3.3. Considering the effects on site features the development would seal some of the soils at the site with development, and the new buildings would also obscure the natural landform of the site. The proposed development would extend residential use across the whole site and would expand the area of the settlement substantially. It would completely alter the land use across much of the site, changing it from semi-rural, undeveloped land, to residential use. The proposed development would result in the removal of a large number of trees. The existing block of woodland in the north-western corner of the site would be removed in its entirety, which would potentially create a harsh urban edge. In terms of landscape-related historic assets the proposed development would interrupt some of hedge lines and the historic hedgerows would lose some of their legibility. The setting of the historic pond on site would also be adversely affected by urban development.

Effects on landscape character

The effects of the proposed development on landscape character were considered at Section 4.4. In terms of existing character, large parts of the site retain a countryside character.

The proposed development would result in a number of negative effects on landscape character, which can be summarised as follows:

- *Introduction of new development leading to a change in character at the site, including the introduction of suburbanising features such as buildings, roads, parking and associated garden paraphernalia.*
- *Introduction of lighting*
- *Loss of trees and woodland*
- *Change to the settlement form and connection of isolated development at Biggin Hall Lane with the main village*
- *Negative effect on the landscape setting of the village*
- *Negative effect on views which are noted within the Conservation Area Appraisal*
- *Change in the character of Biggin Hall Lane*
- *Change in the character of public footpath Thurlaston R310/1*

Effects on views

The effects of the proposed development on visual amenity were considered at Section 5 and the effect on specific views was detailed in Table 5.1.

Views are available from the neighbouring streets as well as the public footpath which crosses the site. Main Street, Biggin Hall Lane, and Church Lane all have views of the site. The western edge of the development site is also exposed to views from the surrounding countryside to the north.

It was found that the proposed development would have a large adverse effect on views from Main Street (Viewpoint A), Biggin Hall Lane (Viewpoints B and C), and public footpath Thurlaston R185/1. Due to the proximity of the proposed development, it is considered that there would be a substantial change to the view from public footpath public footpath Thurlaston R310/1 that crosses the site.

Views from Biggin Hall Lane are considered particularly sensitive as they are noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal. The proposed development would have a strong urbanising influence on these views.

Effects on landscape-related designations

The effects of the proposed development on landscape related designations were considered at Section 6. Particular attention was paid to the likely effects of the proposed development on the Thurlaston Conservation Area, the landscape setting of The Old Forge, Stanleys Farmhouse and The Windmill (Listed Buildings), and the character of public footpath Thurlaston R310/1 which crosses the site.

The proposed development would have a direct effect on the character of the Conservation Area and its landscape setting. The particular contribution of the open space within the site to the character of the Conservation Area would be lost as a result of the introduction of new development, which would give the site an urbanised character. The proposed development would extend westwards from Main Street which would dilute the linear character of the settlement. The proposal would also interrupt the link between the Conservation Area and its countryside setting, which is an important component of the existing character of the Conservation Area.

In summary, the proposed development would have a large adverse effect on the character of the Conservation Area itself, while development would also infringe on the rural setting of the

Conservation Area. Furthermore, the new buildings would have a large negative effect on two of views which are identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The proposed site can be considered to form part of the landscape setting of The Old Forge, Stanleys Farmhouse and The Windmill (listed buildings). The site currently contains a large expanse of open space which retains a countryside character. The introduction of new development would have a direct impact on the existing countryside setting of these listed buildings as the site would take on an urbanised character. This would have an adverse effect on the landscape setting of these buildings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed development would give rise to a number of negative effects on landscape character and visual amenity. Of particular concern is the effect on the landscape setting of the village, the effect on the character of the Conservation Area - including the effect on views identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal, and the effect on the landscape setting of The Old Forge, Stanleys Farmhouse and The Windmill.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

- 1.1.1 The Landscape Partnership has been commissioned by Thurlaston Parish Council to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of a proposed development consisting of 40 bungalows for retirement living at Thurlaston Meadows Care Home, Main Street, Thurlaston, Rugby, Warwickshire. The coordinates of the site are E446729 N270968.
- 1.1.2 An application to Rugby Borough Council was submitted on behalf of Eastdene Investments Limited on the 26.11.2020 (Application Reference: R20/1030). The application was registered by the council on the 27.11.2020.
- 1.1.3 The proposed development is described as follows:
- Erection of a Retirement Living Housing Scheme (Use Class C2) comprising of 40 bungalows with associated development together with alterations to existing access off Main Street (Outline - Principle, Layout and Access Only).*
- 1.1.4 The site would be accessed from Main Street via a modified site access.

1.2 Commission

- 1.2.1 The application package is not supported by any assessment or appraisal of the likely effects of the proposed development on landscape character or visual amenity.
- 1.2.2 The Landscape Partnership has been instructed to undertake an independent LVA by Thurlaston Parish Council. The purpose of the LVA is to enable the parish council to understand and be fully informed on the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development when compiling its consultation response to the application.

1.3 Objectives of the report

- 1.3.1 The LVA comprises an appraisal of landscape receptors (site features and landscape character) and visual receptors that might be affected by the proposed development.
- 1.3.2 In defining landscape, reference is made to the adopted definition agreed by the European Landscape Convention (Florence: Council of Europe 2000), which states that the landscape is: “*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*”. The process to understand how landscape features, landscape character and views would be affected is informed by the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)¹. This appraisal is not, however, a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment as this was not considered proportionate or necessary considering the nature of the development proposed. As such, it identifies likely landscape and visual consequences of the proposed development and provides narrative descriptions of effects; it does not suggest any quantification as to the significance of the change likely to be experienced.

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

1.3.3 The appraisal provides a description of the existing landscape and built features within the site and its immediate vicinity. It also considers the relationship of these features to the local and wider landscape characteristics; the contribution that these features have in views; and the presence of statutory, non-statutory or local landscape-related designations and planning policies. The appraisal includes consideration of the effects of the proposals upon the landscape of the site itself, and the local and wider landscape character, and establishes the extent to which the development would be visible and any changes to views. The appraisal takes into account seasonal variation, and direct or indirect effects, and compares the effects in the first year following completion and after a period of 10 years once any planting has established. Changes can be experienced as an adverse, beneficial or neutral influence.

1.3.4 The following work stages were undertaken to prepare the LVA:

- Desktop study to identify an indicative zone of visual influence, any local statutory and non-statutory landscape-related designations, local public rights of way, and existing landscape character assessments covering the site and its vicinity.
- Field study to verify local landscape characteristics; provide commentary on the condition, sensitivity and capacity of the local landscape character to accommodate change of the type and scale proposed; appraise the contribution of any landscape features within the site that might be lost or altered; identify and provide commentary on the sensitivity of key visual receptors; and compare the existing views observed by visual receptors at representative viewpoints, with those likely to be experienced as a result of the development.
- Consideration of the ability of the proposed landscape strategy to offset or negate any landscape and visual effects.
- Identification of any broad mitigation measures that may be required if the proposed development is to be considered acceptable.
- Identification of any residual landscape and visual effects.

1.3.5 The report details the findings of the LVA and describes any adverse effects on the character of the surrounding landscape and its visual amenity, as arising from the development.

1.3.6 Supporting figures to provide baseline data relating to the site's landscape and visual context, together with photographs and visualisations, are reproduced at Appendix 01.

1.4 Assumptions and limitations

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

- The development assessed is that described at Section 2 of this LVA.
- The appraisal baseline year is 2021.
- Existing vegetation will continue to grow at rates typical of the species, and its location and maturity.
- Any proposed tree and shrub planting would grow at a rate of approximately 200 to 300mm/year and the proposed hedge planting at approximately 200mm/year, based on the average expected growth rates for typical species growing on Lime-rich loamy and clayey soils

with impeded drainage with high fertility² which are likely to be present at the site. Predicted growth is also based on the assumption that no growth will take place in the first year, as the plants adjust to their new growing environments.

- The receptor for a view from a public right of way, within public open space, or within a residential property is represented as an adult standing with an eye height of 1.6m.
- Visual effects are assessed on the basis of good visibility. Visual effects can be expected to vary, e.g. poor visibility at times of low cloud, rainfall and dusk. At these times, a reduction in visual clarity, colour and contrast would be experienced. Reduced visibility would limit the extent of view possible particularly in mid to long distance views. Consequently, the assessment of effects is based on the worst-case scenario, where the proposed development would be most visible.
- Extent of use of public rights of way is based on known information (e.g. if the right of way forms part of a promoted route at a local or national level), signage, and circumstantial evidence at the time of the survey such as recent disturbance of grass and crops, a clearly defined path, extent of wear, and the number of people/horses using the right of way at the time of the survey. The extent of use of a road is based on the number of vehicles observed using the road at the time of the survey and as could reasonably be expected for the class of road.

1.4.2 The assessment was undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect and Member of the Landscape Institute, who viewed the application site during a site visit in January 2021, on a reasonably clear day, from adjacent land, local rights of way, and public locations (e.g. areas with recreational access). It was noted that at this time of year, deciduous trees were devoid of leaf, and that ephemeral vegetation such as grasses and herbaceous plants were exerting little presence.

1.4.3 In undertaking the assessment, other than the site, private property has not been accessed, as it is generally considered impracticable to seek approval to gain access to residential properties or other buildings to assess the effect on views from each window in a property or adjoining land. Assessment is therefore based on the nearest publicly accessible location, which will usually be a road or public right of way, or on views within the site looking outwards. Professional judgement is used to extrapolate what the likely effect on views would be from windows, making allowances for changes in height, e.g. from a first-floor window.

2 Proposed development

2.1.1 The proposed development is illustrated on the following drawing:

- Proposed Site Plan (drawing number: 3703-101) by Chapman Design, dated September 2019.

2.1.2 A number of supporting documents were also submitted which included:

- Planning Statement, prepared by APC Planning.

² <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/> , accessed 14.01.2021

2.1.3 Outline planning permission is sought for:

Proposed Retirement Living Housing Scheme (Use Class C2) comprising of 40no. units (bungalows) and associated development together with alterations to existing access off Main Street.

2.1.4 Outline planning permission is sought for the development of the site to provide retirement living scheme for up to 40 bungalows and associated communal facilities. The application seeks approval for access and layout only for the proposed development. Matters of appearance, scale and landscaping would be the subject of a future reserved matters application.

2.1.5 The proposed masterplan (refer to Drawing No.3703-101 Revision B) establishes the layout parameters for the proposed scheme. As outlined within the accompanying Design and Access Statement, the overall approach in regard to the proposed bungalows is to provide five clusters of eight units across the site.

2.1.6 The proposed development would be served through the upgrading of the existing 'staff and goods' entrance located off Main Street. The access provides a simple priority junction serving a development road with a width of 5.5m bound by a 2m wide footway to the north of the carriageway.

3 Landscape context and site features

3.1 Site context

3.1.1 The site is located in the parish of Thurlaston.

3.1.2 Thurlaston is a village which is approximately four miles south-west of Rugby and one mile west of Dunchurch. The settlement is situated on the edge of a plateau and the ground falls away to the south into a clay valley which now contains a reservoir. The village is set in countryside with the M45 to the north. The only vehicular approach to the village is via a bridge over this road.

3.1.3 Thurlaston is an ancient village which is recorded in the Domesday Book. Prior to the C20 Thurlaston was a thriving village owned by the Duke of Buccleuch. The economy of the settlement was traditionally based around agriculture and this is reflected in the complex of farm buildings at Stanleys Farm, and the mill. The church/school was built in 1848. This building was used as a school in the week and as a church on Sunday. St Edmunds Church was licenced for public worship in 1905. Thurlaston lies within the parish of Dunchurch with Thurlaston.

3.1.4 The village is predominantly linear in form with Main Street being the primary historical route. A number of historical lanes and public rights of way diverge from Main Street, and more modern cul-de-sacs are also present.

3.1.5 Although Pipewell Cottage has origins dating from the C15 or C16 the majority of the historic buildings within the village date from the C18 such as Stanleys Farmhouse, the Old Forge and The Mill. Many of the other buildings date from the mid-C19 suggesting different methods of agriculture led to modernisation and expansion of the village. The village also experienced significant growth in the 1960s with open plan housing along Main Street, open plan cul-de-sacs and infill development.

3.2 The site

- 3.2.1 The application site extends to c.3.4ha and has an irregular shape which takes in several different parcels of land.
- 3.2.2 The site is located to the west of Main Street and includes an existing care home at its eastern end.
- 3.2.3 Reference to the OS map of 1887 shows that the application site originally consisted of agricultural land and what appears to be a farmyard, adjoining Main Street. A sheepwash is marked within the site and there are also small areas of woodland / orchard. It appears that some of the original farm buildings have been adapted and retained, and now form part of the care home.
- 3.2.4 The OS map of 1960 shows that a large property has been constructed on the site. This property forms part of the existing care home. The eastern part of the site (the area around the existing care home) appears to be laid out as a garden and a residential property (accessed from Biggin Hall Lane) has been constructed on a part of the site (i.e. the existing property at Patricks Field). Large parts of the site however are still shown as agricultural fields. The sheepwash is identified on this map as a pond.
- 3.2.5 The application boundary includes several parcels of undeveloped land which have the character of meadows and woodland. It also takes in a C20 dwelling at Patricks Field which is set within a large, well-vegetated garden. The eastern part of the site is included within the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal makes reference to open areas within the site, which are a positive feature of the Conservation Area (see Section 6).
- 3.2.6 The local plan map excludes most of the site from the settlement boundary. Only the eastern portion of the site adjacent to Main Street is included within the settlement boundary. The remaining parts of the site can be considered to form part of the countryside (while Patricks Field is an example of isolated development within the countryside).
- 3.2.7 To the west of the site is a small cluster of isolated development at Biggin Hall Lane which is mainly C20 in origin. These dwellings back onto woodland and farmland further to the west. To the north is an expanse of open countryside which forms part of the setting of the village. Biggin Hall Lane wraps around the western and northern sides of the site. The northern side of Biggin Hall Lane adjoins areas of undeveloped land which consist of pastures and large gardens. The Old Forge is also found to the north of the site on the opposite side of Biggin Hall Lane.
- 3.2.8 The eastern site boundary adjoins Main Street. The context to the east consists of historic buildings within the Conservation Area including Stanleys Farm, which is grade II listed, and the associated farm buildings. A private dwelling is indented into the south-eastern corner of the site. This plot consists of a medium-sized garden and a modern house. The eastern part of the southern site boundary adjoins a short cul-de-sac of modern properties at Moat Close. The remaining sections of the southern site boundary adjoin pastures which connect with the wider countryside.

3.3 Site features

Geology

- 3.3.1 The site and wider landscape are underlain by the Charmouth Mudstone Formation. This consists of sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 183 to 199 million years ago in the Jurassic Period.

The bedrock geology is overlain by superficial deposits known as Dunsmore Gravel - Sand And Gravel which cover the plateau between Frankton and Clifton upon Dunsmore, Warwickshire. These deposits were formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.³

- 3.3.2 The proposed development would introduce built development across much of the site, but this would not have any material influence on geology from a landscape character perspective.

Soils

- 3.3.3 The natural soils of the site are described as lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage with high fertility.⁴ Landcover for these soils is typically arable with some grassland, and the soils are drained by a network of streams. Typical habitats for these soils are *“Base-rich pastures and classic chalky boulder clay ancient woodlands; some wetter areas and lime-rich flush vegetation.”*

- 3.3.4 With regard to water protection *“Land is drained and nitrate vulnerable; potential for rapid pollutant transport; surface capping can trigger sheet erosion of fine sediment to stream network”*. In terms of general cropping the soils are *“Suited to autumn sown crops and grass but shortage of soil moisture can restrict yield, and timeliness with field work is important to avoid structural damage particularly in spring”*.

- 3.3.5 It is possible that the existing soils have been subject to some disturbance in the garden areas of the site. The proposed development would introduce built development across much of the site and this would seal the soil surface and also preclude any agricultural use. It might be considered that the site has limited potential for agriculture as parts of the site are in residential use, but there would nonetheless be an adverse effect on the soils at the site.

Landform

- 3.3.6 The village of Thurlaston, including the site, is situated on a plateau at 110m to 120m AOD. The levels within the site are approximately 109m to 115m AOD, with the highest lands located >>>>. The site extends across a minor valley which contains an artificial pond (previously used as a sheepwash). The pond releases water into a small stream which flows southwards into Draycote Water (Reservoir). The landform within the site is generally unaltered from its natural state.

- 3.3.7 The development site includes some noticeable slopes and localised earthworks would be required to accommodate the buildings. This would affect the natural landform of the site by introducing artificial terraces and features to create level building plots and appropriate access between. It is assumed that buildings could be accommodated with relatively localised changes to the landform. The introduction of development would, however, obscure the natural form of the minor valley, which would have an adverse effect on the landform of the site.

Land use

- 3.3.8 The site currently comprises a residential care home and grounds, a residential property and associated garden, and some fields/meadows (which are not in active agricultural use). Parts of the site have become well-wooded. The site also contains a pond which is a former sheepwash.

³ British Geological Survey: <https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>, accessed 20.01.2021

⁴ Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute Soilscales: <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/>, accessed 20.01.2020

3.3.9 The proposed development would extend residential use across the whole site and would expand the area of the adjacent settlement substantially. The greater portion of the site currently lies outside the settlement boundary and effectively forms part of the countryside. The new units would be situated within this part of site. The proposed development would completely alter the land use across much of the site, changing it from semi-rural, undeveloped land, to residential use. Although the site already contains some residential use this is limited to the existing care home and a single residential dwelling at Patricks Field, and the remaining parts of the site currently have a countryside character.

Vegetation

3.3.10 The site contains a range of existing vegetation and has a well-vegetated appearance. A well-maintained, native hedge borders Biggin Hall Lane, and there is a block of woodland in the north-western corner of the site. Some of the original rural hedge lines survive within the site. These hedges now consist of mature trees. The domestic garden at Patricks Field contains a range of shrubs and mature trees, including ornamental varieties. There are also mature trees around the pond.

3.3.11 The Arboricultural Impact Assessment indicates that a large number of trees would be removed as they conflict within the proposed layout. The existing block of woodland in the north-western corner of the site would also be removed in its entirety. This woodland adjoins Biggin Hall Lane and the surrounding countryside and removal of the woodland and its replacement with bungalows up to the edge of the site, would potentially create a harsh urban edge. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment states that the most important trees within the site would be retained. There would, however, be a considerable loss of existing trees within the site which is considered to be a negative effect.

Landscape-related heritage assets

3.3.12 Reference to historic mapping indicates that some of the historic hedgerows survive on their original alignments, and the hedge which adjoins Biggin Hall Lane for example is in good condition. Open spaces also retain much of their former agricultural character, even if they are not in active agricultural use. The care home consists of historic buildings which have been repurposed, as well as more modern extensions. The original buildings on the site might be considered non-designated heritage assets, although such judgements are outside the scope of this LVA. The wall on the site frontage also makes an important contribution to the character of Main Street and the village as a whole. The sheepwash can be considered as a heritage assets.

3.3.13 The proposed development would retain many of these features though there would be some interruption to the hedge lines. The historic hedgerows would lose some of their legibility due to the introduction of development i.e. the hedges would be contained within a residential area.

Public access

3.3.14 Public Footpath Thurlaston 310/1 crosses a portion of the site. The planning statement says that the development would “*improve the quality and quantity of green infrastructure networks and protect and enhance physical access, including public rights of way to open space.*” There are, however, no further details of how the public footpath would be accommodated within the

proposed development. It is assumed that this footpath would be retained on the same alignment, but there would be large changes to the character of the route. This is considered in more detail in the visual amenity section (Viewpoint D).

- 3.3.15 The proposal could potentially increase public access to the site, but this would have limited benefit in terms of amenity because of the nature of the development.

4 Landscape character

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The importance of understanding the landscape character of all landscapes in England is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 170), which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to the natural environment by: *“recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services”*. Landscape character assessment is the process which can identify these intrinsic values and unique characteristics of the diverse landscapes in the UK.
- 4.1.2 Landscape character assessments enable landscapes to be described and understood by mapping natural, physical and cultural features in order to define different landscapes and demonstrate what makes them special. Landscape character types share similar characteristics, such as underlying geology, soil type, topography and landform, the pattern and type of land/field enclosure, historic land use, the pattern of settlements and types of building that these comprise, tree and woodland cover and the general visual experience of the area. Landscape character areas are specific geographic areas that exhibit a particular landscape character type. Landscape character assessments can be undertaken at a range of scales. Boundaries are only indicative of the change between areas and therefore when working at a site scale, especially close to boundaries between landscape character types or character areas; users should carefully identify which landscape the land parcel belongs to, based on its specific characteristics. In addition, it is important to note that while drawn with a line on a map, areas close to boundaries often may be better thought of as an area of transition and may display some of the characteristics and sensitivities of both character areas.
- 4.1.3 Effects on landscape character can be both direct, i.e. on the character area/type that the site is located within, and indirect, i.e. changes to characteristics or perceptions of character that occur beyond the boundary of a character area/landscape type. In addition, effects on landscape character may be positive or negative, i.e. strengthening and enhancing the characteristic patterns and features, or eroding and losing the patterns and features that contribute to landscape character.
- 4.1.4 There are three relevant published landscape character assessments that encompass the site. These are the national level National Character Area profiles, the county level assessment, and the borough level assessment.
- 4.1.5 Information on the character of the Thurlaston Conservation Area is presented in the landscape-related designations section.

4.2 National level – National Character Areas

4.2.1 In the mid-1990s, English Nature and the Countryside Commission jointly produced The Character Map of England – a single map that identified and described 159 Joint Character Areas (JCA) covering the whole of England. (The Landscape Partnership undertook the mapping and character assessment work on behalf of Natural England for the east of England). Each distinct area was defined following consideration of its landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, and cultural and economic activity. The boundaries of the areas followed natural rather than administrative boundaries. The various volumes of the Map were published between 1998 and 2000.

4.2.2 More recently, Natural England has undertaken a review of the JCAs in order to fulfil, in part, responsibilities set out in the Natural Environment White Paper 2011, Biodiversity 2020, and the European Landscape Convention 2007, creating National Character Area (NCA) profiles that are based on the original JCA profiles.

4.2.3 The site is located within **NCA 96: Dunsmore and Feldon**. Dunsmore and Feldon is predominantly a rural, agricultural landscape, crossed by numerous small rivers and tributaries and varying between a more open character in the Feldon area and a wooded character in Dunsmore. The name Feldon refers to the old English term *feld* meaning ‘open cleared land’ and expresses the contrast, in medieval times, with the more wooded Arden area to the north-west.

The historic character of this area is very important, in particular its ancient woodlands, enclosed fields, veteran trees, landscaped parklands and areas of archaeological interest.

4.2.4 Key characteristics of NCA 96 include:

- *The sense of a predominantly quiet, rural landscape is heightened by its close proximity to several urban areas, with a gently undulating landscape of low hills, heathland plateaux and clay vales separated by the occasional upstanding escarpment.*
- *The underlying lower Lias clays and Mercia mudstones are similar throughout Dunsmore and Feldon but the Quaternary ‘superficial’ deposits are what mark the change in character between Dunsmore and Feldon.*
- *Light sandy soils associated with the west (Dunsmore) supporting mixed farming and some intensive arable with fertile alkaline soils to the east (Feldon) supporting grazed pasture.*
- *Generally low woodland cover across the area, although there are areas of well-wooded character and ancient woodlands.*
- *Remnants of the formerly extensive Dunsmore Heath, preserving characteristic heathland archaeology, can still be found in woodland clearings. Natural regeneration on sand and gravel soils also occurs along roadside verges, although bracken is often abundant.*
- *Narrow, meandering river valleys with pollarded willows, streamside alders and patches of scrub supporting rare species.*
- *Canals, including the Grand Union Canal, and Draycote Reservoir provide important riparian habitats and a well-used recreational resource.*

- *Mainly large fields, with regular or rectilinear shapes, although some smaller fields also feature. Numerous areas of remnant ridge-and-furrow and earthwork remains of medieval settlements as found at Lower Tysoe, Radwell and Napton on the Hill.*
- *Predominantly nucleated settlement pattern with a low density of isolated farmsteads and some field barns sitting within a landscape of piecemeal and planned enclosure of the open fields which extended from the villages over large parts of this area. Many villages have recently expanded but the traditional buildings, constructed of red brick or Lias limestone, still retain their blue brick or ironstone details.*
- *The busy roads and large industrial units on the outskirts of the main settlements of Leamington Spa, Coventry and Rugby exert an urban influence on the surrounding area.*

4.2.5 The landscape in the vicinity of the site displays several of the characteristics of the area. The landscape to the north of Thurlaston is influenced by the M45, but is nonetheless relatively intact and well-preserved. Traditional buildings are well-represented within Thurlaston and the original settlement pattern is still legible. The settlement has expanded in recent years, which is typical of the area.

4.2.6 Statement of Environmental Opportunity No.1 reads as follows:

Protect and appropriately manage the historic character, settlement pattern and features of Dunsmore and Feldon, in particular its areas of archaeological and heritage interest.

4.2.7 Statement of Environmental Opportunity No.4 addresses landscape character and settlement character directly:

Protect and manage the landscape character, high tranquillity levels and the historic settlement character to enhance sense of place and of history and to promote recreational opportunities; and ensure that new development is sensitively located and designed.

4.3 County Level – Warwickshire Landscape Project

Baseline character

4.3.1 The Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines were produced as part of the Warwickshire Landscape Project which was a partnership between Warwickshire County Council and the Countryside Commission. The project was set up in 1987 to consider the unique and distinctive landscape of Warwickshire. The Guidelines for the Dunsmore Area - which includes Thurlaston - were published in November 1993.

4.3.2 The area known as **Dunsmore** consists of low ridges and valleys lying between Leamington Spa, Coventry and Rugby. The core of the region comprises an area of former heath associated with the low glacial plateau running from Cubbington to Hillmorton. It is primarily a planned landscape of large fields and small villages.

4.3.3 The character of Dunsmore is strongly influenced by the underlying geology and physical form of the land. Glacial deposits form a series of low plateaus composed of relatively recent lacustrine clays and capped with porous and infertile gravels. The latter produce light sandy soils showing traces of podzolisation, indicative of their late reclamation from heathland. A series of river valleys

have mildly dissected these glacial deposits, leaving gravel-capped ridges separated by wetter clay-floored valleys.

4.3.4 The main Dunsmore plateau stretches for approximately 10 miles to the west of Rugby. This plateau rises to just over 120m at Dunchurch. Most of the region is drained by the Avon and Leam and their tributaries. The valleys feature heavy clay soils.

4.3.5 In Dunsmore the historical development of the landscape is strongly related to the underlying physical character. In particular, the patterns of settlement and enclosure which have developed over many centuries exhibit features which are clearly distinct from other regions in the country. Dunsmore Heath appears to have been an area of intercommoning at the period of parish formation (in the early middle ages) as most of parish boundaries radiate from its highest point. This arrangement made it possible for each parish to include a portion of meadowland, arable land rough pasture (heath) and woodland. The more productive arable land in the region was densely settled during the early medieval period and farmed in open arable fields. The needs of livestock were met by grazing on the fallow field and on the waste, reinforced by the provision of hay from the alluvial water meadows. Depopulation in parts of the area began at a relatively early date and the area contains some notable deserted settlements.

4.3.6 Dunsmore has been sub-divided into three different landscape types:

- Plateau farmland
- Plateau fringe
- Dunsmore Parklands

4.3.7 The site falls within the Plateau Fringe landscape type, while the land to the north of Biggin Hall Lane falls within the Plateau Farmlands landscape type (as defined within this assessment).

4.3.8 The **Plateau Fringe** is described as ‘*a rather variable, often large scale farmed landscape with a varied undulating topography and characterised by a nucleated settlement pattern of small, often shrunken villages.*’

4.3.9 The appraisal states that:

Small nucleated villages are a characteristic feature of the Plateau Fringe..... Many of the villages in the Avon valley such as Ryston-on-Dunsmore, Wolston and Long Lawford, have expanded considerable with the addition of much modern residential development. The opposite is true in the Leam valley, where most of the villages have seen little new development and still retain much of their original character.

4.3.10 The implication of this statement is that villages which have seen a lot of expansion have lost much of their original character i.e. modern development changes the character of these villages.

4.3.11 The characteristic features of the Plateau Fringe are described as follows:

- An undulating topography of low rounded hills and narrow meandering river valleys.
- Large, arable fields, often with a poorly defined field pattern.

- Pockets of permanent pasture and smaller hedged fields, usually associated with more steeply sloping ground.
- A nucleated settlement pattern typically comprising loose clusters of dwellings.
- Isolated, brick built farmsteads.

4.3.12 The management strategy for this area is to *'Enhance the overall structure and key features within the farmed landscape.'*

4.3.13 The landscape of the site and its surroundings is considered to be relatively typical of the Plateau Fringe as a whole. Thurlaston is a historic village or hamlet which has seen a moderate amount of expansion, but still retains its historic settlement pattern and much of its original character. The land use in the surrounding landscape is dominated by permanent pasture and smaller hedged fields which are associated with steeply sloping ground, as described within the assessment. The topography of the area is characterised by steeply sloping ground which falls from the plateau towards the reservoir. Although some change has occurred at the site and in the wider area, the historic pattern of the landscape can still be read and is relatively intact.

4.3.14 The **Plateau Farmlands** landscape type is described as *'a simple, often heavily wooded, farmed landscape, typically confined to low plateau summits, and characterised by sandy soils and remnant heathy vegetation.'*

4.3.15 The characteristic features of the Plateau Farmlands are described as follows:

- A gently rolling topography of low glacial plateaux.
- An 'empty' landscape of former waste with few roads and little settlement.
- A regular geometric field pattern defined by closely cropped hawthorn hedges.
- Many mature hedgerow oaks.
- Large blocks of ancient woodland.
- An historic land use pattern reflected in the local abundance of 'heath' names.
- Remnant heathy vegetation in woodlands and roadside verges.

4.3.16 The management strategy for the Plateau Farmlands is to *'maintain and enhance the distinctive character of the landscape.'*

4.3.17 The map of Dunsmore also identifies areas which are enhancement zones. The landscape surrounding Thurlaston does not fall within an enhancement zone and this suggests that it does not require enhancement.

4.4 Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Study

4.4.1 The Landscape Assessment is a broad scale landscape assessment and sensitivity analysis of the Borough of Rugby. The study focused principally on the sensitivity of the landscape surrounding the town of Rugby, for use in the development planning process. In order to do this it was necessary to carry out a broad based assessment of the landscape within the Borough as a whole.

- 4.4.2 The study systematically divided the landscape of the borough into a series of Landscape Description Units (LDU) – a discrete tract of land defined by a distinct pattern of physical, biological and cultural attributes. The LDU analysis forms the basis for considering the relative sensitivity and capacity of different landscapes to accept change.
- 4.4.3 The site is located on the boundary of the Dunsmore Plateau Farmlands (Dpfa) LDU and the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe (Dpf) LDU. The boundary is drawn around the edge of the plateau and goes through the site. Thus the lower parts of the site are considered to form part of the Plateau Fringe. This reflects the characteristics of the site quite accurately. The site straddles the upper part of a minor valley which descends towards the reservoir, and the slopes within the site can be considered to form part of the plateau fringe. The site can be expected to exhibit some of the characteristics of each LDU.
- 4.4.4 The landscape sensitivity component assessed a number of different aspects of sensitivity.
- 4.4.5 The ‘landscape sensitivity - fragility of the inherent character’ combined natural and cultural sensitivity values to give an overall score. The overall fragility of both LDUs was assessed as moderate (Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby, Figure 1).
- 4.4.6 The ‘visual sensitivity’ measured the degree to which change is likely to cause a visual impact within a particular landscape. The visual sensitivity of the plateau farmland was assessed as low – meaning there is much potential to mitigate impact through woodland planting. The visual sensitivity of the plateau fringe however was assessed as high – meaning there is little opportunity to mitigate impact (Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby, Figure 2).
- 4.4.7 ‘Overall sensitivity,’ combines the fragility and visibility indices to give an overall sensitivity rating. The overall sensitivity of the Dunsmore Plateau Farmlands was assessed as Moderate while the overall sensitivity of the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe was assessed as High. In terms of the ‘potential for mitigation of Visual Impact,’ high sensitivity indicates that there is ‘little opportunity to mitigate impact’ while medium sensitivity indicates that there is ‘some potential to mitigate impact through tree and/or woodland planting’ (Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby, Figure 3).

Character of the site

- 4.4.8 Using the Warwickshire Landscape Assessment the site falls completely within the Plateau Fringe Landscape Type. The Rugby landscape assessment identifies the same character types, but with a more refined boundary. In this assessment part of the site falls within the Plateau Farmlands LDU and part of it falls within the Plateau Fringe LDU. This difference could be attributed to differences in the scale of mapping. In any case it is clear that the site lies near to the edge of the plateau in a transitional region. The site could be considered to display some of the characteristics of both character types.
- 4.4.9 The larger part of the site also lies outside the settlement boundary as defined within the local plan. This part of the site contains fields and woodland which have a rural character. These open areas, together with the native hedgerow on the site boundary, make an important contribution to the character of Biggin Hall Lane and the Conservation Area (as is recognised in the Conservation Area Appraisal). The western part of the site also contains a residential dwellings at Patricks Field which is set within a large garden with generous planting. This planting includes mature trees and shrubs,

and this portion of the site has a garden character. The eastern part of the site contains the nursing home which consists of historic buildings and a more recent extension. The areas immediately adjoining the home have a domestic quality which includes areas for parking, a terrace and areas of mown grass. The buildings are situated within fields and pastures which once formed part of a farm, though active agricultural use has now ceased. Whilst the buildings have been subsequently adapted and extended the grounds retain a countryside character.

Appraisal of the effects of the proposed development on landscape character

- 4.4.10 The proposed development would introduce up to 40 bungalows to the site as well as two ancillary buildings. Access to the site would be gained via the existing entrance. A shop and community building and creche/gym building would be situated in the north-eastern corner of the site and the proposed bungalows would be arranged across the western part of the site. These buildings would be accessed via new roads, and two parking spaces would be provided per dwelling. The existing character of the site has been described above. The introduction of development would give the site an urban character which would replace the existing areas of open space. The character of the site would completely change as it would take on the characteristics of an urban area. This would occur despite the retention of the boundary hedgerow and important trees within the site.
- 4.4.11 The current form of Thurlaston is based on a single historic street (Main Street) which intersects with various lanes and cul-de-sacs. The settlement has a compact, linear form. There is also a small cluster of isolated development at Biggin Hall Lane. The proposals would introduce development which would connect the main village with the isolated development at Biggin Hall Lane, resulting in a loss of separation. The development at the site would be noticeably deeper than any of the other developments which extend off Main Street. The development might even be considered to compromise the linear form of the settlement as it would create a large block of development to the west of Main Street.
- 4.4.12 The countryside also contributes to the setting of the village, particularly within the site where open ground offers a direct connection to the surrounding countryside. Open areas within the site are an important part of the character of the village, and the undeveloped land within the site allows for open views.
- 4.4.13 Biggin Hall Lane has a distinctive rural character (as described in the Conservation Area Appraisal) and offers views towards the surrounding countryside. The proposed development would replace undeveloped and open land with built development. These buildings would interrupt the visual connection between the village and the surrounding countryside, and the site would no longer contribute to the rural setting of the village, or the rural character of Biggin Hall Lane. Although the boundary hedgerow is proposed to be retained, Biggin Hall Lane would be flanked by development, which would inevitably change its character with views and glimpses of the clutter associated with residential development – including vehicles and garden paraphernalia such as washing lines, sheds, etc. Most of the site (except for the existing buildings) is dark at night. The proposed development would introduce sources of lighting which would have a detrimental effect on the character of the site and the lane at night time.
- 4.4.14 The proposed development would also influence the character of Public Footpath Thurlaston 310/1 which crosses part of the site. The introduction of bungalows and an access road would add

suburbanising features such as buildings, roads, parking, and associated garden paraphernalia. New buildings would also interrupt existing views to the open countryside beyond. At night-time, the current site is mostly dark. The development would introduce new light sources which would have a detrimental effect on the night-time environment across the whole site.

4.4.15 The effects on character can be summarised as follows:

- Introduction of new development leading to a change in character at the site. Introduction of suburbanising features such as buildings, roads, parking and associated garden paraphernalia.
- Introduction of lighting
- Loss of trees and woodland
- Change to the settlement form and connection of isolated development at Biggin Hall Lane with the main village
- Negative effect on the landscape setting of the village
- Negative effect on views which are noted within the Conservation Area Appraisal
- Change in the character of Biggin Hall Lane
- Change in the character of public footpath Thurlaston R310/1

4.4.16 The proposed development would therefore lead to a number of adverse effects on landscape character. In terms of potential for mitigation it would not be possible to effectively mitigate these effects, not least due to the extent and density of development which is required to accommodate the quantity of development proposed.

4.4.17 The potential effects on visual amenity are discussed in Section 5: Visual amenity.

5 Visual amenity

5.1.1 The visibility of the site is influenced by the surrounding buildings and vegetation within the wider landscape.

5.1.2 There are potential views from neighbouring properties within the village which overlook the site. These include views into the site from the rear elevation of properties in Moat Close for example. The nearby buildings do, however, limit longer distance views, such as those from points to the east of the village.

5.1.3 Views are available from the neighbouring streets as well as the public footpath which crosses the site. Main Street, Biggin Hall Lane, and Church Lane all have views of the site.

5.1.4 The proposed development extends westwards from Main Street to Biggin Hall Lane and the western edge of the site is exposed to the surrounding countryside. There are therefore potential views towards the site from the countryside to the north.

5.1.5 Longer-distance views from the west are interrupted by blocks of woodland. There are, however, potential longer-distance views from the south such as those from the permissive footpath which circles Draycote Water.

- 5.1.6 As set of ten representative viewpoints have been selected to describe the site’s visual context and to appraise the likely effects of the proposed redevelopment as experience by visual receptors (i.e. people) at these points. They are all publicly accessible in nature and encompass a variety of geographical locations at varying distances from the site.
- 5.1.7 The location of the representative viewpoints is shown on Figure 05 (Appendix 01), along with a set of annotated photographs illustrating the composition of the view from each of the representative viewpoints.
- 5.1.8 Table 5.1 includes details of each of the representative viewpoints, along with an appraisal of the effect that the proposed development would have on the composition of each view.

Table 5.1 Likely effects and possible mitigation

Sensitive landscape or visual receptor	Existing view	Likely effects
<p>View A View from Main Street, Thurlaston</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also representative of the view from private properties on Main Street including Stanleys Farm (Grade II listed). • The foreground of the view is formed by Main Street. This section of Main Street forms part of the historic core of the village. • One of the main features within the site which is visible is the historic brick wall on the site frontage. Converted buildings and a more modern extension at Thurlaston Meadows Care Home are also visible beyond the wall. • Views are available down Biggin Hall Lane towards the surrounding countryside. • The Old Forge (Grade II) is situated at the right-hand-side of the view. • The existing features within the view contribute considerably to the character of the Conservation Area and this view is therefore particularly sensitive to inappropriate development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed layout indicates that a shop and community building would be constructed in the north-eastern corner of the site. This building would be positioned just beyond the hedgerow on the site boundary. It would interrupt open views across the site to more distant trees. The proposal would introduce built form into what is currently a piece of undeveloped land extending to Main Street. It would compromise an open piece of land within the Conservation Area, and the connection between Main Street and the surrounding countryside would be interrupted by new buildings. • The degree of change within the view would be high and the effect would be adverse. • Other views from Main Street would be limited by the existing wall on the site frontage. • The proposed development would have a large adverse effect on the view.
<p>View B View from Biggin Hall Lane looking west (adjacent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified view within the Conservation Area Appraisal. • Views are available along Biggin Hall Lane to the surrounding countryside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A row of bungalows would be erected within the site parallel to Biggin Hall Lane. Although the hedge and existing mature tree would be retained the more distant block of woodland would be removed to make way for the

Sensitive landscape or visual receptor	Existing view	Likely effects
to the northern site boundary)	<p>This forms an important part of the setting of the Conservation Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggin Hall Lane has an attractive rural quality. • The lane is bound by native hedgerows. The hedgerow on the site frontage is dense and neatly maintained. There is currently little or no reference to built form within the view, despite the proximity of the village edge. • The land within the site has a rural character. Views are available over the native hedge on the site frontage to meadows and trees within the site. 	<p>bungalows. The development would result in the loss of a prominent block of woodland which is an important part of the current street scene. The new units would be close to the road, and domestic features such as parked cars, garden furniture etc. would further detract from the view.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposed cheche and gym building would be situated close to the site boundary on the other side of the hedgerow. A number of buildings would therefore be introduced which would give the site an urbanised character. In addition to the new buildings there would be visual clutter from garden features. • Retained vegetation might soften the visual effect of new buildings, but the visual character of the site would inevitably change as it would no longer be perceived as countryside. • The proposed development would have a large adverse effect on the view.
View C View from Biggin Hall Lane looking east (adjacent to the northern site boundary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified view within the Conservation Area Appraisal. • Views are available along Biggin Hall Lane to historic properties on Main Street. Stanleys Farm (Listed Grade II) and the Mill are both visible within the view. • The lane is bound by native hedgerows. The hedgerow on the site frontage is dense and neatly maintained. • The land within the site has a rural character. Undeveloped land within the site forms an important part of the landscape setting of the Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area. • The existing features within the view contribute considerably to the character of the Conservation Area and this view is therefore particularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed development would introduce new buildings just beyond the boundary hedgerow. These buildings would replace the existing undeveloped parcel of land. New buildings would be more prominent than the historic buildings and would obscure views to Stanleys Farm. • The introduction of buildings would cause the site to take on an urbanised appearance, and the new buildings would break the skyline. Domestic features such as parked cars, garden furniture etc. would further detract from the view. • The retained hedgerow on the site frontage would soften the visual effect of the new buildings, but the visual character of the site would nonetheless change. The introduction

Sensitive landscape or visual receptor	Existing view	Likely effects
	<p>sensitive to inappropriate development.</p>	<p>of new buildings would break the direct link between the surrounding countryside and the conservation area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development would have a large adverse effect on the view.
<p>View D View from Footpath Thurlaston R310/1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This footpath crosses the application site. Views from the easternmost section of the path are contained by vegetation. However, open views are available from the rest of the path. The view encompasses meadows in the foreground which from part of the site. The ground falls into a small hollow which contains a pond. The view also takes in a large garden that forms part of the site, and which includes ornamental planting. Looking southwards from the path the ground falls away towards Draycote Water. Views are available over fields towards the reservoir. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development would see the introduction of bungalows to the right and left of the path. The bungalows to the left-hand side of the path would interrupt views across the countryside towards Draycote Water. The bungalows to the right-hand side of the path would replace the existing meadows and private garden. This would give the site an urbanised appearance, which would change the character of the view. The new buildings would be seen in close proximity to the viewer and would completely change the view. Visual clutter associated with residential development – including vehicles and garden paraphernalia such as washing lines, sheds, etc would further affect the view. New buildings would also urbanise the setting of the existing pond. The proposed development would have a very large adverse effect on the view.
<p>View E View from Footpath Thurlaston R185/1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This relatively short path provides a link between Stocks Lane and Biggin Hall Lane. The path is situated on the edge of the plateau and within the countryside and there is a pastoral field in the foreground of the view. Views are available across a slight hollow into the site. The village is visible in the background of the view. The site has a rural character which consists of native trees and shrubs, a native hedge and meadows. The existing buildings within the site are also visible, but are not particularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development would introduce a collection of new buildings to the view including the proposed community shop, creche and bungalows. The buildings would replace open ground and woodland within the view. Although the intervening vegetation would provide some screening (during summer months) the new development would still be visible particularly in the northern part of the site. The proposed scheme would have a large effect on the character of the view as it would introduce a considerable amount of additional development in

Sensitive landscape or visual receptor	Existing view	Likely effects
	<p>prominent. These buildings are situated on the easternmost part of the site and are related to other buildings in the village. The site forms an important part of the rural setting of the village (and the Conservation Area).</p>	<p>close proximity to the receptor. An important block of woodland would also be lost within the view and replaced by development. New dwellings would also link the isolated development at Biggin Hall Lane with the main village. The proposed development would infringe on the landscape setting of listed buildings (Stanleys Farm and The Mill) and the Conservation Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development would have a substantial effect on the view and this effect would be adverse.
<p>View F View from Footpath Thurlaston R185a/1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The footpath follows the line of a neatly maintained hedgerow. Views are available over the hedge towards the village of Thurlaston. Views are also available over the intervening fields towards the site. Undeveloped portions of the site create a rural setting for the village. The existing trees within the site are a prominent part of the view. The isolated development at Biggin Hall Lane is not particularly visible. This reinforces the rural character of the views. Existing buildings in Thurlaston are visible in the background of the view. The buildings are contained within a framework of vegetation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development would introduce a collection of new buildings to the view including the proposed community shop, creche and bungalows. The buildings would replace open ground and woodland within the view. The intervening vegetation would provide some screening (during summer months) but buildings would still be visible. The proposed development would infringe on the landscape setting of listed buildings (Stanleys Farm and The Mill) and the Conservation Area. Development would detract from the landscape setting of the listed buildings and conservation area. The proposed development would have a moderately large adverse effect on the view.
<p>View G View from the A45/M45</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most views from the A45/M45 are contained by hedgerows which line the road. There is a relatively short gap in the vegetation which allows open views towards the site. The site is visible in the background of the view and is a relatively distant feature. Existing buildings within the site can be seen, as well as the existing woodland. Views of the site from moving vehicles would be relatively fleeting. The site would be more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The biggest change to the view would be the loss of woodland in the north-western corner of the site and replacement with bungalows. Bungalows would be partially screened by the intervening landform, but the upper portion of the new buildings would still be visible. These buildings would create a harsh urban edge which would replace existing woodland.

Sensitive landscape or visual receptor	Existing view	Likely effects
	<p>visible from taller vehicles such as lorries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The views from the road currently encompass countryside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development would affect a relatively small part of the view and views from moving vehicles would be fleeting. The effect on views from the A45/M45 would be relatively small, but nonetheless would insert urbanising elements into what is a relatively rural aspect from the road.
<p>View H View from Footpath Thurlaston R168d/1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From this viewpoint (and the public rights of way to the north) the build-up of intervening vegetation limits views towards the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any changes to views from this footpath and other public rights of way would be difficult to discern beyond the intervening vegetation.
<p>View I View from Church Lane</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The view from Church Lane extends along the lane, which is bound by a brick wall on one side and a hedge on the other. Views are held by the existing buildings at Thurlaston Meadows. Trees also help to contain the view in summer months. Views into the main body of the site are prevented by foreground features, including the wall on the site frontage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be no discernible change to views from Church Lane.
<p>View J View from permitted path around reservoir</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views from the path around the reservoir are heavily constrained by the existing hedge and other planting around the perimeter of the reservoir site. Biggin Hall is visible at the left hand side of the view. The site is situated behind and to the right of Biggin Hall, but views are obscured by intervening vegetation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any views of the new bungalows would be heavily filtered by the intervening vegetation and new buildings would be difficult to discern. The effect on the view would be small.
<p>View K Views from Hensborough Hill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The view northwards from Hensborough Hill is marked on the OS map as a viewpoint. This viewpoint offers views over Draycote Water and the surrounding countryside, including the Leam Valley. Views are available across the reservoir to Thurlaston which is situated on the opposite side of the reservoir. The village sits on the edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of new buildings would be heavily filtered by the intervening vegetation. Trees which are to be removed for development would be lost from the view; however, some of the existing trees would be retained within the site. The number of trees within the view would be reduced, but a framework of trees would still be

Sensitive landscape or visual receptor	Existing view	Likely effects
	<p>of the plateau. It is surrounded by undeveloped land which falls towards the water. The site is approximately 1.7km from the viewer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing buildings in Thurlaston are visible as is Biggin Hall. There is an expanse of undeveloped land between Biggin Hall and Thurlaston which contains the site. Views into the site are partially filtered by vegetation in the surrounding landscape. Trees within the site add to the mass of vegetation. 	<p>present, which would contain development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New buildings would be largely contained within a framework of vegetation (particularly during summer months) and the effect on the view would be relatively small.

6 Landscape-related designations

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 Landscape-related designations covering the site or within its environs, which may be affected or influenced by development at the site, are described below. See also Figure 02: Landscape-related designations.

6.2 Ancient Woodland

6.2.1 Ancient Woodland is formally defined by Natural England and comprises woodland that has existed continuously since 1600. Such woodland is likely to have developed naturally, since before that date the planting of woodlands was not commonplace.

6.2.2 The nearest Ancient Woodland is 6.37ha of Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland at Cawston Spinney which is located 1.4ha to the north of the site. Cawston Spinney is adjacent to another 3.8ha area of Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland at Boat House Spinney. There are a range of intervening features in the landscape which include hedgerows, road corridors and buildings. These features combined together prevent any intervisibility between the site and the ancient woodlands. The proposed development would not have any material effect on the setting of Ancient Woodlands.

6.3 Scheduled Monuments

6.3.1 Scheduled Monuments are nationally important monuments and sites. The aim of scheduling is to preserve sites and monuments as far as possible in the form in which they have come down to us today. They are legally protected through the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979.

6.3.2 The nearest Scheduled Monument is a *“Prehistoric pit alignment and associated features on Lawford Heath, adjacent to the northernmost Blue Boar Farm”* (List Entry Number 1020937), which is located 2.2km to the west of the site. The intervening landscape contains a range of features

which combined together prevent any intervisibility or intravisibility with the site. The proposed development would not have any material effect on the setting of Scheduled Monuments.

6.4 Listed Buildings

- 6.4.1 A Listed Building is a building or structure of special architectural or historic interest. Listed Buildings are protected by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 6.4.2 There are a number of listed buildings within the village of Thurlaston. The nearest listed buildings and the ones with potential inter-visibility/intra-visibility are:
- The Old Forge, Grade II, Main Street, cottage and former forge, C18, Flemish bond brick with thatched roof. The building lies at the intersection of Main Street and Biggin Hall Lane, directly opposite the site.
 - Stanleys Farmhouse, Grade II, Main Street, C18, with early C19 right wing and alterations and a small mid/late C19 rear range, Flemish bond brick with a tile roof. The building fronts onto the western side of Main Street and is directly opposite the site.
 - Pipewell Cottage, Pudding Bag Lane, Grade II, probably C15/C16 origins, with later alterations, one storey with attic. The property fronts onto Pudding Bag Lane but the side elevation and garden are visible from Main Street. Approximately 25m to the east of the site. The cottage is potentially visible together with the site in views from Main Street.
 - Church House, Church Lane, Grade II, 1849, built as a chapel-school, to be used as a school during the week and a church on Sunday, with schoolmaster's house attached. Approximately 100m to the east of the site. The listed building is potentially visible together with the site in views from Church Lane.
 - The Windmill, Church Lane, Grade II Windmill, converted to house. Late C18; converted 1970s. Approximately 80m to the east of the site. The windmill is separated from the site by properties on Main Street, but there is still some inter-visibility as The Windmill is a tall buildings.
- 6.4.3 The changes at the site would not be visible from Pipewell Cottage or Church House, or the nearby streets (Church Lane and Pudding Bag Lane). From these points the new development would be hidden by the intervening buildings, walls and vegetation.
- 6.4.4 The Old Forge lies directly opposite the site, as does Stanleys Farmhouse. The site is an important part of the existing landscape setting of The Old Forge. This building overlooks an area of open space within the site which retains its original agricultural character and links with the wider countryside. The proposed development would introduce new development in the vicinity of The Old Forge. This would urbanise the setting of the building considerably and would replace the existing open space and agricultural character. The Old Forge, Stanleys Farm, and the site are situated within the historic core of the village. New buildings would dilute the historic character of the village by introducing modern development. The changes in the setting of The Old Forge would be appreciable from Biggin Hall Lane and a short section of Main Street, as well as the building itself.
- 6.4.5 From the ground floor of Stanleys Farmhouse views would be limited by the wall on the site frontage, but views over the site would be available from upstairs windows. The site forms part of the landscape setting of the Listed Building. The proposed development would introduce a block of

development which would reduce the links with the surrounding countryside, but the perceived changes in the landscape setting would be limited by the wall on the site frontage. The site is, however, visible together with Stanleys Farmhouse and The Windmill in views from Biggin Hall Lane. The site currently contains a large expanse of open space which retains an agricultural character. This open space preserves the countryside setting of Stanleys Farm and the village in general, including The Windmill. The introduction of new development would have a direct impact on the existing countryside setting of these listed buildings as the site would take on an urbanised character. This would have an adverse effect on the setting of these buildings.

6.5 Conservation Areas

- 6.5.1 The concept of Conservation Areas was first introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967 in which local authorities were encouraged to determine which parts of their area could be defined as “*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. This was the first time that recognition was given to the architectural or historic interest not only of individual buildings, but also to groups of buildings, the relationship of one building to another, and the quality and character of the spaces between them.
- 6.5.2 The positive identification of areas under the designation of a Conservation Area helps focus attention on its qualities and encourages a sensitive approach to any proposed development. The Local Planning Authority will exercise particular care to ensure that change, where it occurs, will preserve or enhance the character of an area. The designation as a Conservation Area ensures that consideration is given to design quality and context and that new development respects its surroundings.
- 6.5.3 Thurlaston is a linear village and the Conservation Area is centred on Main Street. The Conservation Area boundary takes in the principal historical properties to either side of Main Street and includes part of the site. The landscape setting of the village is also important in establishing the character of the Conservation Area.
- 6.5.4 A Conservation Area Appraisal for Thurlaston has been published by Rugby Borough Council. The document is undated.
- 6.5.5 The principal objectives of the Thurlaston Conservation Area Appraisal are to:
- define and record the special interest of Thurlaston Conservation Area to ensure there is full understanding of what is worthy of preservation;
 - increase public awareness of the aims and objectives of Conservation Area designation and stimulate their involvement in the protection of its character and to inform decisions made by Rugby Borough Council, the Parish Council and local residents;
 - reassess current boundaries to make certain that they accurately reflect what is now perceived to be of special interest and that they are readable on the ground; and
 - assess the action that may be necessary to safeguard this special interest and put forward proposals for its enhancement.
- 6.5.6 The location and context of the village is described in the Conservation Area Appraisal as follows:

Thurlaston is a relatively small village set in countryside and as the form is broadly linear the presence of the surrounding countryside is often apparent. Agricultural land surrounds the settlement. The countryside permeates into the village from the northern approach and from the west along Biggin Hall Lane.

- 6.5.7 The Conservation Area Appraisal notes that the current condition of the buildings and the land within the Conservation Area is good, but that a number of development pressures exist:

The land and buildings within the Conservation Area are generally of good quality and well maintained. There is however potential for development pressure including infilling open spaces with new dwellings.

- 6.5.8 These development pressures could potentially dilute the special qualities of the Conservation Area. The general character and form of the village is described as follows:

Thurlaston is a relatively small settlement of linear form with Main Street being the central north to south spine. A number of lanes branch off Main Street with some historic development to the east and west. Modern cul-de-sacs mainly consisting of open plan development. Biggin Hall Lane, a narrow road surrounded by countryside, leads to sporadic development outside the village. The narrowness of the lanes provides a sense of enclosure which contrasts with the wide space of Main Street.

- 6.5.9 It is notable that Thurlaston is described as “a relatively small settlement of linear form.” Biggin Hall Lane is also explicitly described as “a narrow road surrounded by countryside.” Both of these features are sensitive to change.

- 6.5.10 The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies four character areas: the 1960s and later modern entrance to the village, the historic central core, the nursing home, and the area centring on Stanleys Farm. The *nursing home* character area describes the site.

- 6.5.11 The appraisal states that:

Landscaping is a dominant feature in the Conservation Area. The rural setting of the village is reflected within the village with mature trees, shrubs, hedges and grass verges. The result is a landscape-dominated character, with many views framed by a backdrop of mature trees.

- 6.5.12 The appraisal goes on to state that:

The Conservation Area is also defined by its historic buildings which include the church, small houses and the dominant Stanleys Farm which lies at the heart of the village.

- 6.5.13 The landscape setting of the Conservation Area is described as follows:

The village remains strongly linked to the countryside setting. From outside the village the landscaping prevents views of the majority of buildings, trees on the approach effectively screen the buildings. From Biggin Hall Lane views of buildings are limited other than the nursing home [Thurlaston Meadows Care Home]. From the southern end of the village the route of Main Street and the landscaped boundaries prevents clear views of many buildings. There is a close relationship between Main Street and the countryside on the western side since development is narrow and butts up to the highway. Along the eastern side of Main

Street there is greater depth to the settlement and therefore the surrounding countryside has less of an impact. [TLP emphasis]

6.5.14 The Appraisal also makes explicit reference to open spaces within the Conservation Area and the contribution which these spaces make to the character of the Conservation Area:

Open and undeveloped land forms part of the Conservation Area. Many of the buildings are served by relatively large gardens to the rear or side. The land forming Stanleys Farm is an extensive parcel of largely undeveloped space viewed from Main Street and Church Lane. The largest open space is around the nursing home [Thurlaston Meadows]. This land to the north and south of the complex provides a spacious setting, a dominant garden and agricultural feature within the Conservation Area. [TLP emphasis]

6.5.15 Five particular views are identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal. These include:

- *a view out of the Conservation Area into adjacent countryside.*

The view along Biggin Hall Lane looking west. This equates to Viewpoint B of the LVA. The site adjoins Biggin Hall Lane. The undeveloped land within the site contributes to the rural setting of the conservation area and creates a critical connection with the adjacent countryside. The rural setting is an important component of the character of the village. The view from Biggin Hall Lane is one of the key public routes where the connection with the adjacent countryside can be experienced.

- *a characteristic view of building as focal point looking towards Main Street.*

The view along Biggin Hall Lane looking east. This equates to Viewpoint C of the LVA. The site adjoins Biggin Hall Lane. The undeveloped land within the site contributes to the setting of the historic building on Main Street. The open space and vegetation within the site also contribute directly to the character of the view. Biggin Hall Lane retains a rural character due to the adjacent open space.

- *A view into the conservation area from the south.*

The view along Main Street looking north. The site is separated from the road by the intervening properties at Moat Close and Nut Coppice. Views into the site are limited by foreground features. This view has not been included within the LVA as its composition would not change.

Appraisal of the effects of the proposed development on the Conservation Area

6.5.16 The proposed development would have a direct effect on the character of the Conservation Area and its landscape setting. The eastern portion of the site falls within the Conservation Area boundary and the Conservation Area Appraisal explicitly mentions the contribution that the open space around the nursing home makes to the character of the Conservation Area. The linear form of the village is described within the Conservation Area Appraisal, and the importance of the landscape setting is also highlighted. Biggin Hall Lane is one of the main public routes from which the rural setting of the village can be appreciated, and the site plays an important role in views from lane, as it gives the view a rural character.

- 6.5.17 The proposed development would introduce new roads and buildings within the Conservation Area itself. The particular contribution of the open space within the site to the character of the Conservation Area would be lost as a result of the introduction of new development, which would give the site an urbanised character. Whilst the existing boundary hedgerow would be retained this would not offset the fundamental change in character experienced within the site.
- 6.5.18 In terms of the settlement form *“Thurlaston is a relatively small village set in countryside and as the form is broadly linear the presence of the surrounding countryside is often apparent.”* The proposed development would extend westwards from Main Street which would dilute the linear character of the settlement. The development of the site would inevitably make the surrounding countryside less apparent.
- 6.5.19 The landscape setting of the Conservation Area is explicitly mentioned in the Conservation Area Appraisal: *“The village remains strongly linked to the countryside setting.”* The proposal would interpose a block of modern development between the historic core of the village on Main Street and the surrounding countryside, which would interrupt this link.
- 6.5.20 The new development (including the shop and community building and the creche/gym building) would interrupt views towards historic buildings on Main Street, which would have a negative effect on the character of the Conservation Area (as illustrated by Viewpoint C). The new development would also infringe on views out from the Conservation Area to the surrounding countryside such as the view from Biggin Hall Lane identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal (as illustrated by Viewpoint B). The proposal would introduce a line of bungalows parallel to Biggin Hall Lane. These buildings would replace the existing views across open meadows within the site which have an attractive rural quality. The proposal would change the character of the view by introducing built form, meaning that the site itself would no longer contribute to the rural setting of the Conservation Area. The remaining view to the countryside would be much narrower, focused on the lane itself and the land to the north of the lane.
- 6.5.21 In summary, the proposed development would have a large adverse effect on the character of the Conservation Area itself, while development would also infringe on the rural setting of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, the new buildings would have a large negative effect on two of views which are identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

6.6 Registered Parks and Gardens

- 6.6.1 The Historic England 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England', currently identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of particular significance. The main purpose of the register is to celebrate designed landscape of note and encourage appropriate protection. Registration is a material consideration in the planning process, meaning that planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development on these landscapes' special character.
- 6.6.2 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens in the immediate vicinity of the site but there are two such sites in the wider study area. Dunchurch Lodge (Grade II) features early C20 gardens and pleasure grounds laid out by Thomas H Mawson to accompany an early C20 country house. Dunchurch Lodge is located 2.1km to the east of the site. Bilton Grange (Grade II) consists of mid-Victorian gardens and pleasure grounds set in a small park accompanying a country house designed

by AWN Pugin, together with a walled garden to Pugin's design. Bilton Grange is located 2.0km to the east of the site. Both Registered Parks and Gardens are separated from the site by intervening development and countryside and the proposed development would not have any effect on their landscape setting.

6.7 Public Rights of Way

6.7.1 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are designated routes accessible year-round to the public. These include public footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways, and byways open to all traffic (BOATs).

6.7.2 Part of public footpath Thurlaston R310/1 crosses the site.

6.7.3 There are also a number of public rights of way in the wider landscape beyond the site boundary:

- Thurlaston R185/1 leading north-eastwards from Biggin Hall Lane to connect with Stocks Lane
- Thurlaston R185a/1 leading north-westwards from Stocks Lane to end at the A45 Coventry Road
- Thurlaston R168d/1 leads northwards from Coventry Road to meet Thurlaston R168/3
- Thurlaston R337/1 forms an eastward continuation of Church Walk
- Thurlaston R175x/1 and Thurlaston R175y/1 continue north-eastwards from Church Lane through open countryside to the east of the village. The path then crosses beneath the M45 and continues to the north as Dunchurch R175.
- Thurlaston R175a is a bridleway which begins from the eastern edge of the village and travels eastwards to end at Toft Lane.
- Thurlaston R235b/2 leads eastward from Thurlaston, descends towards Draycote Water, and follows a route around part of the reservoir.
- Thurlaston R183b/1 leads westwards from Biggin Hall Lane, initially across fields, and then across the Whiteside Golf Course.
- Thurlaston R1844/1 continues westwards from the end of Biggin Hall Lane across open countryside.

6.7.4 Part of public footpath Thurlaston R310/1 crosses the site. The planning statement says that the development would “*improve the quality and quantity of green infrastructure networks and protect and enhance physical access, including public rights of way to open space.*” There are however no further details of how the public footpath would be accommodated within the proposed development.

6.7.5 The public footpath would pass between two of the new bungalows and would also cross a new access road. It is assumed that the path would be retained on the same alignment, but the site would take on a more urbanised character, which would alter the experience of footpath users. New buildings would partially interrupt views southwards from the path towards the surrounding countryside and Draycote Water. New buildings would be seen in close proximity to the viewer and would completely change the view. Visual clutter associated with residential development – including vehicles and garden paraphernalia such as washing lines, sheds, etc. would further affect the view. The effect on views from the path is described in more detail in Section 5 – Visual Amenity.