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1 Introduction and Site Context

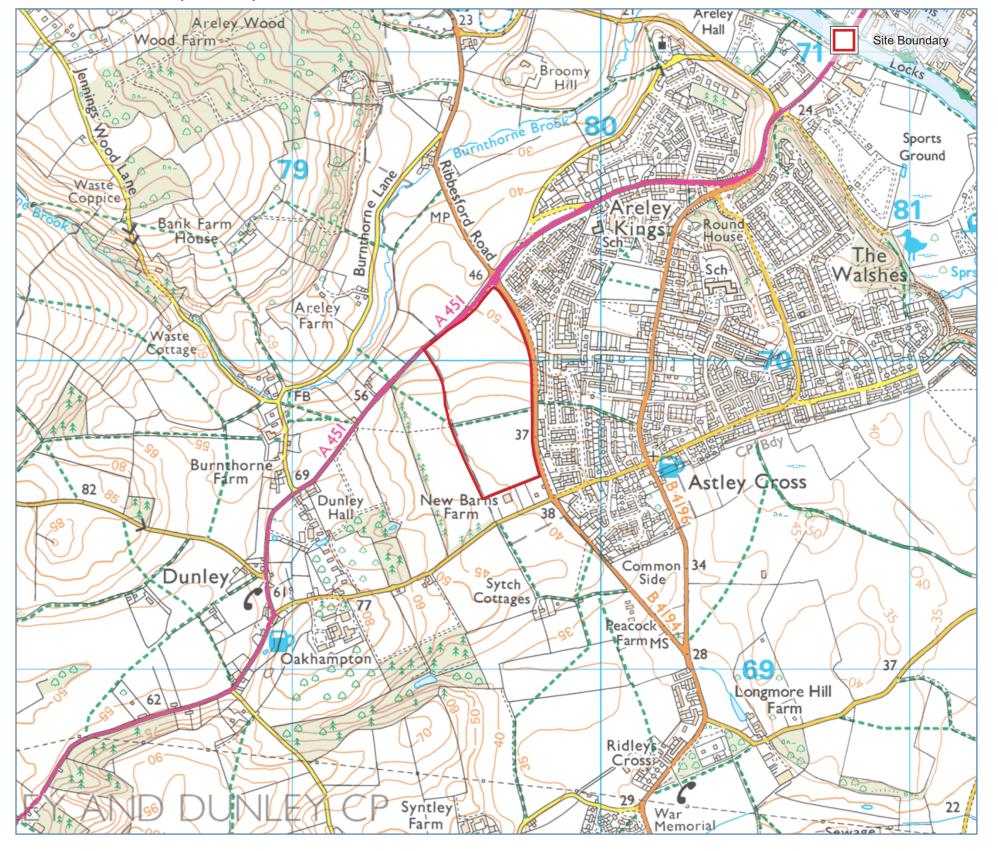
Background

1.1 Tyler Grange have been appointed by Barratt West Midlands to provide landscape consultancy services in relation to the planning application for the development of up to 331 dwellings on land at Pearl Lane, Sourport-on-Severn.

Site Context

- 1.2 The site location and its surroundings are illustrated on **Plan 1**: **Site Location.**
- 1.3 The site is located within the parish of Dunley, on the western settlement edge of Astley Cross, and within the administrative boundaries of the Wyre Forest District.
- 1.4 The western edge of Stourport-on-Severn and the site area sit within an area of rolling topography, that rises from the lower lying land adjacent to the River Severn, forming a crescent shaped bowl of rolling hills to the north, west and south. The landform across the site slopes up from 40m AOD in the south to 50m AOD in the north where it forms a plateau for much of the northern area.
- 1.5 The topography and rising landform across the site generally reflects that to the east upon which the adjacent settlement edge is built. To the southwest of the site, the land begins to slope up again towards the hillside beyond.
- 1.6 The site covers approximately 15.07 hectares of arable fields surrounded on all four sides by native hedgerows and a 5-10m wide tree belt comprising predominantly semi-mature Silver Birch and Scots Pine. An established hedgerow including scattered mature Oak trees delineate the remnant field pattern across the site. There are also portions of metal estate fencing remaining on site following sections of the field boundaries. A single free standing oak tree is situated within a field to the south of the site.

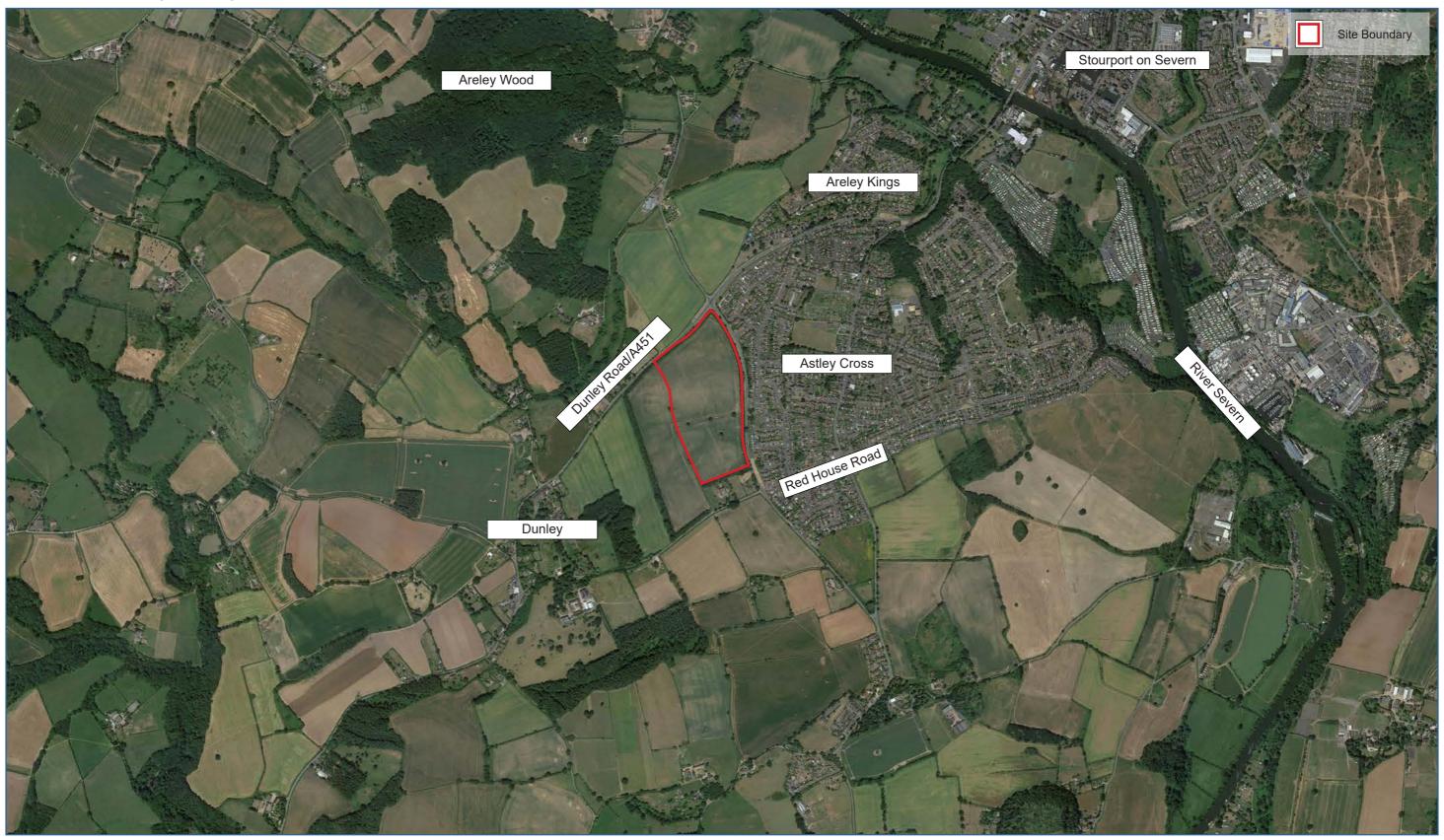
Plan 1: Site Location (2469/P09)





1 Introduction and Site Context

Plan 2: Site Context (2469/P10)





1 Introduction and Site Context

Methodology

- 1.7 This report has been undertaken in accordance with the following guidance:
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, 2014; and
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment(GLVIA), Third Edition, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013.
- 1.8 This is a standalone report and does not constitute a landscape chapter in the context of an Environmental Statement (ES) required by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 1.9 Table 3.1 of the GLVIA3 outlines what is required in this type of appraisal report, as a project outside of an EIA. This includes the following:
 - Establish the existing nature of the landscape and visual environment in the study area;
 - Provides a description of the proposed development, identifying the main features of the proposals and the changes that will occur: and
 - Systematically identifies and describes the effects that are likely to occur, including whether they are adverse or beneficial.
- 1.10 The approach taken in the preparation of this report is considered to be appropriate and proportional in the context of the professional guidance published by the Landscape Institute.
- 1.11 Professional judgement plays an important role in the landscape and visual analysis process where the analysis of landscape character and visual amenity is both a subjective and objective process. However, the analysis process seeks to provide a narrative to explain the judgement reached.



National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)

- 2.1 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan making the presumption requires plans to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of an area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change. Footnote 6 identifies protected areas or assets of particular importance including:
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
 - Green Belt:
 - · Local Green Space;
 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);
 - National Parks:
 - · Irreplaceable Habitats;
 - · Heritage Coasts;
 - · Designated Heritage Assets; and
 - Areas at Risk of Flooding or Coastal Erosion.
- 2.2 Paragraph 12 of the NPPF clarifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Furthermore, it confirms that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.
- 2.3 The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, as stated at paragraph 124.
- 2.4 Paragraph 127 seeks to ensure that developments:

"Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, just not for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users"

2.5 Paragraph 170 requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by fulfilling criteria including amongst others:

"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);

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."

National Planning Practice Guidance

2.6 The NPPG considers that the creation of new residential neighbourhoods can, through sensitive design, be deemed acceptable even where it results in a loss of open countryside. Those categories within the NPPG that are of particular relevance to landscape and visual matters in relation to this site are set out below.

<u>Design</u>

2.7 The NPPG emphasises the need for development to be integrated with its surrounding context, reinforces local distinctiveness, reduces impacts on nature and sense of place, and considers views into and out of sites. This includes the use of local building forms and ensuring that development reflects the layout, scale, pattern and materials within new development.

At paragraph 007 Reference ID: 26-007-20140306, it states:

"planning should promote local character (including landscape setting). Development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of developments, local man-made and natural heritage and culture, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation".

2.8 The use of high quality hard and soft landscape design to help successfully integrate development into the wider environment is also emphasised as being important to consider from the outset, in order to ensure that proposals improve the overall quality of the townscape and landscape.

Green Infrastructure

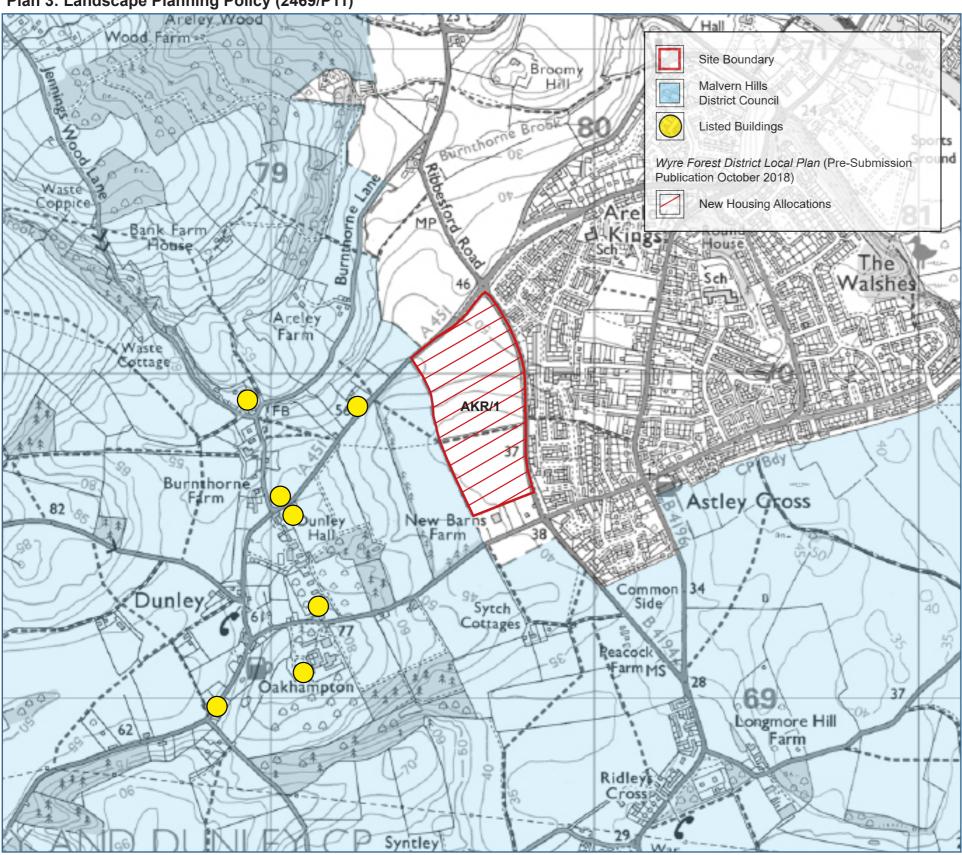
- 2.9 The NPPG highlights the multifaceted benefits provided through the provision of Green Infrastructure, including but not limited to: "enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk" (Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 8-005-20190721).
- 2.10 Moreover, the NPPG recognises how green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can thus be used to reinforce and enhance local landscape character and contribute to a sense of place.

Landscape

- 2.11 The NPPG makes reference to the National Planning Policy Framework, stating: "it is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes" (Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721).
- 2.12 It is therefore emphasised that the cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully, whereby proposals should "avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary" (Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721).



Plan 3: Landscape Planning Policy (2469/P11)



Local Planning Policy Context

2.13 The relevant local planning policy for the site is as follows:

Wyre Forest District Adopted Core Strategy (Adopted December 2010)

2.14 The Core Strategy sets out the broad strategy and vision for development within the District and forms part of the Local Development Framework.

Policy CP12: Landscape Character

2.15 "New development must protect and where possible enhance the unique character of the landscape including the individual settlement or hamlet within which it is located. Opportunities for landscape gain will be sought alongside all new development, such that landscape character is strengthened and enhanced".

Policy CP13: Providing a Green Infrastructure Network

- 2.16 The policy outlines the need for Green infrastructure to be carefully planned into all new developments from the outset:
 - "The existing green infrastructure network within the District, as set out within the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy, will be safeguarded.'
 - 'New development will be required to contribute positively towards the District's green infrastructure network.'

Wyre Forest District Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan 2006-2026 (July 2013)

2.17 This document sits alongside the Core Strategy in the Local Development Framework and sets out areas of land to deliver major development such as housing, in order to fulfil the requirements described in the Core Strategy.

Policy SAL.UP9: Landscaping and Boundary Treatment

2.18 This policy states that new Landscape Schemes must consider. amongst other things, 'the Landscape Character Assessment and protect any existing trees and distinctive landscape features where possible. "Boundary treatments should also 'reflect the local character and appearance of the area and protect existing trees or distinct landscape features".



Wyre Forest District Council Green Infrastructure Strategy (October 2012)

- 2.19 This document provides a strategic vision for the district's green infrastructure. Within the vision, it states that 'Stourport-on-Severn will be enhanced to provide strong linkages between open spaces along the riverside and around the canal basins.' The document also sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of green infrastructure provision. Those of relevance to the site are as follows:
 - Seek to retain mature trees where appropriate
 - Provide appropriate pedestrian and cycle access to the existing green infrastructure network in order to encourage active recreation and travel
 - Provide opportunities for wildlife and biodiversity incorporating appropriate soft landscaping and features which act as green stepping stones

Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Review 2016-2034 (Pre-Submission Publication October 2018)

- 2.20 Importantly, the upcoming Local Plan has allocated the site for residential development as it provides an 'opportunity to deliver a high quality residential development with significant areas of landscaping'.
- 2.21 In accordance with **Policy 33.5 Pearl Lane AKR/14**, development will be expected to do the following:
 - "Access to be taken from Pearl Lane
 - Additional boundary tree planting will be required along northern, western and southern boundaries in particular to reduce the impact on the rural landscape and screen the development from the A451 and Redhouse Lane
 - Development should be sympathetic to the setting of the historic buildings in Dunley, especially Dunley Hall
 - There is an opportunity to design an area of open space in the northern part of the site to buffer the setting of Dunley and potentially conserve significant archaeology in situ
 - A 10m buffer will be required alongside the Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct which runs north to south through the site
 - The potential to open up the spring fed culverted watercourse which runs west to east to provide biodiversity benefit should be investigated. A public footpath also runs alongside

- the watercourse and this should be further buffered from development to maintain the views out into the wider rural landscape
- No additional discharge must be made from the development as there are issues of surface water flooding on the estate opposite. This should be dealt with on site by SuDS and integrated into the wider green infrastructure provision
- New development should front onto Pearl Lane to help merge the new development with the existing urban edge"
- 2.22 A number of new policies are included within the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan Review, with the following of relevance to Landscape and Visual purposes:
 - Policy 6B Locating New Development
 - Policy 11A Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness
 - Policy 11C Landscape Character
 - Policy 27A Quality Design and Distinctiveness
 - Policy 27C Landscape and Boundary Treatment
- 2.23 To summarise the main points of the above policies, they describe how 'High quality design' and 'Creating and reinforcing local distinctiveness' is a requirement for new development, as well as meeting the requirements within the local character assessments.
- 2.24 In relation to Landscape Character, it mentions that 'New development must protect and where possible enhance the unique character of the landscape including the individual settlement or hamlet within which it is located. Opportunities for landscape gain will be sought alongside all new development, in order that landscape character is strengthened and enhanced.'
- 2.25 It states how landscape schemes must demonstrate that they:
 - · 'Predominantly use local native species;
 - Take into consideration the Landscape Character Assessment, protecting existing trees and landscape features where possible; and
 - Provide imaginative, durable and porous hard landscaping solutions which add to a sense of place and local distinctiveness...'
- 2.26 It goes on to mention how boundary treatments must be

designed to:

- 'Reflect the local character and appearance of the area and protect existing tree or distinct landscape features; and
- Include vegetation wherever possible
- Ensure a clear definition between public and private spaces".

Design Guidance (June 2015)

- 2.27 The aim of this Supplementary Planning Document is to provide detailed advice on Wyre Forest District Council's expectations for the delivery of high quality development. The SPD sets out how the District Council's design policies should be interpreted.
- 2.28 Namely, with regard to Landscape the SPD sets out the following principles which should inform any Residential Development:
 - "Appeal to a wide range of users
 - Relate to the surrounding character of the area
 - Link into a wider network of green spaces
 - Form a focal point for residents
 - Be safe, attractive and easily accessible for all physical abilities
 - Not be designed as an addition but integrated into the design from the beginning
 - Integrate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to include landscape features such as ponds and swales to enrich the landscape and enhance biodiversity and ecology through wetland habitats
 - Survey and retain existing landscape features of value including trees, hedges, woodland, ditches, ponds, grassland and verges. Retaining these features helps to enhance new development in a cost effective way, creating a sense of place
 - Use Communal Gardens at existing water features and canals as part of the design, enhancing them to encourage leisure use and improve access
 - Car parks should not be central to a design. Pocket parks can be fitted into the smallest spaces, breaking up car parking schemes and other vast expanses of hard surfaces."



Policy Requirements for the Development:

- The upcoming Local Plan has allocated the site for residential development.
- Development will be required to protect and enhance the unique character of the landscape and any of its distinctive features; taking into consideration the Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment (2011) (Policy CP12, SAL.UP9, 11C and 11A);
- Proposals should contribute positively towards the districts Green Infrastructure Network (Policy CP13, 27C, and in line with the Wyre Forest District Council Green Infrastructure Strategy);
- Furthermore, boundary treatments should be cohesive with the local character and appearance of the area (Policy SAL. UP9, 27C and 11A);
- The upcoming Local Plan (Pre-submission October 2018) offers a robust set of Landscape and Visual interventions for proposals of the site to adhere to (refer to Paragraph 2.20) (Policy 33.5)
- Adhere to the principles put forward in the Design Guidance SPD.



Landscape Character and Visual Baseline

3.1 The Landscape and visual baseline describes the site specific landscape character and sets this within the context of the published landscape character assessments and the landscape planning context. This forms the baseline against which the proposals and their potential impacts, in both landscape and visual terms are considered.

Landscape Character

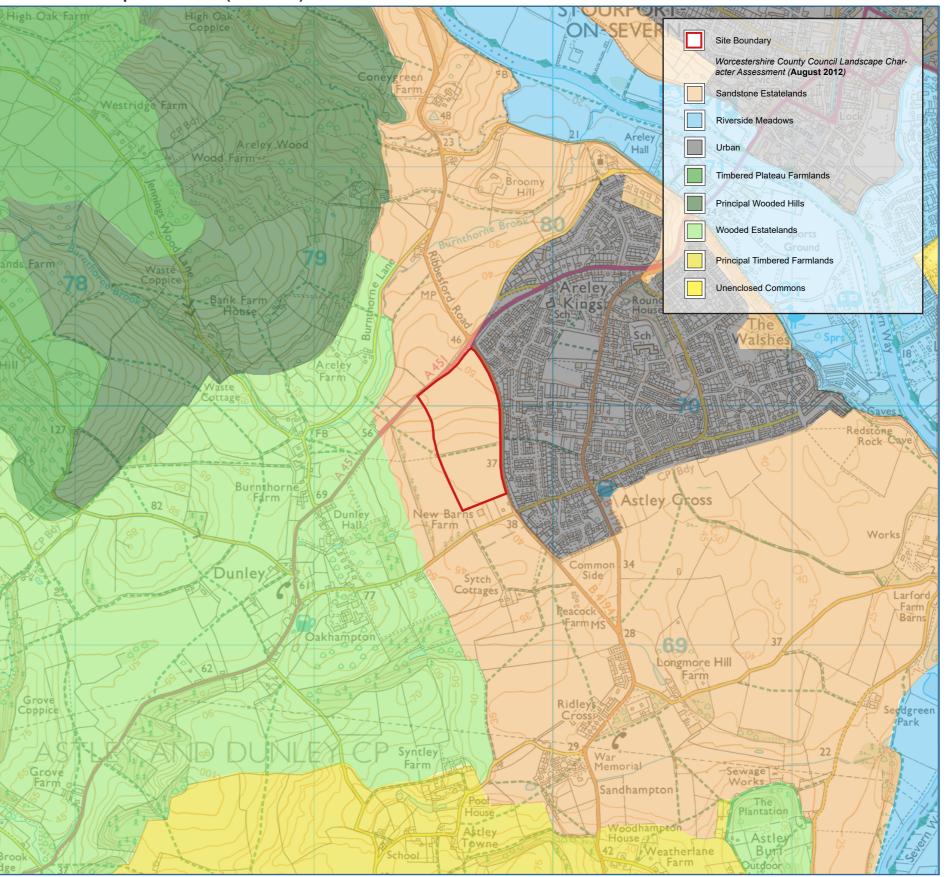
- 3.2 The characterisation process is a non-value judgement process; therefore, classifying landscapes into distinct areas does not suggest that one character area is more sensitive than another or valued by people more or less.
- 3.3 The landscape character appraisal process reviews the wider landscape character type at a national level, explores more detailed character features at a district/local level and analyses site-specific land use that informs local distinctiveness and sense of place.
- 3.4 This landscape and visual appraisal considers the local, site specific character features and context as identified by Tyler Grange Group Ltd through fieldwork, and informed by a review of published assessments. From this baseline information the relevant site features can be retained in order to identify detracting features that need to be addressed within the proposals.

Regional Character

Sandstone Estatelands

- 3.5 At a regional level, the site is covered by the Regional Landscape Character Area: Kinver Sandlands, as described within the Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment 2011. The Character Area encompasses many landscape character types but of relevance to the site is the Sandstone Estatelands (see Plan 4: Landscape Character).
- 3.6 The key characteristics of the Sandstone Estatelands which are relevant to the site include the following:
 - Arable land use:
 - Hedgerow boundaries to fields;
 - Planned enclosure pattern straight roads and field boundaries;
 - · Woodland pattern of discrete blocks;
 - Planned woodland character estate plantations and groups of trees;

Plan 4: Landscape Character (2469/P12)





- Large-scale landscape with wide views over open farmland;
- Dispersed pattern of isolated farmsteads and scattered wayside dwellings;
- Discrete settlement clusters often in the form of small estate villages; and
- Rolling topography with occasional low escarpment.
- 3.7 The associated landscape guidelines for the ongoing management of this Landscape Character Type include:
 - Conserve and restore the distinctive hedgerow pattern with priority given to primary hedgerows;
 - Identify opportunities for further large scale planting of woodlands and tree belts to strengthen the regular patterns of the landscape;
 - Conserve and restore parklands;
 - · Conserve the integrity of estate villages;
 - Promote the creation and appropriate management of natural vegetation communities along highways and other non-farmed areas; and
 - Promote the development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit.

Areley Kings Sandstone Estatelands

- 3.8 The Landscape Character Assessment for Worcestershire also defines areas at a more local scale in terms of Landscape Description Units or Land Cover Parcels. The site is situated within the Landscape Description Unit: Areley Kings Sandstone Estatelands which is described as:
 - 'An area of ...rolling lowland topography. The land use is arable with a tree cover comprising thinly scattered hedgerow and streamside trees, together with tree groups associated with settlement. Farmsteads and strings of wayside dwellings characterise the settlement pattern, associated with a moderate to high level of dispersal and a small to medium scale field pattern.'
- 3.9 The condition of the landscape, as of 2008, was reported as:
 - "High intensity cropping with a fragmented field pattern
 - Poor condition boundaries

 Localised high impact of urban development at Areley Kings and Astley."

Site Specific Character

- 3.10 The site shares some of the characteristics of the Sandstone Estatelands, most notably its arable land use and undulating topography as well as the hedgerows forming the site boundaries. However, the site's location adjacent to the residential development of Areley Kings and Astley Cross, together with the influence of the nearby A451 that runs along the northern boundary, gives the site a more transitional periurban character.
- 3.11 The bowl-like topography is a distinctive feature of the local landscape and the site area. The landform creates a sense of openness in the northern portion of the site on the plateau area. The landform slopes up and around to the north and west from the south east area of the site, which adds to the sense of enclosure in the south provided by the existing vegetation along the site boundary (Image 1).
- 3.12 Within the site boundary, the medium to large scale fields have an open appearance due to only a small number of mature oak trees being located along field boundaries (see **Image 2**). There is also a single free standing oak within the medium scale field in the south east. The site is bordered by semi-mature trees approximately 8-12 metres in height which provide a sense of enclosure for the lower, southern area of the site (**Image 4**).
- 3.13 The large areas of mature woodland and farmsteads scattered amongst arable land to the north and west of the site, including the block of woodland on the hillside to the southwest are prevalent within the surrounding landscape character. This, together with the large amount of tree planting throughout the neighbouring development, places the site within a well-wooded context.
- 3.14 To the east, the site is edged by predominantly two storey residential development along Pearl Lane with buildings orientated with both gable ends and rear elevations facing the site along Pearl Lane (as illustrated in **Image 5**). Some single storey properties are located on the edge of the settlement such as those around the Pearl Lane junction onto the A451 in the north. Development is arranged in a regular grid pattern and is stepped to follow the natural landform of the area. The back gardens of the properties adjoining Pearl Lane are set back from the road by a grassed verge, which is supplemented in places by tree planting. This provides the existing development with a soft

- edge and creates a sense of separation with the site
- 3.15 The linear arrangement of existing housing on the rising land creates a developed skyline, when seen from the Public Rights of Way within the site. The Roundhouse, a 19th Century windmill that has been converted into a residential dwelling is located within Areley Kings on the higher ground less than a kilometre to the east of the site and forms a local landmark in these views. Whilst forming a local feature on the skyline of Areley Kings, the roundhouse and views towards it are not identified within published landscape assessments, guidance documents or the Areley Kings Conservation Area Character appraisal as being of particular importance or significance.
- 3.16 Although separated from the built edge, the existing development on the rolling land to the east places the site within the built edge context, contained within the rolling topography and woodland of the local landscape.
- 3.17 When approaching Stourport-on-Severn from the south on the B4194, the built edge to the southeast forms a distinct edge with the open fieldscape and creates a gateway to the settlement. When approaching from the west on the A451, tree belts along the site boundary screen views towards the built edge, with the entrance to the town perceived at the junction with Pearl Lane to the northeast of the site.
- 3.18 The illustrated images overleaf depict some of the key characteristics outlined above.







Image 2: A line of mature Oak trees run along a field boundary to the south.

Image 1: The site has an undulating topography whereby it rises from south east to north west, creating a sense of enclosure to the south.



Image 3: To the west the site is edged by a lineal arable field. A substantial belt of tree planting borders this field, serving as a robust physical and visual barrier.



Image 4: The site is contained to the south by semi-mature tree planting.



Image 5: The sites location adjacent to Astley Cross' settlement edge places it within a urban fringe context.



Image 6: The site is bounded to the east by tree and hedge planting adjacent to Pearl Lane.



Landscape Character Conclusion

Overall the site is largely characteristic of the Sandstone
 Estatelands with its arable land use, undulating topography and
 hedgerows forming the sites boundaries. However, the site is also
 strongly influenced by its relationship with Areley Kings and Astley
 Cross' settlement edge which serves to set the site within an urban
 fringe context.

Key characteristics to retain:

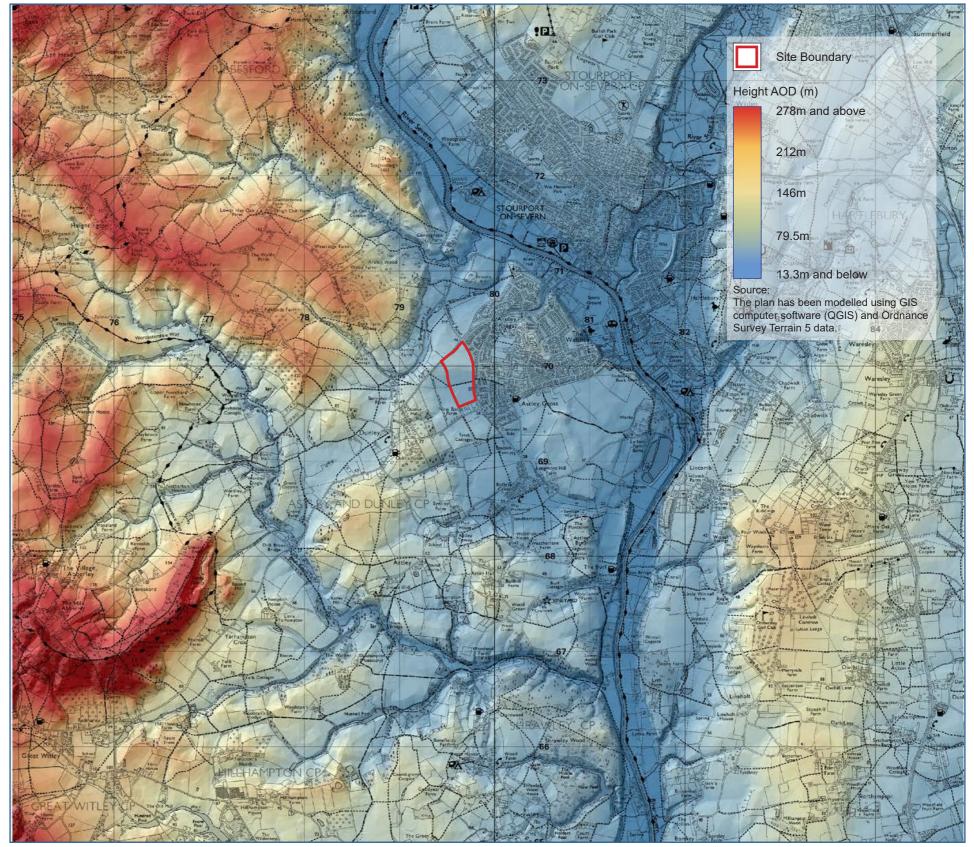
- The site is contained by robust belts of tree planting which provide both physical and visual enclosure;
- The site contains a small number of free standing oak trees which serve as distinguishable landscape features;
- The site has a rolling topography which is typical of the character area, and allows for views towards the wooded skyline to the south; and
- A PRoW runs through the site from east to west, however is presently inaccessible due to overgrown and unmaintained rapeseed crop.



Visual Context and Visual Receptors

- 3.19 In order to establish the degree of any change that may arise from future development on site and the extent to which such changes will affect identified local receptors, it is important to understand the existing situation in terms of visual amenity alongside the availability and context of views associated with the local area. Chapter 6 of the GLVIA3 sets out how the visual baseline is established. The baseline should establish the area in which the proposed development may be visible, those people who may experience views of the development, the key viewpoints representative of affected views and the nature of the views at the viewpoints.
- 3.20 The visibility of the site considers representative views towards it from the surrounding area. This is based on the findings of topographical mapping (Plan 5: Topography) and Geographic Information System (GIS) first sieve analysis mapping (Plan 6: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and has been refined and verified through field assessment.
- 3.21 The software generated image illustrates the extent to which development of up to 8m high on the site would be potentially visible within a 5km radius to a 1.6m high receptor. The calculation is based on Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 data only, and does not take into account built form or vegetation present within the landscape. The Theoretical Zone of Visual Influence (ZTV) generated for the proposed development on the site development clearly identifies the influence of the topography in limiting views.
- 3.22 Given the local landform and the dense woodland vegetation in the areas surrounding the site, the ZTV indicates a considerably greater area than in reality. The influence of built form and vegetation, including the dense vegetated site boundaries serve to limit inter-visibility.
- 3.23 This first sieve exercise has been verified in the field to take into account any significant vegetation or built form which further restricts or limits the extent of visibility. Following the completion of a visit to the site, a number of representative viewpoints have been included that illustrate the approximate extent of areas from which the site is visible. These are illustrated further below. In accordance with GLVIA3, the visual analysis is based on views from external spaces within the public domain excluding barely discernible views and not from inside buildings or private spaces. However, where notable views from private properties are possible, these have been considered where relevant.

Plan 5: Topography (2469/P13)



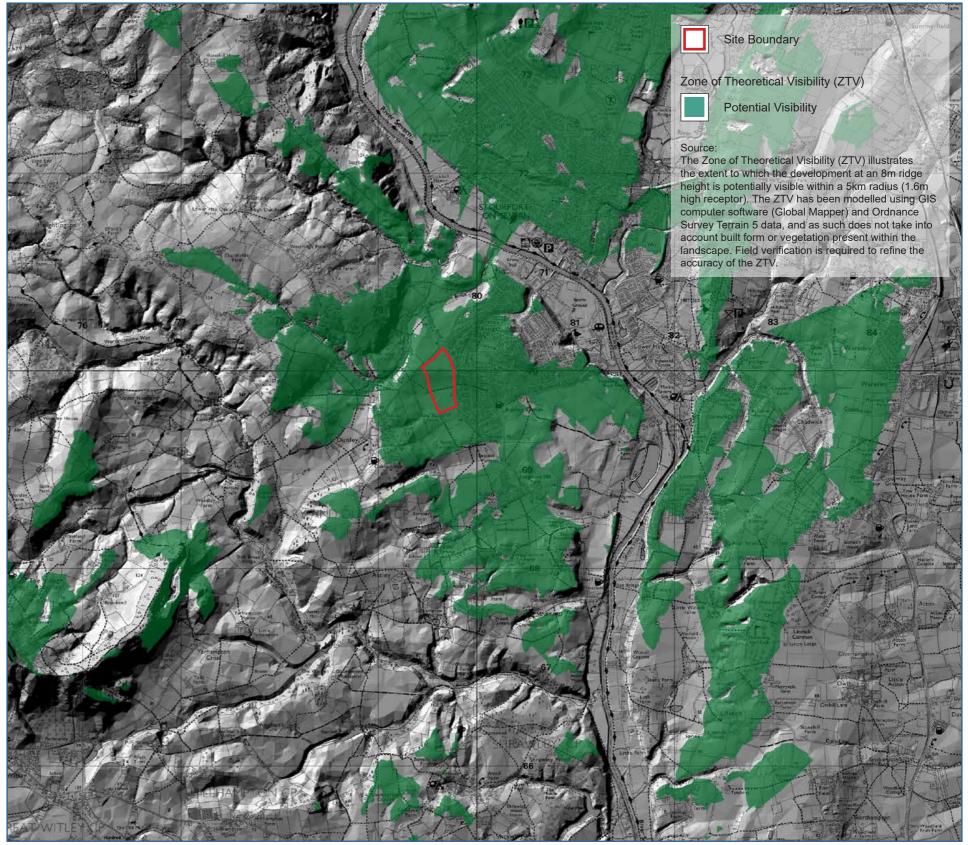


- 3.24 Photographs were taken from selected viewpoints with a digital camera with an equivalent 50mm focal length lens at eye level (approximately 1600mm above ground). A total of 10 representative viewpoints have been chosen from locations surrounding the site to enable the effects of the development to be assessed from all directions (see **Photoviewpoints 1-10**).
- 3.25 The photographs were taken in May and June 2019 when the trees and hedgerows were coming into leaf, however consideration has been made to visibility during the winter months.
- 3.26 Whilst the views are chosen to be representative of the area, they cannot provide continuous coverage of all potential locations within the vicinity of the development. Often, views will occur as a sequence within the surrounding environment, with the most significant views assessed further within this report.
- 3.27 Likewise, where transient or fleeting views are possible, these will also be assessed as part of the report.

Extent of Views

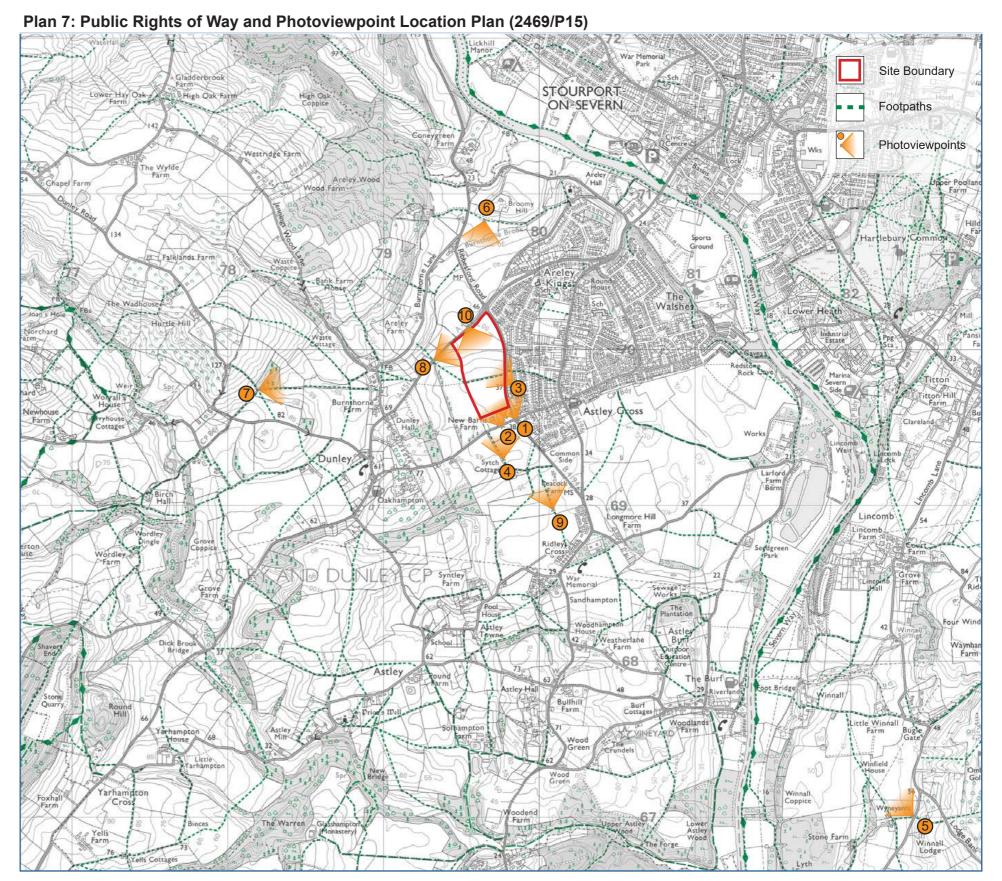
- 3.28 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility suggests that the site will be visible as far north as Stourport, approximately 2km away. However in reality views of the site from this location, and in Stourport in general, are obstructed by Stourport's built form.
- 3.29 To the east, the ZTV suggests the site is visible from Waresley yet in reality the visibility of the site is considerably more localised due to the existing built edge of Areley Kings and Astley Cross.
- 3.30 Visibility of the site from the south is theoretically limited to as far as Astley. Views further south are obstructed by intervening topography.
- 3.31 To the west, the ZTV suggests the site is visible as far as footpaths 152C, 509C and 510C.
- 3.32 The actual extent of visibility of the site is described below, with reference to the representative Photoviewpoints from within the public realm. The location of these are illustrated on Plan 8: Public Rights of Way and Photoviewpoint Location Plan. The views from each of these locations are also included within this section of the report.

Plan 6: GIS Zone of Theoretical Visibility (2469/P14)





- 3.33 Although the site sits within a well wooded context, the northern area of the site is largely open to distant views from hillsides in the south, due to its situation on elevated land and the lack of on-site structural vegetation. At a more local scale, views in and out of the site are limited to gaps in the semi-mature vegetation along the boundary line as a result of the site's location next to the well-treed, built form of Stourport-on-Severn.
- 3.34 The approximate extent of the visual envelope is described below:
 - To the north Large blocks of woodland planting restrict expansive views in to the site from the north. There are however, some open fields along the public rights of way around Areley Wood which allow for a small number of glimpsed views of the site;
 - To the east The existing built form limits clear views towards the site from the east. Although glimpsed views across the site are obtained from gaps between properties adjoining Pearl Lane, the vegetation along the site boundary screens the majority of views from the road;
 - To the south Views of the site from the south are largely determined by the surrounding topography and large scale woodland planting. Locally, glimpsed views of the site are limited to gaps in the boundary vegetation. Distant views onto the site can be achieved from the area of higher ground around Ombersely Golf Club, approximately 3.5km to the south east (Representitive Photoviewpoint 5);
 - To the west The topography and woodland planting around Dunley screen the majority of views of the site from the west.
 Glimpsed views can however be obtained along the A451 as the land slopes away from Dunley Hall.





Visual Receptors

3.35 The approximate extent of visibility for a range of Visual Receptors is illustrated on **Plan 8: Visual Receptors**. These receptors represent individuals or groups of people with views towards the site and whose visual amenity may be affected by the proposed development. The Visual Receptors identified are summarised as follows. The photoviewpoint locations are illustrated on **Plan 7**.

Transient Receptors (Road Users)

- Users of Pearl Lane (Representative Photoviewpoint 1 and 3)
- Users of the A451/Dunley Road (Representative Photoviewpoint 8 and 10)

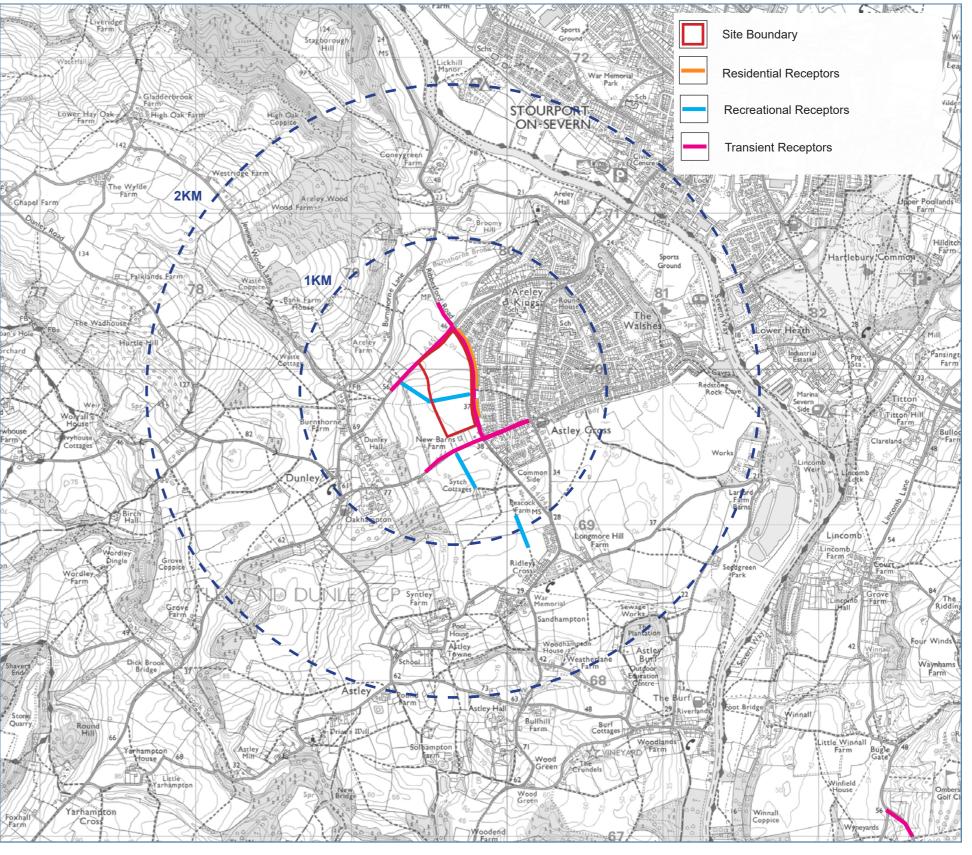
Residential Receptors

 Residents of the properties on: Cheviot Close, Cleeve Close, Sevenhills Drive, Abberley Avenue, Longmynd Way, Cotswold Avenue; which back onto / overlook Pearl Lane (Representitive Photoviewpoint 3)

Recreational Receptors

- Recreational users of public footpath 522 which traverses the site (presently un-traversable)
- Recreational users of public footpath 530 which traverses the site (presently un-traversable)
- Recreational users of public footpath 539 (Representitive Photoviewpoint 4)
- Recreational users of Pearl Lane (Representitive Photoviewpoint 3)
- Recreational users of the A451/Dunley Road (Representitive Photoviewpoint 8 and 10)
- 3.36 Views from each of the 10 Representative Photoviewpoint locations identified above and shown on Plan 7 are illustrated on the following pages, along with descriptions of the nature of views and annotations identifying key features.
- 3.37 Views from along public footpaths 522 and 530 have been discounted from this report, as at the time of two separate visits the footpaths were inaccessible due to overgrown rapeseed crop.

Plan 8: Visual Receptors (2469/P16)





Photoviewpoint 1:

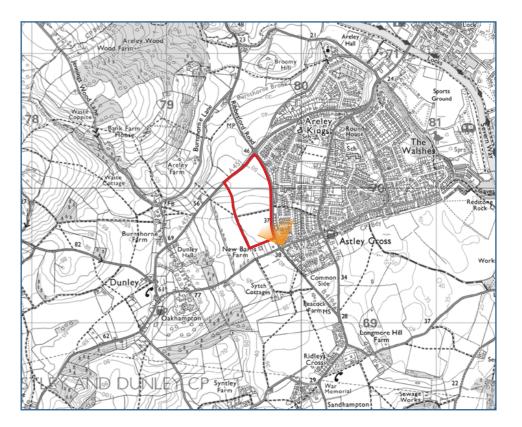
- 4.1 This photoviewpoint illustrates the sites visual containment from the south east along Pearl Lane and Red House Road. Highly robust boundary planting along the sites eastern boundary and around New Barns Farm restricts views onto the site.
- 4.2 During the winter months, there may be greater visibility afforded onto the site through gaps in the vegetation when the leaves have wilted.

Landscape Character

- Gardens of properties along Pearl Lane mark the built edge
- Robust planting following lineage of road

Receptors

4.3 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are pedestrians and road users of Red House Road.





Photoviewpoint 1: View taken from Pearl Lane, looking north.

Orientation: North



Photoviewpoint 2:

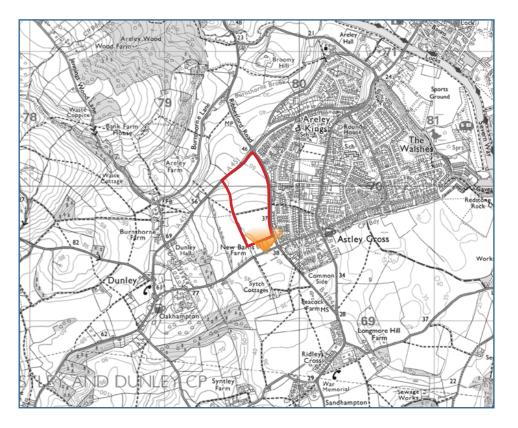
- 4.4 Views of the site from Red House Road are fragmented by the sites southern boundary and vegetation associated with New Barns Farm.
- 4.5 During the winter months, there may be greater visibility afforded onto the site through gaps in the vegetation when the leaves have wilted.

Landscape Character

- Urban influence of properties associated with New Barn Farm
- Robust planting following lineage of road

Receptors

4.6 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are pedestrians and road users of Red House Road.





Photoviewpoint 2: View taken from Red House Lane looking north towards the site



Photoviewpoint 3:

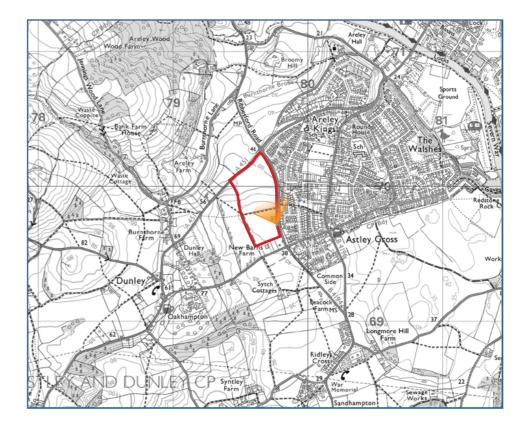
- 4.7 Views onto the site from along Pearl Lane to the east are heavily filtered by the sites boundary planting.
- 4.8 During the winter months, there may be greater visibility afforded onto the site through gaps in the vegetation when the leaves have wilted.

Landscape Character

Robust planting following lineage of road

Receptors

4.9 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are pedestrians and road users of Pearl Lane.





View taken from Peal Lane looking at the sites eastern boundary. **Photoviewpoint 3:**



Photoviewpoint 4:

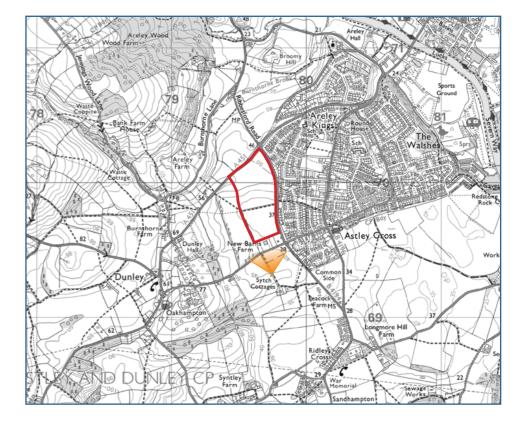
4.10 There are glimpsed views afforded onto the higher ground of the site through gaps in the tree cover to the south. Even though Areley Wood and the hills to the north form a wooded setting skyline, New Barns Farm and the properties of Areley Kings and Astley Cross place views the site within an urban fringe context.

Landscape Character

- Arable land use
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- The site sits below Areley Wood and the hills to the north

Receptors

4.11 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are recreational users of public footpath 539





View taken from the public footpath near to Sytch Cottages, looking north. Photoviewpoint 4:



Photoviewpoint 5:

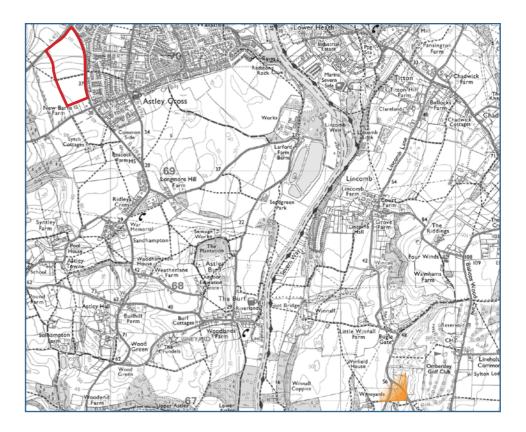
- 4.12 Views of the site are contained within the rolling hills and welltreed context of the wider landscape. Where the site is visible in the backdrop, views are framed against Astley Cross' existing development edge.
- 4.13 Changes to the composition of the views associated with the residential edge of Astley Cros would be negligible

Landscape Character

- Arable land use
- Large-scale landscape with wide views over open farmland
- Rolling topography

Receptors

4.14 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are recreational users of public footpath 519.





View taken from the public footpath just outside the grounds of Ombersley Golf Club, looking north west. Photoviewpoint 5:



Photoviewpoint 6:

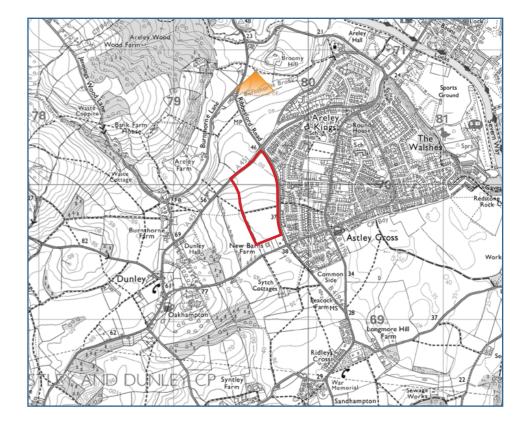
4.15 This photoviewpoint further demonstrates the sites visual containment to views from the north due to the robust boundary planting along the sites northern border adjacent to the A451/ Dunley Road which contributes to the wooded skyline.

Landscape Character

- Arable land use
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Rolling topography

Receptors

4.16 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are recreational users of public footpath 523.





View taken from the public footpath on Broomy Hill looking south. **Photoviewpoint 6:**





Photoviewpoint 7:

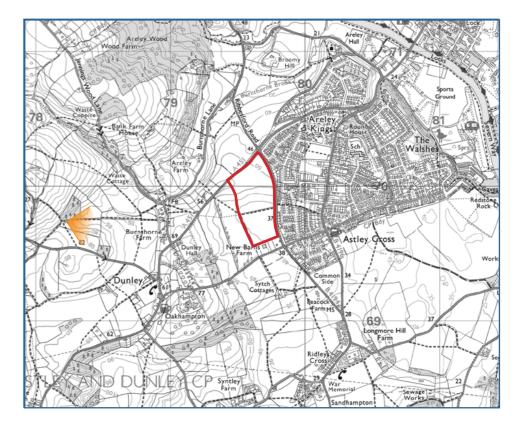
4.17 Middle-Long distance views of the site from the west are obstructed by the wooded foreground and undulating landform. The properties at Astley Cross can be seen to rise out of Burnsthorne Farm in the foreground.

Landscape Character

- Arable land use
- Rolling topography
- Farmsteads and wayside dwellings
- Woodland copses

Receptors

4.18 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are recreational users of public footpath 512.





Photoviewpoint 7: View taken from the public footpath on the footslopes of Hurtle Hill, looking east.



Photoviewpoint 8:

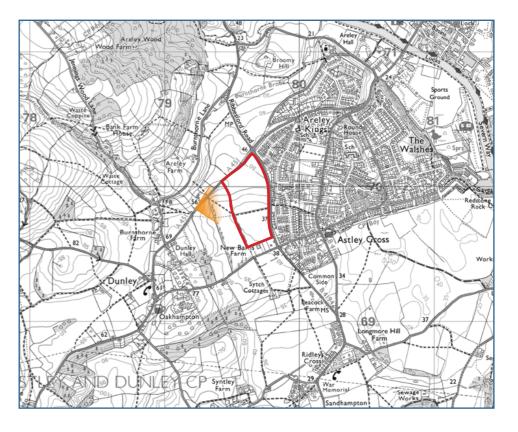
- 4.19 There are glimpsed views afforded onto the higher ground of the site above the hedgerow which runs parallel to A451. These views however are framed against the properties of Astley Cross which places the site within an peri-urban context.
- 4.20 During the winter months, there may be greater visibilty afforded onto the site through gaps in the vegetation when the leaves have wilted.

Landscape Character

- Vegetation boundary planting
- · Road infrastructure has an urban influence
- Urban fringe setting

Receptors

4.21 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are recreational users of the A451/Dunley Road and transient users who are travelling at speed.





Photoviewpoint 8: View taken from the A451 looking east towards the site East



Photoviewpoint 9:

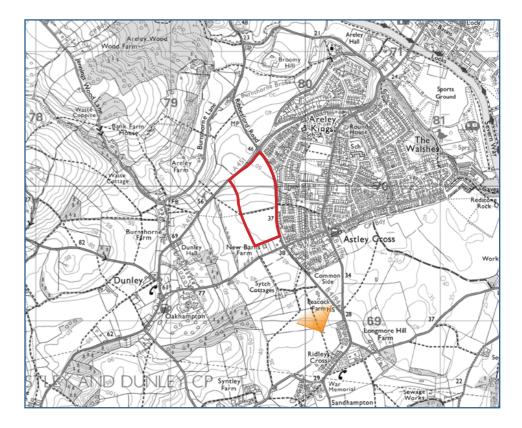
4.22 View taken from public footpath 544C looking north. Glimpsed views of the site are afforded in the backdrop, whereby it is contained by and framed against Areley Wood.

Landscape Character

- Arable land use
- Rolling topography
- Hedgerow field boundaries

Receptors

4.23 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are recreational users of public footpath 544C.





View taken from public footpath 544C looking towards the site in the north. Photoviewpoint 9:



Photoviewpoint 10:

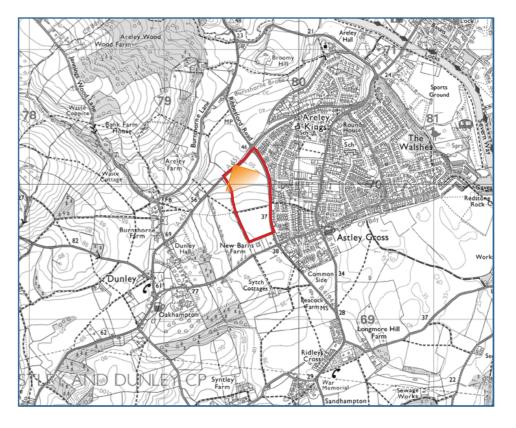
- 4.24 This viewpoint illustrates the sites limited visibility from the north due to its highly robust boundary planting which serves to fragment views. Views are confined to between gaps in the planting.
- 4.25 During the winter months, there may be greater visibility afforded onto the site through gaps in the vegetation when the leaves have wilted.

Landscape Character

- · Vegetation boundary planting
- Road infrastructure has an urban influence

Receptors

4.26 Receptors who will experience this viewpoint are recreational users of public footpath 544C.









Composition of Views

- 4.27 In elevated views from the north, the site sits within the wooded foreground well below the skyline. Views into the site are limited to small areas, which are framed by the boundary vegetation. However, in views from the lower-lying land and along Ribbesford Road, the distinctive tree belt forming the site boundary forms the skyline and screens views into the site.
- 4.28 From the south, views of the site are limited to neighbouring fields and areas of higher land further afield in the south east due to large blocks of woodland planting and scattered development around Astley.
- 4.29 In the elevated views from the south east, the site is situated alongside the extents of development, which includes the settlement at Areley Kings and sits below the wooded hills of Areley Wood. More locally, glimpsed views of the higher areas on site can be obtained beyond the boundary vegetation, while the roof tops of Astley Cross adjacent to site together with the wooded hills beyond site to the north form the local skyline.
- 4.30 As can be seen from Photoviewpoint 8 and 10, views into site from the A451 are largely filtered by the semi-mature tree belt and maintained hedgerow forming the site boundary. The vegetation both sides of the road, also frame views towards the distant skyline.
- 4.31 Further planting around the property at New Barns Farm combines with the planting along the site boundary to provide a dense vegetative screen to views from the adjacent junction. The boundary vegetation creates a vertical emphasis to views from Pearl Lane and is gappy in places, as can be seen from Photoviewpoint 1. This allows glimpsed views across the area up to the woodland next to Dunley.

Visual Conclusions

Conclusions on Views/Visibility

- Views of the site are largely localised due to a combination of its robust boundary planting, vegetation and woodland cover in the surrounding landscape, and the rolling topography of the wider area.
- As listed in this section of the report, the primary receptors which would experience the greatest change in the views experienced would be users of the sites internal footpaths and residents, recreational and transient users situated on and around Pearl Lane.
- Where there are external views afforded onto the site, they are either heavily filtered by its robust boundary planting or limited to the northern half where the topography is higher. Furthermore, many of the views which are afforded onto the site are framed against Areley Kings and Astley Cross' exisiting settlement edge.

Visual Design Principles

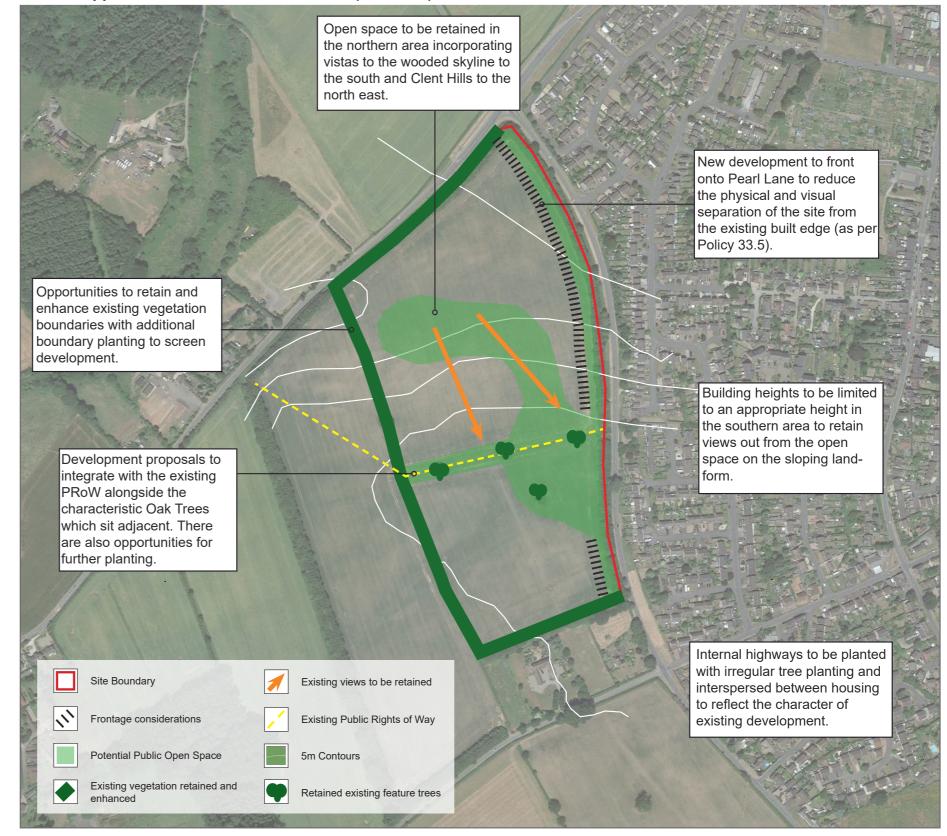
- Retain and enhance the sites northern, southern and western boundary vegetation to maintain the sites visual enclosure. Any potential views of the proposed developments roofline would also consequently be softened.
- Fronting development onto Pearl Lane to the east to visually integrate site with adjacent development edge of Astley Cross.

5 Development Proposals

Landscape Opportunities and Constraints

- 5.1 In response to the landscape and visual baseline analysis, a series of landscape objectives, and opportunities and constraints have been identified (see Plan 9: Opportunities and Constraints Plan) to ensure that the development response reflects the local circumstance and addresses opportunities for landscape enhancement.
 - Access and new development to front onto Pearl Lane to reduce the physical and visual separation of the site from the existing built edge, providing a softer settlement edge to integrate the scheme into the adjacent existing settlement edge;
 - Building heights to be limited to an appropriate height in the southern area to retain views out from the open space on the sloping landform;
 - Internal highways to be planted with irregular tree planting and interspersed between housing to reflect the character of existing development in Areley Kings, providing additional green, and to soften developments built form and internal layout;
 - Development to be set back from the public footpath and surrounding area with opportunities for further planting;
 - Existing trees and hedgerows to be enhanced to conserve the existing field pattern;
 - Woodland planting to be introduced in the northern area to reflect the wooded character prevalent in the surrounding context. Existing planting found along the northern boundary should be retained to maintain the sense of enclosure and containment from Pearl Lane:
 - Open space to be retained in the northern area, incorporating vistas to the wooded skyline to the south and Clent Hills to the north east. Open space to incorporate the existing internal planting with opportunities for SuDS and publicly accessible open space;
- 5.2 Importantly, these recommendations have been informed by the relevant policies and SPDs of the Wyre Forest district local plan, and adhere to the *Pearl Lane AKR/1* allocation guidelines.
- 5.3 The broad themes that have emerged through the Opportunities and Constraints Plan have been utilised to inform a **Landscape Strategy (Plan 10)** for the site to accompany the development proposals. The proposals will comprise of 331 homes with associated landscaping including 6.06ha of Public Open Space.

Plan 9: Opportunities and Constraints Plan (2469/P15)





Development Proposals

Plan 10: Landscape Strategy (2469/P17)



Native Tree Planting Suggested Species:



Meadows









Bulb Planting Suggested Species:





Sorbus aucuparia



Quercus robur



Emorsgate: EM1- Basic General Purpose Meadow Mixture Emorsgate: EM1F- Basic General Purpose Wild Flowers Emorsgate: EP1- Pond Edge Mixture

Water Tolerant Tree Planting Suggested Species:



Suggested Species:

Sorbus aucuparia

'Sheerwater Seedling'





Salix caprea

Pyrus calleryana

'Chanticleer'



Proposed Native





Proposed Meadow Grassland (POS)

Site Boundary



Proposed Bulb Planting

Existing Trees and Tree Belts Proposed Water Tolerant Trees Proposed Street/ Existing Hedgerow Avenue Trees Proposed Native Front Gardens and Proposed Wet Meadow Verges Proposed Flowering Wildflower Meadow Residential Back Gardens

'Fastigiata'

6 Implications of Development

Landscape Effects

- 6.1 The effects of any new development need to be considered in light of the existing context and baseline scenario, which in this instance includes the relationship of the site to the existing townscape and the containment afforded by the site's established landscape framework. With the introduction of new dwellings across the site, it is accepted that there would be a change to the land use and nature of the site itself; however, it is not an isolated location and the changes need to be considered in terms of how the local landscape will continue to be experienced once the development is complete.
- 6.2 Whilst there would be a direct loss or alteration to one or more elements/features/characteristics of the site, and the introduction of new built form may appear prominent at close proximity, residential development is not uncharacteristic within this settled landscape.
- 6.3 The site is part of a draft allocation in which the council has deemed it as suitable for development. The site is not associated with any nationally recognised or local designations which attribute to distinct landscape features.
- 6.4 At a localised level, the site contains a number of features which attribute some form of distinct landscape features:
 - The site is contained by robust belts of tree planting which provide both physical and visual enclosure;
 - The site contains a small number of free standing oak trees which serve as distinguishable landscape features;
 - The site has a rolling topography which is typical of the character area, and allows for views towards the wooded skyline to the south; and
 - A PRoW runs through the site from east to west, however is presently inaccessible due to overgrown and unmaintained rapeseed crop.
- 6.5 Upon completion, the proposals would introduce 2 storeyhigh residential development comprising high quality housing in keeping with the local vernacular, whilst also retaining the settlement pattern and existing extents of development to the east at Astley Cross.
- 6.6 The more characteristic features of the site have been retained and used to inform the nature of development. The public

- footpath which passes through the site is to be retained and enhanced whilst the implementation of cycle routes along the footpath and throughout the site will increase the recreational value of the site. The development also proposes a new network of internal footpaths which traverse the areas of open space within the site.
- 6.7 The retention and enhancement of the hedgerow and tree planting at the sites boundaries will ensure that the physical and visual separation between development and the surrounding countryside is maintained. Within the site, proposals are also sensitive to important views outwards incorporating vistas to the wooded skyline to the south and Clent Hills to the north east.
- 6.8 The free standing Oak trees within the site have been retained and utilised as distinguishable landscape features in which areas of open space are centred around.

Visual Effects

Visual Context

6.9 As Set-out at Section 4 of this report, views towards the site are largely limited to those from the local area, and from within 1km. There are long distance views of the site obtained from the south east however approximately 3km away.

Receptors

- 6.10 The following groups of people have been identified as having the potential to view the proposed development and experience visual change and impacts on their visual amenity resulting from the proposed development. This is due to the proximity and nature / extent of view, as well as the activities and focus of the people likely to experience them:
 - Transient users of Pearl Lane and residents with views fronting onto to the road (Representative Photoviewpoints 1 and 3)
 - Transient users to the north of the site along the A451 (Representative Photoviewpoints 8 and 10)
 - Recreational users of the PRoW network to the south (Representative Photoviewpoints 4 and 9)
 - Long distance views from the south east (Representative Photoviewpoint 5)

Visual Receptor Analysis

Transient users of Pearl Lane and residents with views fronting onto to the road

- 6.11 As illustrated by **Photoviewpoints 1 and 3**, views of the site from the east are heavily screened by hedgerow and tree planting along the sites eastern boundary. Any views afforded onto the site are limited to between gaps in the boundary planting. The proposals of the application site retain this boundary planting, meaning any development of the site would be concealed and lead to a negligible change to the present view experienced.
- 6.12 If and where views are afforded onto the site from along Pearl Lane, the addition of the proposed development will not be an uncharacteristic feature within the perceived landscape. The proposed development will be in keeping with the surrounding residential built context of Astley Cross to the east.
 - Transient users to the north of the site along the A451
- 6.13 As illustrated in **Photoviewpoints 8**, views of the site when approaching Areley Kings from the A451 to the west are experienced against the existing settlement edge which forms the backdrop and skyline to the view. As viewed by this receptor, the addition of the proposed development on the site from along the PRoW will not be an uncharacteristic feature within the landscape. The proposed development will be in keeping with the surrounding built context whereby the proposed buildings are of a similar height and massing to those at Areley Kings, meaning the skyline and balance of elements in the existing view will remain largely unaffected.
- 6.14 The development has also been set back from the western edge which will soften views whilst the provision of additional planting along the western boundary will further filter views of the site.

 Additional characteristic planting will also assist in filtering views and integrating the perceived western edge.
- 6.15 Photoviewpoint 10 illustrates the views experienced of the site whilst directly adjacent to its northern boundary on the A451. As the viewpoint shows, views onto the site are limited to between gaps in the boundary tree planting. The proposals of the application site retain and enhance this boundary planting, meaning any development of the site would be concealed and lead to a negligible change to the present view experienced.
- 6.16 Where visibility would be afforded onto the site from the proposed access road, the views would comprise. The proposals have been sensitively designed so that characteristic



6 Implications of Development

views towards the wooded backdrop to the south are retained and channelled along the route of the road.

Recreational users of the PRoW network to the south

6.17 Photoviewpoints 4 and 9 represent the composition of the view experienced from the public rights of way to the south of the site. The viewpoints demonstrate that only the more elevated areas of the site to the north are visible where the rising ground can be seen between gaps in boundary vegetation at the sites boundary and beyond. The woodland planting at Areley Wood sits on the skyline above the site in the view, whilst residential development at Areley King's frames the views within a settled-edge context Upon completion of the development, the proposed development will be perceived as a background component of the wider view.

Long distance views from the south east

- 6.18 As shown in **Photoviewpoint 5**, there are long distance views obtained from public footpath 519 and Lodge Bank across the gently rolling landscape towards the site. The site sits adjacent to Areley Kings settlement edge.
- 6.19 The proposed development will be perceived as a background component in wider, expansive views across the wider landscape, set against the built edge of Astley Cross. The proposal will not alter the composition of the views or the elements within them, being subservient to the landform of rolling lowland landscape. Furthermore, the proposed development will be in keeping with the surrounding built context whereby the proposed buildings are of a similar height and massing to those at Astley Cross, meaning the balance of elements in the existing view will remain unaffected.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 When considering the landscape and visual implications of development it is important to recognise that any change to a site which is partially greenfield land will result in landscape and visual implications.
- 7.2 The extent of these implications should be considered within the local context and the proposals degree of conformance with their surroundings. In addition, the implications need to be put in the planning balance with all other economic, social and environmental implications of the development.
- 7.3 The site is subject to a housing allocation for up to 250 units in the emerging local plan, therefore deeming it as suitable for residential development. As demonstrated in the Opportunities and Constraints Plan and materialised in the Landscape Strategy Plan, the proposals have been informed by the Policy 33.5 AKR/14 requirements for the site.
- 7.4 Development proposals also adhere to the policy guidelines set out in both the existing Wyre Forest District Local Plan and the emerging Local Plan. This includes:
 - As illustrated in the Landscape Strategy Plan proposals using local native species (Policy 11A and 11C);
 - Proposals reflecting the local character and appearance of Astley Cross by (Policy 27A)
 - Proposals protecting existing trees and distinct landscape features- including boundary vegetation, the Oak trees, and the PRoW which rungs through the site (Policy 27C)
- 7.5 Policy also requires that proposals should consider the appropriate landscape character assessments. The Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment 2011 acknowledges the site to be located within the Areley Kings Sandstone Estatelands 'Landscape Description Unit' "An area of ...rolling lowland topography. The land use is arable with a tree cover comprising thinly scattered hedgerow and streamside trees, together with tree groups associated with settlement".
- 7.6 Importantly, the character assessment acknowledges the localised high impact of urban development at Areley Kings and Astley on the character of the Landscape Unit. This holds particularly true for the site which is located directly adjacent to Astley Cross' western settlement edge.
- 7.7 At a localised level, the site contains a number of features which attribute some form of distinct landscape features:

- The site is contained by robust belts of tree planting which provide both physical and visual enclosure;
- The site contains a small number of free standing oak trees which serve as distinguishable landscape features;
- The site has a rolling topography which is typical of the character area, and allows for views towards the wooded skyline to the south; and
- A PRoW runs through the site from east to west, however is presently inaccessible due to overgrown and unmaintained rapeseed crop.
- 7.8 The proposals for the site have directly responded to these landscape features by utilising them to shape the nature of development.
- 7.9 With regard to visibility, as the visual study of this report has shown, the site generally sits within a well screened enclosure whereby views from the surrounding area are limited.
- 7.10 It has been demonstrated that local views of the site are heavily screened by the robust belts of tree planting along the sites northern, eastern and southern boundaries. Any visibility of the site is limited to between gaps in the boundary planting.
- 7.11 Views of the site from the north and west are obstructed by the undulating landform of the wider area and intervening belts of tree planting.
- 7.12 Views are afforded of the more elevated areas of the site from the PRoW network to the south, however these views are framed within a built-edge context due to the sites location directly adjacent to residential development within the settlement of Astley Cross.
- 7.13 Likewise, long distance views of the site are obtained from the south east. The proposed development will be perceived as a background component in wider, expansive views across the wider landscape, set against the built edge of Astley Cross.

