



SLC Property

Landscape, Townscape and Visual Overview

Ashington Station, Northumberland Line

VO.4

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. This Landscape, Townscape and Visual Overview (LTVO) has been prepared by SLC Property, commissioned by Northumberland County Council (“the client”), to accompany the planning application at Ashington for a new railway station and associated parking and landscaping.
- 1.1.2. This report is not a full Landscape or Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment but seeks to provide an overview of the landscape, townscape and visual baseline and to broadly consider the likely effects that might arise from such as development in this context.
- 1.1.3. The landscape overview has concentrated on a 2.5km radius, this is the study area. The townscape overview has concentrated on a 0.5km radius. They are both centred on the proposed development site, with focus paid to receptors and features within the 0.5km radius of the centre of the site. This radius was chosen on the basis of digital Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping and field studies which confirmed that views in close proximity to the site are largely contained by the built form of Ashington in all directions. The site is well contained in mid and long-range views due to vegetation, topography, and the settlement of Ashington.
- 1.1.4. This overview is intended to provide an account of the predicted landscape, townscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The level of assessment provided by this LTVO has been agreed by officers from Northumberland County Council. The pre-application Northumberland County Council determined that the proposed development would not require an Environmental Impact Assessment. As such, a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is not required.

Level of Assessment

- 1.1.5. The scheme consultants share the view of Northumberland County Council officers that the level of assessment provided by the LTVO is appropriate for this scheme.
- 1.1.6. The Request for a Screening Opinion submitted to both local planning authorities opined that an EIA would not be required for the scheme. Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is the accepted form of assessment when a scheme is an EIA development, or when a scheme has a diversity of potential impacts. Based on the characteristics of the scheme the level of assessment provided in a full LVIA is not necessary. This is supported by the Landscape Institute, who consider;

“If the intervention is not considered to be EIA development, some form of assessment may still be required if it has the potential to affect the landscape. This would form a landscape and visual appraisal of the development proposals.”

- 1.1.7. In addition to this, the Northumberland County Council Validation Checklist states that a LVIA is required

“where a proposal is an EIA development and the development would be likely to have a significant impact on the surrounding landscape and/or townscape/seascape character of the site, including its context. LVIA will also be required for proposals for non-EIA development that could have a significant effect on the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast or North Pennines Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.”¹

- 1.1.8. The limited extent of the development at each of the proposed station developments is a material consideration in determining the scope of the supporting assessments. As discussed within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition:

“In all cases, the approach to, and scope of, the assessment / appraisal should be ‘proportional to the scale and nature of the proposed development’²

- 1.1.9. In addition to the above, a full LVIA would be inappropriate for the station at Ashington as the site is located within an urban setting. The proposed location for the Ashington station is located within an area enclosed by built form with an existing partial dedication to railway use. The layout and views of the landscape around the site will not be altered, as demonstrated within this LVO.

1.2. Description of the Site & Study Area

Refer to Figure 1: Site Location Plan

- 1.2.1. The application site is located within the county of Northumberland in the centre of the town of Ashington. The site is approximately 100m south of Station Road and directly adjacent to Kenilworth Road. The site is currently used for the parking of cars, public open space, and an area of vacant land which was previously housing (now demolished).
- 1.2.2. The boundaries of the site are formed:
- To the north by Wilko shopping complex and the Ashington War Memorial Garden
 - To the east by the fencing between the railway corridor and parking along John Street
 - To the south by a post & net fence and overgrown hedge
 - To the west by Kenilworth Road and the Ashington War Memorial Garden
- 1.2.3. Within the site the land is relatively flat at 35m AOD with a slight slope to the south. Outside of the site boundaries is a highpoint of 37m AOD at the intersection of Sheepwash Road and Bothal Bank. The general topography of the study area is relatively flat yet slightly rolling with drops in topography towards the River Wansbeck and local deans.

¹ NCC, Validation Checklist, Pg. 40

² GLVIA 3, para. 6.2

- 1.2.4. The area immediately surrounding the site in all directions is dominated by the built form of Ashington. Within the town there are blocks of green space bound by residential and commercial properties. Further to the north, beyond Rotary Parkway, is the Ashington Community Woodland with agricultural land and Lynemouth Windfarm beyond. The east is dominated by townscape, as is the south with the River Wansbeck dividing Ashington and Stakeford townscape. To the west is the townscape of Ashington with agricultural fields becoming a key feature approximately 2km from the site.
- 1.2.5. The vegetation within the study area is predominantly street trees, vegetation within small private gardens and small managed coppices. At the townscape boundaries the vegetation develops into woodland to the north within Ashington Community Woodland and the tree buffers between fields; into wetlands, scrub land, and woodland to the south along the banks of the River Wansbeck and within the deans; into hedged field boundaries to the west.

1.3. The Development Proposal

- 1.3.1. SLC Property has been commissioned to prepare a Landscape and Visual Overview in support of the application for planning permission.
- 1.3.2. The development and the application for planning permission is anticipated to include the following;

'Construction of a new single platform railway station including pedestrian lift, new highway access; modifications to existing highways including pedestrian footways; provision of parking for cars, electric vehicles, motorcycles, cycles, and taxis and other associated works including new crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. Construction of facilities ancillary to the station including, lighting, soft and hard landscaping, surface and subsurface drainage, utilities and other services, boundary treatment and other associated works'

1.4. Policy Context

National Planning Policy Context (NPPF)

- 1.4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. In terms of landscape and visual matters, the following (*quoted*) paragraphs are of particular relevance to the proposed development:

Section 12. Achieving Well Designed Places

12.4. The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

131. In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings..

Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

170. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimizing impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

171. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

172. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues...

Local Planning Policy Context

The Study Area

1.4.2. Alongside the National Planning Policy Framework, the current local plan for this area is the Consolidated Planning Policy Framework of Northumberland (Regulation 19) containing the saved local policies from the Blyth Valley District Local Plan, 1999 and the Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007). The Northumberland Local Plan Publication Draft 2019 policies have been given considerable weight, as guided by Paragraph 48 of the NPPF. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 29 May 2019 and is currently undergoing examination. The second phase of the public hearing sessions took place in October and November 2020. Further detail of the local policies is discussed within the Planning Statement.

1.4.3. The landscape and townscape policies which relate to the proposed site are listed below:

1.4.4. Northumberland Local Plan (Draft – 2019)

- Policy STP1 – Settlement Boundaries
- Policy QOP1 – Design Principles
- Policy QOP2 – Good Design and Amenity
- Policy QOP4 – Landscaping and Trees
- Policy QOP6 – Delivering well-designed places
- Policy TRA1 – Promoting sustainable connections
- Policy TCS 2 – Town Centres & Primary Shopping Areas
- Policy ENV1: Approaches to assessing the impact of development on the natural, historic and built environment
- Policy ENV2 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife & Geological Sites, South East Northumberland Wildlife Network, Ancient Woodland)
- ENV9 – Conservation Areas
- INF5 – Protected Open Space

1.4.5. Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007) saved policies

- Policy GPI – Spatial Strategy
- Policy RTC1 – Town Centres
- Policy RTC5 – Primary Shopping Area
- Policy GP4 – Accessibility
- Policy GP5 – Landscape Character
- Policy GP6 – Trees and Hedgerows
- Policy G13 – Biodiversity and Wildlife Networks
- Policy GP30 – Visual Impact
- Policy GP31 – Urban Design
- Policy GP32 – Landscaping and the Public Realm
- Policy T1 – Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Rail Line
- Policy REC2 – Recreation and Open Space

2. Methodology

2.1. Methodology for Landscape and Visual Overview

- 2.1.1. This document is intended to discuss the broad landscape, townscape and visual issues that are likely to arise should the proposed development be granted planning permission. The extent and location of the proposals is considered in the context of the visibility of the site, the landscape of the site, and the surrounding area.
- 2.1.2. This overview of the landscape, townscape and visual issues will not include an appraisal of predicted effects, assessment of possible impacts or suggestions regarding mitigation. This has been agreed with Northumberland County Council, as previously mentioned in paragraph 1.1, as that level of assessment is not required for this site.
- 2.1.3. The study area and viewpoints included in this report were determined using a combination of map analysis, digital ZTV mapping and field work. Panoramic photography was taken at 1.5m above ground level with a digital SLR camera.
- 2.1.4. Desktop research has been carried out in order to understand the context of the proposed development. This was based on a range of reference documents and online resources (see Appendix A).
- 2.1.5. The findings of the desktop and field studies are presented in the following text and represented on a sequence of illustrations (see Appendix B).

2.2. Landscape and Visual Methodology

- 2.2.1. The landscape, townscape and visual assessment will involve desk study, field work, data processing and analysis, and interpretation using professional judgement.

Desk Study

- 2.2.2. The aim of the desk study is to establish the key landscape and townscape features and landscape planning designations affecting the proposed development site and the surrounding landscape and townscape.

Baseline Study/Conditions

- 2.2.3. Analysis and reporting of the baseline assessment will be undertaken following completion of the desk and field surveys. The baseline landscape, townscape and visual assessment provides a description, classification and evaluation of the existing landscape and visibility of the study area, providing a starting point from which the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development are determined.
- 2.2.4. The desk study and baseline assessments undertaken provide direction and focus to subsequent field survey work.

Landscape and Townscape Character and Amenity

- 2.2.5. Landscape and Townscape Receptors are resources located within the study area that could potentially experience a change in landscape character as a result of the potential effects of the development proposal. The potential visibility of the proposed development from the landscape resources within the study area was checked during site visits. Consideration is given here to changes upon landscape elements such as woodland, trees or other features.
- 2.2.6. 'Townscape is the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationship between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.'³
- 2.2.7. Based on this definition landscape and townscape will both be referred to as 'landscape' within the methodology of this assessment.
- 2.2.8. The baseline section of this assessment deals largely with the appreciation of landscape and townscape character (in which the particular attributes of the existing landscape are considered and described), while later sections of the study assess and make judgements about the potential impacts and effects of the proposals based upon this characterisation.
- 2.2.9. Existing character assessments are an important starting point for any new assessment. Landscape character assessment is hierarchical and describes landscape on different strategic levels and scales (i.e. national and regional, county and district or local and site specific).
- 2.2.10. The study of landscape assessments at different strategic levels is important for several reasons:
- it aids the understanding of the landscape at a wider level;
 - it allows the identification of landscape elements that may be present at various scales, and thus of higher importance;
 - it highlights landscape character that is 'out of context' with other levels of the hierarchy; and
 - it may identify potential mitigation and restoration options that may not be present at the local scale but could be beneficial at a higher level.
- 2.2.11. The landscape and townscape character of the site and its surroundings is therefore assessed according to the above principles.

Viewpoints - Overview on selection

- 2.2.12. The selection of viewpoints is a key stage and is informed by the outcomes of the baseline and context work relating to landscape and visual considerations. The study area and draft viewpoints are determined using a combination of desk study, consultation, map analysis and field work.

³ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3), paragraph 2.7

Visual Context Methodology

- 2.2.13. The aim of the baseline visual assessment is to ensure that an appropriate range of viewpoints is included in the assessment from representative locations (covering several receptors) and from specific locations (covering a particular receptor).
- 2.2.14. The selected viewpoints are to represent views from a range of potential representative and specific visual receptors classified according to their associated land use; such as the occupants of settlements, footpath users, roads users, etc. Having identified potential receptors within the study area it is then possible, through site survey, to identify those likely to be most affected by future development.
- 2.2.15. The initial selection of viewpoints included a representative range in relation to the following criteria:
- A range of distances of receptor from proposed development to the maximum extent of the study area; and
 - A range of locations of receptors from proposed development, with the aim of achieving a reasonable distribution from different compass points around the site.

Visual Assessment Methodology

- 2.2.16. The visual assessment considers the site and its surroundings from a range of receptors, focusing on a maximum radius of 2.5km from the approximated centre of the proposed development site. It is typically considered that observers beyond this distance would be unlikely to obtain clear views of the site because of the surrounding topography, built fabric, tree cover and field boundaries within this landscape.

Field Survey

- 2.2.17. Field survey is used to verify and refine the viewpoints and receptors identified in the desk study and baseline assessment, and to gain a full appreciation of the relationship between the proposed development and its surrounding landscape. The field survey also helps to establish the existing condition and quality of the landscape within the study area.
- 2.2.18. A series of panoramic photographs was taken to record the view from each viewpoint selected and to provide a basis for discussion in this report.

Viewpoint Photography

- 2.2.19. All photographs in this assessment were taken using a full frame Nikon D750 digital SLR camera. The lens used is fixed to a focal length of 50mm, ISO 100 and white balance set to daylight, in accordance with relevant guidelines. Photographs were taken using a tripod at a height of 1.6m, the eye height above ground of the photographer. The camera was set in the correct position for the first photograph to show the development centred in the shot, with subsequent shots taken in an overlapping sequence.

Panorama Construction Method

2.2.20. Following completion of field work, the photographic images were constructed into panoramas by stitching together several frames using Hugin software. Hugin uses a cylindrical projection method for 90-degree images and a planar method to merge images for 53.5-degree panoramas, showing a horizontal field of view (FOV) of 53.5 degrees and a vertical field of view (FOV) of 18.2 degrees.

Annotated photographs

2.2.21. Selected views varied from a single frame (approx. 40°) to panoramic images (90°–360°) where appropriate. The viewpoint location (including National Grid Reference), camera type, lens focal length, horizontal angle of view and actual grid reference were recorded for each image. For viewing purposes, 90° images should be viewed at 'a comfortable arm's length' and 53.5-degree images should be laid in a flat position for viewing.

2.2.22. The Landscape Institute publication 'Advice Note 01/11, Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment' states (p2):

2.2.23. It is essential to recognise that:

- Two-dimensional photographic images alone cannot capture or reflect the complexity underlying the visual experience, and should therefore be considered an approximation of the three-dimensional visual experiences that an observer would receive in the field;

2.2.24. As part of a technical process, impact assessment and considered judgements using photographs and/or photomontages can only be reached by way of a visit to the location from which the photographs were taken.

2.3. Terminology

2.3.1. Terms to describe landscape and visual matters in this report have been used in accordance with the Glossary of Terms pages 155 to 159 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (Third Edition, 2013), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment.

3. Baseline Conditions

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. This section provides an overview of the baseline study results and references. It provides information on the following features within the study area:

- Statutory/ non-statutory designations;
- National and Regional and Site Landscape Character;
- Site and surrounding area;
- Visual context (ZTV and representative views)

3.2. Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations

*Refer to Figure 2: Planning and Landscape Designations
Figure 3: Heritage Designations
Figure 4: Access and Circulation Plan*

3.2.1. The designations from Northumberland Local Plan Publication Draft (2019) and Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007) saved policies that are applicable to the study area and shown on the associated Policy Maps are described below:

Local Nature Reserves – ENV2 & G13

3.2.2. Within the Study Area there are three locations designated as Local Nature Reserves (LNR). The Wansbeck Riverside Park is the closest LNR to the site approximately 1.1km to the south of the site. The Queen Elizabeth II Country Park is located approximately 1.2 km north-east, while the Castle Island LNR is approximately 1.6km south of the site.

Town Centres – RCT1 & TCS2

3.2.3. Within the Study Area there is one area designated as a Town Centre. The site itself sits within this designated area in the centre of Ashington. The area extends approximately 0.2km west of the site, 0.54km east of the site and 0.47km north of the site.

Ashington Settlement Boundary – GPI & STPI

3.2.4. The site is located within the Ashington Settlement Boundary. The boundary extends approximately 0.6km north, beyond the 2.5km study area east, 1.5km south and 1.8km west of the site.

Ancient Woodland – ENV2

3.2.5. Within the Study Area there are four areas designated as Ancient Woodland. These areas are located within the Wansbeck Riverside Country Park, Black Close Bank, and adjacent the Castle Island LNR. The closest Ancient woodland is located within Black Close Bank, with its northern most point approximately 1.1km south of the site. The other woodland areas are approximately 1.5km south-west of the site.

Primary Shopping Areas – TCS 2

- 3.2.6. Directly north and adjacent to the site is an area designated as a Primary Shopping Area. The area extends approximately 0.3km north, 0.5km east, 0.3km south, and 0.2km west of the site.

South East Northumberland Wildlife Network – ENV2 & G13

- 3.2.7. Within the Study Area there is a chain of areas designated as a part of the South East Northumberland Wildlife Network. The closest area is approximately 0.8km north of the site. Other areas are approximately 1km north-east, 1.5km west and 1km south. The areas create an arc within the Study Area and around Ashington, starting from the south-west, heading east, and ending to the north of the site.

Local Wildlife and Geological Sites– ENV2 & G13

- 3.2.8. Within the Study Area there is one location designated as a Local Wildlife and Geological Site. It is located approximately 1.7km north-west of the site.

Protected Open Space – INF5 & REC2

- 3.2.9. Throughout the study area there are multiple areas designated as Protected Open Space (POS). There is one area within the proposed site boundaries, currently this area contains a grassed open space crossed by a single path and a row of trees in poor condition. The Ashington Cricket Club is a second POS directly adjacent to the site, north-west of the site centre and across the street to the west. There are two other green spaces within 0.5km of the site with approximately 40 others within the Study Area.

Site of Special Scientific Interest – ENV2

- 3.2.10. There is one area designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is located approximately 1.5km north-west of the site.

Listed Buildings

- 3.2.11. Within the study area there are 23 Listed Buildings. The closest Listed Building is the Ashington Co-Operative Society Premises, Grade II. It is approximately 0.5km north-west of the site. There are 6 other Listed Buildings within 1km of the site, at a distance of approximately 0.8km west.
- 3.2.12. There are no formal locally listed buildings in this part of Northumberland. There are three known heritage assets within the Site. The post-medieval Ashington and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea branch railway [NHER 27329], which forms the eastern boundary is to be revitalised by the proposed Scheme, to re-instate the operation of new passenger train services. Review of historical mapping shows that a number of spur lines, with associated platforms, and a goods shed existed within the Site, which were later removed and built over. Part of the original Ashington Station [NHER 27333] is extant, as a disused platform, however below ground remains associated with the structure are also expected to be present. Further structures, related to the station and the line, are expected to exist on Site. Immediately to the north of the Site is Ashington Memorial Garden. The memorial garden was created in 2015 and contains the Ashington WWI and WWII War Memorial [NHER 20431], as well as two further memorials to Ashington Airfield and its personnel in WWI, and to military personnel who have lost their lives in service since 1945. It is a

place to remember local men and their families who have been impacted by conflict, and military personnel more generally who have continued to make sacrifices since 1945. A key view of the memorial is achieved at the entrance into the garden where it is placed centrally in view and centrally as the centrepiece of the garden. The setting of the memorial garden is the busy urban centre of Ashington which provides a contrast with the peaceful green space within.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- 3.2.13. There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument within the Study Area. It is approximately 1.8km north-west of the site and is located within the Woodhorn Colliery.

Public Rights of Way and Other Routes

- 3.2.14. There are a limited number of Public Rights of Way (PROW) within the Study Area. Most of the PROW within the Study Area are over 1km from the site and are associated with local parks. These include Traffic Free Cycle Routes within the Queen Elizabeth Country Park and along the River Wansbeck and Bridleways along the River Wansbeck, the Ashington Community Woodland and the small area between Wansbeck General Hospital and Moorhouse Lane. There is one 'Other Route with Public Access' leading to the Ashington Community Woodland approximately 0.5km north of the site.
- 3.2.15. The closest Footpath to the site is Public Right of Way 600/019, approximately 0.2km south of the site and connects to a short bridleway.

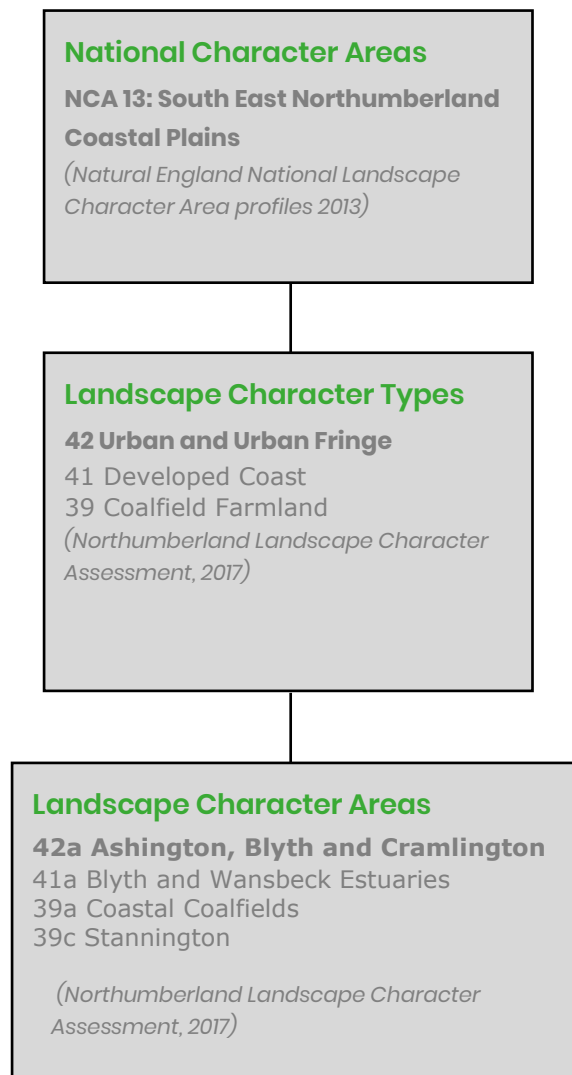
4. Landscape & Townscape Character

Refer to Figure 5: National Character Area

Figure 6: Regional Landscape Character Type and Areas Plan

Figure 7: Townscape Character Areas

Summary of available and relevant Landscape Character Study Information



Introduction

- 4.1.1. National Character Area mapping is carried out by Natural England and is the primary source of reference for this study (Natural England National Landscape Character Area profiles 2013).
- 4.1.2. Considering the size and scale of the proposed development, the baseline landscape character and sensitivity will also cross refer to information relating to Landscape Types and Areas defined in the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (Aug 2010) and the local Townscape characteristics.

National Character Areas (Natural England)

- 4.1.3. In order to gain a strategic overview of landscape character, reference has been made to the Natural England's National Character Areas (NCA). **Figure 5: National Landscape Character Areas** indicates that the site and the study area lie within the **NCA 13: South East Northumberland Coastal Plains**. The key characteristics of the NCA are as follows with the characteristics relevant to the site in bold:

- **A wide, low-lying coastal plain with widespread urban and industrial development, extending north from the urban edge of Newcastle across the coastal plain, with mining towns and villages merging into rural landscape towards the north.**
- Sweeping sandy beaches and rocky headlands remain within largely developed coast, along with mudflats and salt marshes in river estuaries.
- Large-scale open cast coal mining sites and restored mine sites which include deep mine spoil heaps. Restoration has created large tracts of simple, relatively featureless agricultural land with strips of plantation.
- Limited woodland cover, confined to prominent blocks of mixed and coniferous woodland on reclaimed colliery sites, with broadleaved woods on steeper valley sides and within estate parkland.
- Large, open arable fields, served by large-scale farmsteads, are interspersed with pastures on the poorer reclaimed soils. Fields are bounded by post-and-wire fences or by low and gappy hedges.
- Frequent areas of open water and wetland in areas of mining subsidence and as features within restored landscapes.
- Major rivers (Blyth, Coquet and Wansbeck) meandering across the landscape from west to east, often flowing through steeply incised wooded river valleys.
- Scattered large country houses with distinctive parkland settings, institutions (a hospital, prisons and colleges), and an extensive urban fringe effect near settlements where pit villages have often merged.

Regional and Local Landscape Character Types

- 4.1.4. Having gained a broad overview of the National Landscape Character perspective above, the more detailed Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment, 2010 is now explored. It provides a more detailed account of the landscape character of the study area and enables judgements to be made regarding both the landscape baseline, and sensitivity as well as predicted landscape effects.

- 4.1.5. At regional level, the site falls within the Landscape Character Type (LCT) 42 Urban and Urban Fringe. A small section of the study area, 2km south of the site, is designated as 41 Developed Coast while approximately 0.4km north of the site and 1.5km south-east of the site is designated as 39 Coalfield Farmland and extends beyond the study area boundary.
- 4.1.6. At local level, the site falls within the Landscape Character Area (LCA) 42a Ashington, Blyth & Cramlington, which is the only LCA within LCT 42. The area designated as LCT 41 also has one LCA which is designated as 41a Blyth & Wansbeck Estuaries. As the Landscape Character Types only have one LCA within them, they share the same boundaries. LCT 39 is further divided into the two LCA 39a Coastal Coalfields and 39c Stannington. Within the Study Area LCA 39a follows the boundary of LCT 39 until it reaches LCA 39c, approximately 2km south-west of the site.
- 4.1.7. So that judgements can be made regarding the proposed development, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the landscape elements currently present within each local character area.
- 4.1.8. Within the **LCT 42 Urban and Urban Fringe** and **LCA 42a Ashington, Blyth & Cramlington** the vision statement is:

The approach for the remaining areas of open landscape within this area should be one of restoration and enhancement, to ensure their future as an open space resource for the numerous local residents, while at the same time permitting the managed growth of the settlements to accommodate housing needs.

Key Characteristics

- Large built-up areas including former mining towns.
- Large-scale industrial and commercial land uses.
- Significant human features, including dual carriageways, railways, pylons, and chimneys.
- Residential areas of a range of ages.

Forces for Change

- Development pressure for tourism and recreation purposes is likely to increase, for example caravan parks.
- Redevelopment and renewal of coastal and post-industrial settlements, with potential for major new industrial, commercial or residential developments on existing brownfield sites.
- Coastal erosion, exacerbated by future sea-level rise, may lead to loss of property and/or habitats. Responses may include introduction of erosion control measures and/or managed realignment measures.

Key Qualities

- Open coastal views from rocky headlands and man-made piers and harbours.
- Dynamic seascape environment.
- Traditional seaside resort of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea.
- Industrial and architectural heritage, particularly around Blyth Harbour.

- Ecological interest in the rocky foreshore and estuaries.

4.1.9. Within the LCT 41 Developed Coast and LCA 41a Blyth & Wansbeck Estuaries:

Key Characteristics

- Intensively developed landscape, comprising a coastal urban edge.
- River mouths with mudflats or modified to form harbours.
- Large-scale industrial structures and former industrial sites.
- Fragmented farmland amongst urban development.

Forces for Change

- South east Northumberland has been identified as a focus for regeneration and construction of new homes, to meet demand for expansion of the Tyne conurbation.
- Development pressure for industrial and commercial land uses within and adjacent to existing built-up areas.
- Further loss or deterioration of field boundaries and woodland cover due to intensification of agriculture and advancing development.
- Urban renewal and regeneration of derelict land, particularly post-industrial sites.

Key Qualities

- Historic cores of settlements.
- Fragmented farmland serves as accessible open space.
- Industrial heritage in the form of mining towns and former industrial sites.
- Wooded river valleys dissect this landscape providing an important resource

4.1.10. Within the LCT 41 Developed Coast and LCA 41a Blyth & Wansbeck Estuaries:

Key Characteristics

- Intensively developed landscape, comprising a coastal urban edge.
- River mouths with mudflats or modified to form harbours.
- Large-scale industrial structures and former industrial sites.
- Fragmented farmland amongst urban development.

Forces for Change

- South east Northumberland has been identified as a focus for regeneration and construction of new homes, to meet demand for expansion of the Tyne conurbation.
- Development pressure for industrial and commercial land uses within and adjacent to existing built-up areas.
- Further loss or deterioration of field boundaries and woodland cover due to intensification of agriculture and advancing development.
- Urban renewal and regeneration of derelict land, particularly post-industrial sites.

Key Qualities

- Historic cores of settlements.
- Fragmented farmland serves as accessible open space.
- Industrial heritage in the form of mining towns and former industrial sites.
- Wooded river valleys dissect this landscape providing an important resource

4.1.11. The key characteristics of LCT 39 Coalfield Farmland are:

- Low-lying coastal farmland, medium to large in scale, and generally open and expansive.
- Heavily modified rural area, with extensive industrial and urban fringe influences.
- Well settled, with mining towns and villages.
- Large-scale opencast mine sites.
- Distinctive, simple landscapes on restored former opencast sites.
- Pylons, chimneys, and transport and industrial infrastructure are prominent.
- Occasional wooded estate landscapes.

Forces for Change

- South east Northumberland has been identified as a focus for regeneration and construction of new homes, to meet demand for expansion of the Tyne conurbation.
- Restoration of existing open cast operations. The scale and extent of open cast operations is such that when they are restored, great potential exists for the restoration to be a force for change.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, arising from climate change or further intensification of arable farming, may cause a loss of enclosure pattern.

Key Qualities

- Surviving remnants of ancient woodland and designed landscapes.
- Industrial heritage.
- Historic farmsteads and village cores.
- Large-scale landscape with coastal and landward views.

4.1.12. Landscape Character Area 39a Coastal Coalfields is described as follows:

This relatively flat coastal plain has been heavily modified by mining and industrial activity. Restoration has generally resulted in oversimplified geometric landscapes of pasture and conifer blocks, which lack distinctive features. Opencast mining operations are ongoing at a small number of large sites. Despite general heavy modification of this landscape, there are pockets of unaltered rural character, including fragments of ancient woodland, and many of the older village centres, such as Ulgham, feature attractive honey coloured sandstone buildings. There are nature reserves at Druridge Bay and Hauxley. A golf course is situated within the estate of Longhirst Hall near Pegswood.

4.1.13. Landscape Character Area 39c Stannington is described as follows:

The character of this landscape is significantly modified and influenced by adjoining urban areas and their associated infrastructure. Several transport corridors run north-south through this landscape, including the A1, East Coast Main Line, A192, and another rail line. Scattered development east of the A1 gives a more urban fringe impression associated with the west edge of the industrial settlements of Bedlington and Cramlington. To the west of the A1, the landscape is more rural, and includes the wooded Blagdon Estate designed landscape. From many vantage points, electricity transmission lines, housing and industry are prominent if not dominant elements. The wooded, incised valleys of the Blyth and Wansbeck rivers are significant features cutting through the farmland, and both have public access, with Plessey Woods Country Park on the Blyth.

Townscape Character

4.1.14. Within the Wansbeck Design Guide (2007) the areas of Wansbeck District have been divided based on their local character. The character areas are designated based on the interrelation of physical elements such as streets, built form, layout, permeability and open spaces.

4.1.15. The site and neighbouring area to the north-east is designated as Town Centre. Below are the key characteristics of the Town Centre Character Areas:

- Central area which provides a range of facilities and services for local communities;
- Developed around significant transport corridors: A197 and A196 and railway line;
- Shopping provision;
- buildings on Station Road are mainly late 19th century 2-storey buildings interspersed with some high-quality Victorian and Neoclassical 3-4 storey character buildings;
- A variety of building heights and styles within the town centre;
- Overall appearance lacks coherence;
- Expansive carparking facilities;
- Urban layout and focus on traffic management has resulted in an area which discourages pedestrian movement.
- traditional terraces and historic settlements can be found towards town and village centres
- failing to create a successful place with any identity
- urban design issues
- historic terraces backed by interwar development as semi-detached and detached properties

4.2. Site Description and Context

4.2.1. The site is located within the county of Northumberland at the centre of Ashington. It is approximately 100m south of Station Road and directly adjacent to Kenilworth Road and the railway corridor.

4.2.2. Within the site the land is relatively flat at 35m AOD with a slight slope to the south. Outside of the site boundaries is a highpoint of 37m AOD at the intersection of Sheepwash Road and Bothal Bank. The general topography of the study area is relatively flat yet slightly rolling with drops in topography towards the River Wansbeck and local deans.

- 4.2.3. The area immediately surrounding the site in all directions is dominated by the built form and formal green spaces of Ashington. Within the town there are blocks of formal green space bound by residential and commercial properties. Further to the north, beyond Rotary Parkway, is the Ashington Community Woodland with agricultural land and Lynemouth Windfarm beyond. The east is dominated by townscape, as is the south with the River Wansbeck dividing Ashington and Stakeford townscape. To the west is the townscape of Ashington with agricultural fields becoming a key feature approximately 2km from the site.
- 4.2.4. The vegetation within the study area is predominantly street trees, vegetation within small private gardens and small managed coppices. At the townscape boundaries the vegetation develops into woodland to the north within Ashington Community Woodland and the tree buffers between fields; into wetlands, scrub land, and woodland to the south along the banks of the River Wansbeck and within the deans; into hedged field boundaries to the west.
- 4.2.5. The site is currently used as a carpark for local shops, an area of public open space, an unmaintained field, and a section of the railway corridor. At the eastern edge of the site, the carparking area and railway corridor are divided by a post and wire fencing with small trees, scrub, and grasses growing within the corridor. The public open space is a flat rectangular grassed area crossed via a footpath from the south-west corner to the north-east. Along Kenilworth Road is a footpath lined with five trees; the north-east corner of the space contains a coppice of medium to large trees in good health which creates a green entrance to the area; while the eastern boundary of the open space is lined with trees which are in poor condition.
- 4.2.6. A number of medium to large trees within the public open space and the trees along Kenilworth Road are two notable and positive landscape features within the site.

4.3. Visual Context

Visual Envelope

Refer to Figure 8: Viewpoint Locations

- 4.3.1. In order to explore the potential visibility of the proposed site and select likely viable viewpoints to represent potential receptors, a 2.5km diameter Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map has been generated using digital topographic mapping.
- 4.3.2. The visual envelope is the extent to which the proposed development may be seen from areas in the surrounding landscape. The visual envelope is shown as a coloured area on the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Plan. Within Figure 8 purple illustrates the ZTV with only the 'bare land' topography within the study area taken into consideration; while the green refines the theoretical visual envelope further by broadly allowing for existing visual barriers, which might include both natural and man-made elements. These are treated as broad blocks, with existing buildings and areas of woodland/trees assigned an average height of 8m. It is important to note that the ZTV mapping is not fully accurate but can help to build up an understanding of the overall visibility of the development when supported by inspections on site. Desk study also informed the viewpoint selection, with particular consideration given to designated or sensitive

locations such as open spaces, Public Rights of Way, listed buildings and adjacent residential areas.

- 4.3.3. From the findings of the ZTV exercise, the extent to which the site is likely to be visible within the study area, as shown on Figure 8, is generally contained to within the local vicinity of the site to the north, west and south, with some mid-range views from the north-east. Views are reasonably well contained by the surrounding topography, vegetation, and existing built form in the surrounding area.

Representative Views

- 4.3.4. Key views of the site from within the defined ZTV were selected to demonstrate and test the visibility of the proposals from different directions, distances and receptor types, and provide an understanding of the baseline conditions and context of them. The selected viewpoints are listed in the table below with measurements from the proposed station location.

Table A Potential Viewpoint Locations

	Viewpoint Description	Distance from site centre (approx.)	Receptor Type
1	View north from south site boundary	94m S	Pedestrians
2	View north-east from Kenilworth Road and footpath behind Ashbourne Crescent	170m SW	Pedestrians & vehicles
3	View south-east from entrance of Ashington Cricket Club	100m W	Pedestrians & vehicles
4	View south-east from Ashington War Memorial Garden	70m W	Pedestrians
5	View south from steps of pedestrian bridge	80m N	Pedestrians
6	View south from intersection of Station Rd & John St.	90m N	Pedestrians & vehicles
7	View south-west from roundabout at South View and John Street	40m NE	Pedestrians & vehicles
8	View north-west from footpath and John Street	140m SE	Pedestrians & vehicles

- 4.3.5. Panorama photography was captured from selected representative viewpoints, and context photography taken from sample locations where the site was not found to be visible.

5. Overview of Predicted Effects

5.1. Landscape and Townscape Character and Sensitivity of the Site

- 5.1.1. The findings are determined from desk top study and field work. This was undertaken to ascertain the baseline character and visibility of the site in relation to its surrounding context, combined with a review of the outline proposals to predict potential effects on landscape and visual receptors.

Overview of the Landscape Character of the Site

- 5.1.2. The following paragraphs provide an appraisal of the predicted effects on the landscape character of the site and study area.
- 5.1.3. The overall character of the site is that of an urban area which is divided into three areas at various levels of maintenance and quality. The character of the site is highly influenced by the clear views of the carpark, the railway corridor, and the unmaintained field to the south.
- 5.1.4. The character of the entrance to the site is currently defined by the area of amenity grass with widely spaced rows of trees along Kenilworth Road and the carpark. A row of trees located along the north boundary of the site and a coppice of nine trees at the northern edge of the green space. The carpark contains failing trees and is edged to the east by the railway corridor with a gapped hedge to the south, unmaintained grasses and four trees. The area in the south end of the site is an unmaintained field which contains a variety of self-seeded vegetation. Along the south boundary and existing footpath along the rear of Ashbourne Crescent there is a formal row of trees and unmaintained hedge.
- 5.1.5. As described within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment a total of 33 tree features are to be removed to facilitate the Proposed Development. This includes one tree classed as high quality (Category A); two individual trees and one group classed as moderate quality (Category B); 13 individuals, four groups and one hedge classified as low quality (Category C); and the remaining ten individual trees and one tree group classed as unsuitable for retention (Category U). The loss of the one high quality tree and group of category B and C trees at the northern edge of the amenity space will negatively alter the character of the site; however, the retention of trees along the north and west boundaries and proposed planting along the entrance way will assist in retaining the existing green character of the site entrance. The loss of trees and vegetation and introduction of carparking and planting beds within the southern area of the site will improve the character of the site as it will better reflect the urban area in which it is located and improve on the quality and maintenance of the vegetation within that area. The retention and enhancement of the hedgerow and trees along the south boundary will allow for the continued screening of the site from the neighbouring residential properties while improving the level of maintenance within that public area. This will influence the landscape character and neighbouring footpath by changing the character from an unmaintained field and area adjacent a footpath to a well-maintained carpark with planting and an enhanced hedgerow and trees which will screen views of the carpark from the footpath. This will create a more welcoming environment to pedestrians traveling along this footpath and increase access and

maintenance levels of the southern section of the site. This is considered to be a beneficial change in the landscape character.

- 5.1.6. The character of the east boundary of the site will be influenced by the introduction of an acoustic barrier. Currently the east boundary is characterised by a steel palisade fence with an area of over grown grasses on the side of the railway corridor and an area of amenity grass with a line of trees which follows the boundary of the corridor and the carpark on John Street. The proposed development will replace a section of the palisade fencing with an acoustic barrier, starting from the south boundary extending to the north edge of the carparking area. One tree at the south end of the row will need to be removed, while the remaining trees will be retained and protected through the installation of the barrier. The barrier will be solid and approximately 2.5m in height. It will cause a neutral change in landscape character experienced by receptors along John Street as it will prevent views into the adjacent railway corridor, remove the palisade fencing, and continue to be screened by the existing trees.
- 5.1.7. The proposals will allow the site to continue to reflect the local and national landscape character of the NCA 13: South East Northumberland Coastal Plain, LCT 42 Urban and Urban Fringe and LCA 42a Ashington, Blyth & Cramlington as the site will reflect the urban character and built-up areas described within these designations. As with any development there will be some direct landscape impacts such as the loss of open green space; however, the areas designated for landscape works have the potential to create a green boundary between the proposed parking and Kenilworth Road and a green feature within the centre of the drop-off/pick-up area. Care will be required to understand the potential impacts upon the adjacent Ashington War Memorial Garden.

Overview of the Townscape Character of the Site

- 5.1.8. The paragraphs below give a site-specific overview of the site and consider the valuable elements of the townscape at present.
- 5.1.9. The proposals will allow the site to continue to reflect the Town Centre character area as described within the Wansbeck Design Guide. The proposed station will support the centralisation of the town centre as it will act as a transport hub within Ashington town centre and increase access to shopping provisions and pedestrian movement. The extension of the carparking facilities will also reflect the local character while proposed planting will retain a green feature within the existing site. The retention of existing trees along Kenilworth Road will assist in the preservation of green features within the local area while reducing the visibility of the proposed development from the adjacent Ashington Cricket Club. The character and general appearance of the local area will be preserved as the proposed carpark will be a natural extension of the existing carpark. The surrounding built form and vegetation to the north, east and south prevents views into the site. The built form to the north, west, and south of the Ashington Cricket Club, along with the sizeable sports equipment within the Cricket Club Grounds, also prevent views into the site from the wider area. The proposal will not impact on the layout, density, scale, or general appearance of the town centre.

5.2. Visual Receptors and Viewpoint Overview

Refer to Figure 9: ZTV Plan (combined Bare Land and Visual Barriers) with Potential Visual

Receptor Locations

Figures 10-14: Photographic Viewpoints 1 to 8

- 5.2.1. The photographs demonstrate the relatively enclosed and small-scale character of the landscape. The built form of Ashington restricts middle and distant views towards the site in all directions. The limited changes in elevation within the study area results in a lack of high points which would increase the site visibility; as such views of the site were restricted to an area within 1km of the site.
- 5.2.2. These views demonstrate how the features along the boundaries, and within the wider landscape, help to contain and minimise views available to it - which are not always evident or obvious from the ZTV plan. The photographs also demonstrate the topography of the site and surrounding area, as well as the nature of the vegetation and built form adjacent to the site, which also restrict views, both inwards and outwards.
- 5.2.3. Following the fieldwork, it was found that no view of the site was achievable from a number of viewpoints in spite of apparent visibility illustrated in the ZTV - particularly those to the north and south-east; this is mostly due to existing vegetation, built form and the lack of high points within the study area which would provide elevated viewpoints. Photographs were taken from these points in some instances to illustrate this aspect of the appraisal and are included with the other panoramas in viewpoint Figures 10 - 14.
- 5.2.4. Descriptions of both the existing view of the site and the predicted view of the development or lack of, for each of the viewpoints are provided below. Anticipated effects of the site proposals on the baseline are also discussed.
- 5.2.5. **Viewpoint 1**, facing north from the south site boundary, demonstrates the view experienced by pedestrians walking along the edge of the public open space within the site boundaries. The site is fully visible from this location. The proposed platform location is to the east, partially hidden by the cars within the existing carpark. This view will be partially altered as the public open space is proposed to be converted into a carpark, while the carpark area will continue its current use. The changes experienced will increase the amount of pavement within the view, while introducing a wider variety of planting through out the carpark and station.
- 5.2.6. **Viewpoint 2**, facing north-east from Kenilworth Road and footpath behind Ashbourne Crescent, demonstrates the view experience by pedestrians and vehicles traveling north along Kenilworth Road. The existing carpark and the buildings Ashington centre is visible in the distance while the neighbouring public open space is in the mid-distance. The foreground contains the currently open field, footpaths and Kenilworth Road. The introduction of a station platform in this environment would not be considered uncharacteristic of the location due to the existing railway corridor and carpark. With the implementation of the proposals, the trees within the public open space would be removed, while the existing carpark would be extended to the current tree lined boundary along Kenilworth Road. A green median⁴ is proposed along the footpath within the site to develop a green boundary between the road and the carpark. The

⁴ Median: the strip of land between two footpaths, carriageways, or roads; a central reservation.

proposed station platform may be partially visible from this point; however, it is expected to amalgamate with the surrounding buildings.

- 5.2.7. **Viewpoint 3**, facing south-east from the entrance to Ashington Cricket Club, demonstrates the view experience by vehicles and pedestrians traveling south along Kenilworth Road. The view consists of the Ashington War Memorial in the foreground, the public open space along Kenilworth Road, and the existing carpark and surrounding residential and commercial properties beyond. The vegetation and fencing along the park boundaries filter views into the site. Alterations to this view are limited to the public open space, which is proposed to change to carpark with a green median along Kenilworth Road. As there are two carparks within this view, the proposed carpark extension will not be introducing incongruous built form elements into the view.
- 5.2.8. **Viewpoint 4**, facing south-east from Ashington War Memorial Garden, demonstrates the view experienced by those visiting the Memorial Garden. The boundary of the garden is composed of a hedge with intermittent specimen trees. This vegetation screens views into the site. As the photo was taken in early March, the site is more visible than in other seasons when the hedge to the south would be in full leaf. The proposed platform shelter may be visible over the hedge; however, it will reflect the characteristics of the carpark and surrounding commercial properties. The adjacent public open space would change character from an open green area to a carpark with associated lighting features. The proposed carpark extension will not be introducing incongruous built form elements into the view due to the existing carpark.
- 5.2.9. **Viewpoint 5**, facing south from the steps of the pedestrian bridge adjacent the railway corridor, demonstrates the view experienced by pedestrians walking east over the pedestrian bridge. The view is composed of a carpark, commercial buildings, the railway corridor, and the existing carpark in the distance. The proposed location of the station platform is clearly visible adjacent to the proposed carpark and footpath located on the opposite side of the railway corridor. Although the proposed platform will be visible, it will not be considered incongruous with the character and existing features within the view.
- 5.2.10. **Viewpoint 6**, facing south from the intersection of Station Road and John Street, the view is dominated by commercial buildings, parking and John Street. The site itself is partially visible in the distance with trees and vehicles causing filtered views into the site. The proposed platform shelter may be visible from this location; however, it will not be introducing an incongruous built form into the view due to the existing pedestrian walk and commercial features within the area.
- 5.2.11. **Viewpoint 7**, facing south-west from the roundabout at South View and John Street, demonstrates the view experienced by vehicles and pedestrians traveling south along John Street. The site itself is partially visible beyond the row of trees and palisade-fence line. With the implementation of the proposals the view will only slightly change with the introduction of the platform shelter and partial replacement of the palisade-fence with a noise barrier in the mid-distance. The noise barrier will be solid and 2.5 meters high; specific details on material, colour, finish and construction will be agreed by condition. The noise barrier start and end points will reflect the extents of the John Street row of parking, as marked within Figure 13: Viewpoints 6 & 7. The existing trees and parking are expected to filter views of the proposed platform and noise

barrier. Although the platform and noise barrier will be considered new features within the view, it will not be incongruous with the existing features and their layout within the view.

- 5.2.12. **Viewpoint 8**, facing north-west from a footpath and John Street, demonstrates the view experienced by pedestrians and vehicles traveling north along the footpath and John Street. The proposed locations of the station platforms and carpark are not visible from this location due to the trees, scrub, and carparking along and within the railway corridor. The proposed element which will be visible from this viewpoint will be limited to the noise barrier. The noise barrier will replace the existing palisade-fencing along the boundary of the railway corridor and introduce a 2.5m high solid barrier at this location. The barrier will be partially screened from view by the existing trees along the fence and adjacent to the carparking along John Street.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of Landscape Character and Influence on Views

- 6.1.1. An understanding of the landscape character has informed the design process to ensure that the proposed development supports and enhances aspects of local urban design. The proposed scheme has been through a rigorous design process in order to bring benefits to the local urban design and hence for the townscape and landscape character of Ashington.
- 6.1.2. The main alteration to the Landscape Character is that of the site itself. Currently the site contains a carpark for local shops, an area of public open space, an unmaintained field, and a section of the railway corridor. At the eastern edge of the site, the carparking area and railway corridor are divided by a post and wire fencing with small trees, scrub, and grasses growing within the corridor. The public open space is a flat rectangular grassed area crossed via a paved footpath from the south-west corner to the north-east. Along Kenilworth Road is a footpath lined with five trees; the north-east corner of the green space contains a coppice of medium to large trees which create a green entrance to the area; while the eastern boundary of the open space is lined with trees which are in poor condition.
- 6.1.3. The proposals will re-introduce a station along the west boundary of the railway corridor. The station area will include two large shrub beds containing specimen trees and areas of amenity grass. The existing trees along Kenilworth Road and the north entrance to the site will be retained. This will provide a welcoming and green entranceway to those visiting Ashington. The proposals will also expand the existing carpark to the south and west into the existing public open space and unmaintained field. The loss of the public open space including approximately 14 trees of varying quality within this space will alter the immediate area. This area will change from an open green space to a carpark with a few trees at the boundaries, hedgerows separating the lines of carparking, along with tree and shrub planting along the entrance route to the station. Although there will be loss of some trees and fragments of hedgerows, the planting proposals will allow for an increase in tree numbers and quality of hedgerows and shrub planting within the site. The increase in tree and shrub variety will allow for an increase in biodiversity within the current open space, which is to be removed, as the current amenity grass creates an area limited to one grass species and is cut regularly, as such limiting the benefits of the green space to biodiversity.
- 6.1.4. Pedestrian connections to Station Road will be through the provision of a lift adjacent to the station road bridge from Wansbeck Square. A section of the existing footbridge parapet will be removed to accommodate pedestrian access to the lift directly from Wansbeck Square from the station platform. The detailed design of the lift will be subject to further technical assessments and details can be provided to the local planning authority to discharge a condition attached to any planning permission.
- 6.1.5. The changes to the site will be perceived from within the immediate area. The site is visually isolated due to the drop in level from Station Road and influenced by the urban and formal character of the adjacent residential and commercial properties. Some views will be available from the Ashington Cricket Club; however, the character of the area perceived by this green

space, will not be significantly altered as the proposals will be in character of the existing railway corridor and carpark. The retention of the existing tree line along Kenilworth Road will also continue to screen views into the site from the Cricket Club grounds. Views from John Street will be limited by retention of the existing line of trees and the proposed noise barrier, which will start at the south boundary and extend 122m north along the line of the existing palisade-fence. The existing residential, transport, and commercial development in the area greatly limits the visibility of the site and prevents the proposal from having any effect on the existing pattern of the landscape and townscape.

6.2. Conclusion

- 6.2.1. The scheme represents a development which will allow the site to continue to reflect the Town Centre character area within the Wansbeck Design Guide in addition to the Regional and National Landscape Character areas. The character of the area will continue to reflect the areas existing focus on transport and shopping, via car and train, and support Ashington Town centre. As such, the development would be considered characteristic for the location.
- 6.2.2. The proposal is located within the settlement boundary, while the majority of the site is located within the town centre boundary. As it will increase accessibility to the area, the scheme will promote sustainable connections. The extensive design review process, as detailed within the Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement, has enabled the scheme to be of good design and amenity, while delivering a well-designed place. The scheme will improve the opportunities for use of alternative modes of transport to the private car, helping to better meet the needs of those without access to the private car and encouraging those with access to the private car to consider using a more sustainable mode of travel, which will help reduce carbon emissions and deliver many environmental and health benefits including improving local air quality.
- 6.2.3. The proposed development will introduce a congruent and well contained extension of the existing commercial uses and buildings within central Ashington. The pattern of the townscape and overall landscape will not be altered by the proposals due to the strong definition of the site boundaries by the existing railway corridor; parking areas; treeline to the east; and the commercial buildings to the north.
- 6.2.4. This Landscape, Townscape and Visual Overview has demonstrated that the scheme as submitted, is compliant with all of the relevant development plan policies set out Chapter 1 section 1.4⁵. Key elements of the scheme which have been influenced by the policies within the Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007) saved policies and the Northumberland Local Plan Draft (2019) include:
- Designated wildlife and biodiversity areas and heritage assets will not be affected by this development. (Policies ENV1, ENV2, ENV9, G13)

⁵ The policies include Northumberland Local Plan Draft (2019) Policies STP1, QOP1, QOP2, QOP4, QOP6, TRA1, TCS2, ENV1, ENV2, ENV7, ENV9, INF5; Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007) saved policies GPI, RTC1, RTC5, GP4, GP5, GP6, G13, GP30, GP31, GP32, TI, and REC2.

- The landscape design has been guided by key design drivers such as views from the surrounding area, increase in biodiversity within the site, and the enhancement of the existing vegetation. (Policies ENV1, ENV2, QOP1, QOP2, QOP4, QOP6, GP5, GP6, GP30, GP31, GP32, REC2)
 - Proposed station will be located within Ashington Town Centre and partially within the designated Primary Shopping Area. It will increase accessibility to these areas and improve on the urban design of the existing carpark area. (Policies STP1, GP1, RTC1, RTC5, GP31)
 - Although there will be a loss of some protected open space, the proposals will introduce an increase of quality planting to the area. The station design also includes areas of amenity grass, reflective of the existing open space, which will be available for passengers and visitors. (INF5, GP5)
 - The construction of a station on this site is supported by transport policies which promote sustainable connections, such as rail, and the safeguarding of the site for railway facilities. (Policies TRA1, TRA5, T1)
 - The extensive design review process and public consultation has guided the scheme to uphold good design, amenity, and principles, while delivering a well-designed place. (Policies STP1, QOP1, QOP2, QOP6, GP31, REC2)
- 6.2.5. This Landscape and Townscape Overview has demonstrated that the proposed railway station and overall scheme accords with the relevant national and local planning policies and will continue to reflect the character of Ashington Town Centre.

7. Appendix A - References

1. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (Third Edition 2013, prepared by the Landscape Institute and IEMA) Core Document 25
2. The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment, Northumberland County Council, 2010
3. Natural England National Character Area profile, 2013
4. Wansbeck Design Guide, 2007
5. Historic England Website (<http://historicengland.org.uk>)
6. The Magic Website (<http://www.magic.gov.uk/>)
7. Google Maps

8. Appendix B - Figures

- Figure 1: Site Location Plan
- Figure 2: Planning and Landscape Designations
- Figure 3: Heritage Designations
- Figure 4: Access and Circulation
- Figure 5: National and County Landscape Character Areas
- Figure 6: Regional Landscape Character Types
- Figure 7: Local Landscape Character Areas
- Figure 8: Townscape Character Areas
- Figure 9: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Plan (combined Bare Land and visual Barriers) with Potential Visual Receptor Locations
- Figure 10: Viewpoint 1
- Figure 11: Viewpoints 2 & 3
- Figure 12: Viewpoints 4 & 5
- Figure 13: Viewpoints 6 & 7
- Figure 14: Viewpoint 8