

Photo: John Fielding



LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

Alton Water Sailing School - New Sailing School Facilities

for the
Royal Hospital School

July 2022

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CHARTERED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

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1.0 Introduction

1. This landscape appraisal accompanies a full planning application for new teaching and changing facilities at the existing sailing school on the banks of Alton Water. The Site is in Stutton parish and is located on the east side of the existing sailing complex and cafe building at the Alton Water visitor centre. Appraisal is being provided because the landscape is sensitive - the Site is close to the edge of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is also in one of Babergh's 'Special Landscape Areas'. The Site is also *visually* sensitive as the area is well used recreational resource with footpaths to the south and east at close range. Studies for the (yet to be adopted) Stutton Neighbourhood Plan identified that views around the reservoir are highly valued by both local people and visitors.
2. This report supported the proposal by providing an assessment of the impact of the proposal upon the local landscape - its character and features - and on visual receptors. This culminated in a strategy for landscape enhancement for the mitigation of potential (very minor) adverse effects.
3. The appraisal shows the Site has capacity for the building without harm to the character of the local area, or to views.

The purpose of landscape and visual appraisal

4. The purpose of Landscape and Visual Appraisal is to assess the effects of change. It does this through an analysis of the local landscape, its features and character, and the visual conditions. It then considers the degree and type of landscape and visual change that would result from a development. It predicts the impacts of those effects, given the baseline landscape and visual conditions and their sensitivity. The outcome of that process is to achieve avoidance, reduction or mitigation of any detrimental effects identified on landscape, and on views/visual amenity. A landscape appraisal ultimately helps promote sensitive design for new development.
5. The appraisal follows the principles set out in GLVIA 3¹. In line with the current guidance, the effects on landscape, and on views/visual amenity were appraised separately.
6. The report first presents baseline information about the landscape context and character of the area. It provides policy context, constraints put forward by any designations, summarises available landscape character assessments and analyses aerial photos and mapping.



Figure 1 - Location Plan

7. A Site visit provided the opportunity to assess the likely visual impacts of the proposal. Following this initial assessment, an iterative process with the designers followed which sought to 'design out' or minimise any adverse effects identified.
8. The final proposals are then subject to formal appraisal, of both landscape and visual effects to assess the residual impacts. These are identified and presented and their magnitude and significance is judged. Details of the strategy for mitigation are included.

Professional credentials

9. This report was undertaken by Kirsten Bowden and Lucy Batchelor-Wylam, both Chartered Landscape Architects and members of the Landscape Institute.

¹ - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - 3rd Edition. Landscape Institute and IEMA. 2013.

2.0 Site context

1. The Site is to the east of the sailing club at Alton Water. Access is provided from the link road to the south, that forms a junction with the Holbrook Road (B1080). The Site is slightly sloping, towards the northeast, dropping from about 25.3m to 23.6m near the water's edge. Willow trees are scattered along the shore at intervals. Whilst the Site is 'countryside' in planning terms, its feel is already highly influenced by the adjoining water sports centre.
2. Land cover on the Site itself is currently regularly mown grass and a scrubby hawthorn hedge. A mature oak tree sits just to the northwest of the Site and is a skyline feature. To the north and east the edge of the reservoir wraps around the Site, and to the west is an enclosed compound used for the storage of dinghies and the existing sailing centre building. The Sailing Centre also comprises a collection of coloured shipping containers (2.6m high), and timber clad sheds. Beyond there is car parking and a play area.
3. From the site, open views across the water to the north and east are experienced. To the east is the dam (topped with a footpath offering views back towards the site) and glimpses of Holbrook beyond. Trees fringing the top of the valleysides tend to form the skyline in views in every direction.
4. Land use to the south is open grassland that surrounds the reservoir here, with farmland beyond. The access road continues past the site to the south and connects to the water plant to the east. The road is also part of the circular route around the reservoir, for walking and cycling. The reservoir shores are a key local recreational resource which connects to Holbrook Bay and the shores of the Stour estuary. The site is therefore in a visually sensitive location.

Image: Google

Figure 2.1: Aerial view - context



Site



Location of context photo
(see page 6)

2.0 Site context *continued*:-

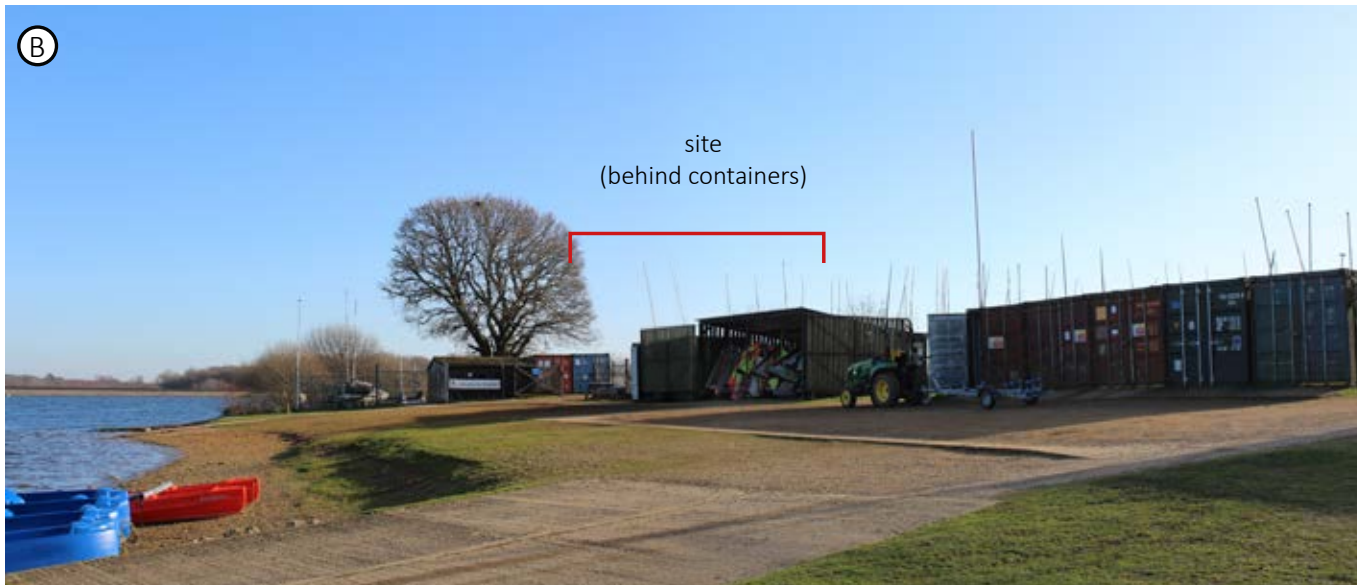
Ⓒ → Location of context photo
(see next pages)

□ Approximate position of new structure

Figure 2.2: Aerial view - site setting



2.0 Site context *continued*:-



2.0 Site context *continued:-*



3.0 Proposals

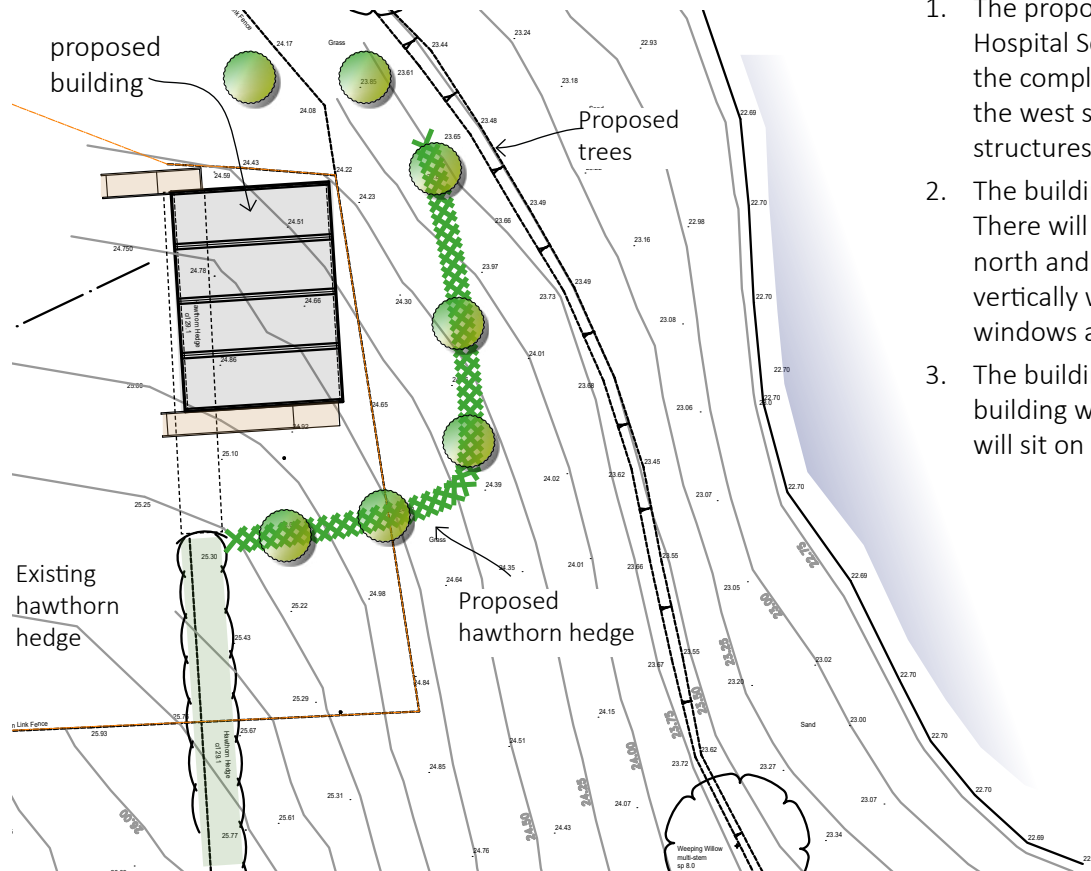


Figure 3.1 Site plan

4. A section of hedge circa. 15m long is to be removed to make way for the building. Whilst this has a minor adverse effect on the landscape, it makes sense to connect the new facility into the compound, rather than place it beyond the hedge. It is proposed to replace the hedge to be removed with a section of new native hedge, of similar length, to the south and east of the building to provide enclosure and screening. Scattered trees encircling the structure will provide further opportunity to assimilate the new building and enhance the landscape.

1. The proposed cabin is to be a changing room and teaching facility for pupils of the Royal Hospital School. Its frontage will be placed in line with the existing hedge on the edge of the complex. Access into the building will be provided from the dinghy compound on the west side via timber ramps. The building will read as part of the existing cluster of structures at the yacht club.
2. The building is a group of portacabin-scale units, assembled 4 together to form a block. There will be 4 windows on the west side and 3 on the east, and a door to each of the north and south elevations. They are to be faced in green fibre cement boards arranged vertically with a woodgrain finish. The roof will be a dark coloured felt finish. The windows and fascia boards will be a dark grey colour. The paths/decks will be timber.
3. The building is 2.8m in height and the levels will be dropped slightly to accommodate the building with a FFL of 24.750. It will not have poured foundations, instead, its metal legs will sit on concrete pads. The building is therefore semi-permanent in nature.



Figure 3.2: Proposed section through the proposed hedge

3.0 Proposals *continued*:-

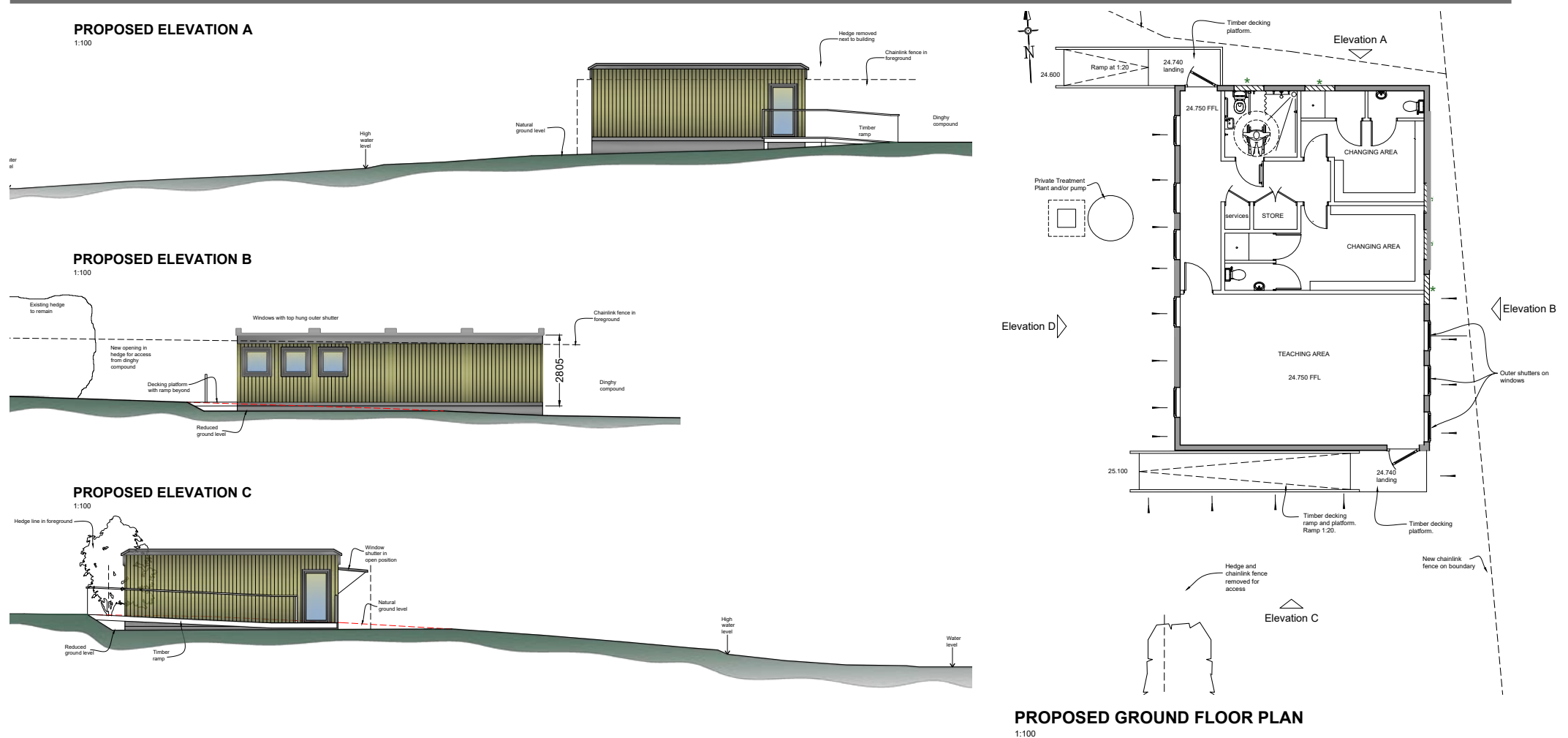


Figure 3.2 Proposals

From the scheme drawings by
Architectural Management Ltd.

4.0 Designations and policy

1. The site has the following constraints:

Heritage

2. There will be no adverse impacts to designated heritage areas/features as a result of this development. There is no Conservation Area in Stutton and the nearest Listed Building is nearly 500m away and has no intervisibility with the Site.

Rights of Way

3. There are a number of footpaths in the area. Footpath users will experience close range views into the Site. Photographed views from these are presented later in the report and the likely effects and impacts are appraised.

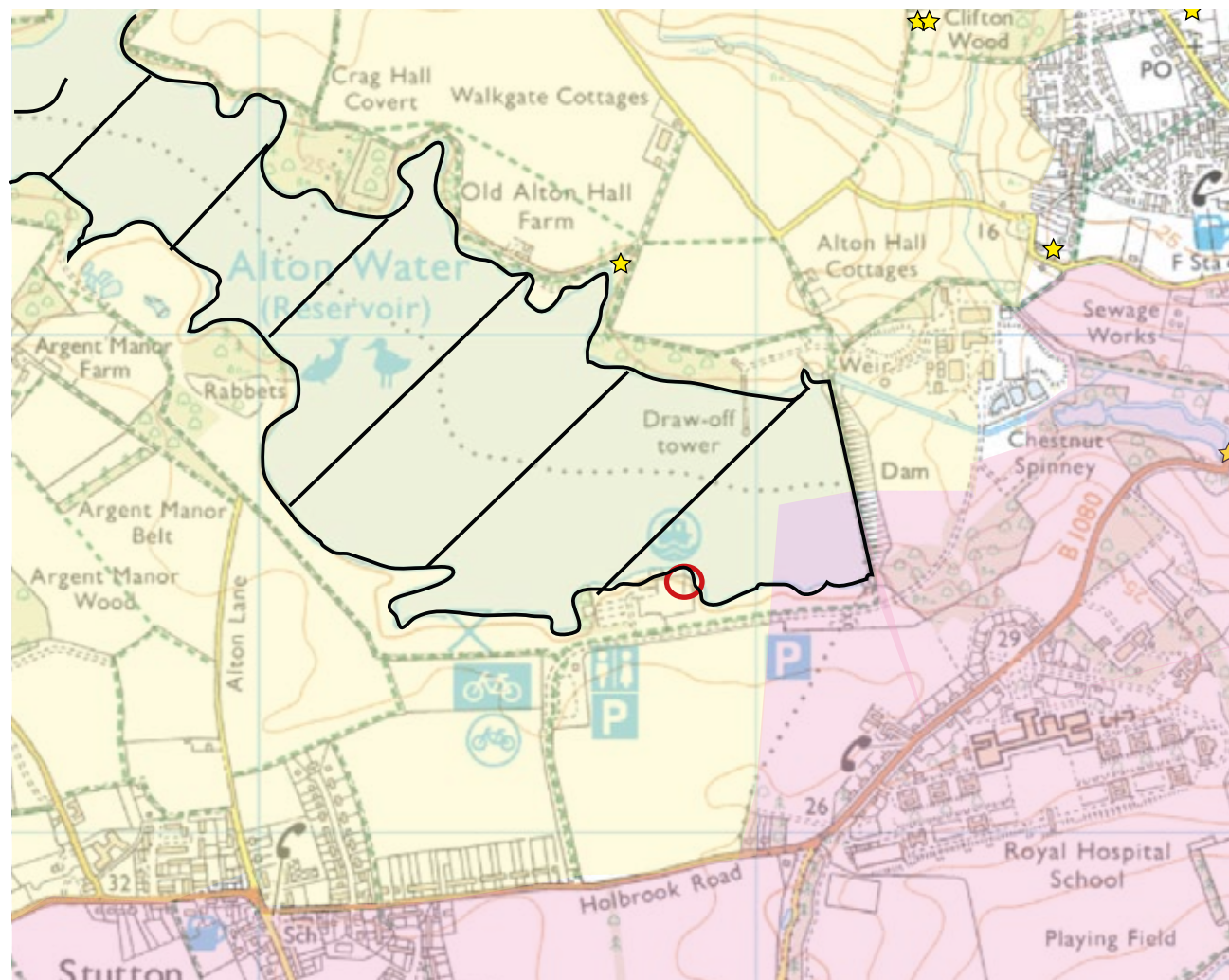
Ecology

4. Refer to PEA report by T4 Ecology Limited.








Arboriculture

5. No trees fall within the Site area.

Figure 3: Designations



KEY

	Site		Footpaths
	Special Landscape Area		Grade II Listed buildings
	Alton Water County Wildlife Site		Grade I Listed building
	Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB		

4.0 Designations and policy *continued*:-

General Planning policy

NPPF

1. The NPPF sets out national planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Paragraph 8 states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, which are economic, social and environmental. With regard to the environmental role of sustainable development, the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; helping to improve biodiversity.
2. NPPF para 127: Requires good design and states that states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:
 - will function well and add to the overall quality of the area,
 - 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)
3. Para 130 guides new design. It states;

Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

 - a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) 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);
 - d) 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;

AONB

4. Alton Water enjoys a high value landscape setting on the Shotley peninsula. The Site sits approximately 180m beyond the edge of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which includes the Royal Hospital School itself. However, given its proximity, the Site is likely to be considered part of the setting of the AONB. DEFRA guidance states 'decisions and activities must consider the potential effect (development) will have within the AONB and land outside its boundary.'
5. Responsibility for the AONB in Stutton is shared between Babergh District Council and other local authorities who are empowered under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to 'take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'. The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty of an area. Development proposals must therefore be considered in terms of impacts on perceptions of natural beauty.
6. The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Partnership publishes a Management Plan for the area every 5 years. The special qualities of the AONB are summarised in the 2018-2023 plan. The key source of evidence is cited as the 'Natural Beauty and Special Qualities Indicators V1.8 Version Date: 21 November 2016' by LDA Design. The features of value are summarised as (p19) ¹;

'The unique quality of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is defined by the rich mosaic of landscape types in a relatively small area. Coast, estuaries, heath, forest, farmland and coastal market towns together create an intimate pattern, an important part of Britain's natural and cultural heritage. Other less tangible features, such as its tranquillity, lack of significant congestion and light pollution, and its relatively undeveloped nature, contribute to the special character of the area' .

¹ <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/AONB-Management-Plan-20132018.pdf>

4.0 Designations and policy *continued*:-

Valued Landscape Assessment

7. A 'Valued Landscape Assessment' was undertaken for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Additional Project Area by Alison Farmer Associates in 2020. The Site is in the 'Alton Water' character area. The report states the special qualities are particularly well expressed in the 'Western fringes of Holbrook' and 'Land south of Holbrook Park'. The local special landscape qualities are described as:
- Notable areas of ancient woodland form skyline features, revealing evidence of former traditional management
 - Alton Water is valued for its birds offering breeding bird habitat ... as a refuge/roost for wildfowl during winter months.
 - Strong recreation focus around Alton Water popular for fishing, walking etc
 - Important habitats for stag beetle to the west of Holbrook.
 - Rural back-water and tranquillity away from main roads.
 - Notable landmarks and historic buildings coupled with rural lanes, veteran trees and historic enclosure pattern, gives rise to tangible time depth.
8. The report puts forward suggestions of opportunities for conservation and enhancement:
- Improve landscape structure of arable farmland through improved management of hedgerows with associated field margins and reinstatement of hedgerows and woodland copses where they emphasise landform and define valley landscapes.
 - Manage areas of ancient semi-natural woodland through coppicing and appropriate woodland management regimes.
 - Record and survey veteran trees, manage existing trees to prolong life and plant new trees to become future veterans.
 - Avoid the expansion of settlements which undermine the current dominance of historic core and settlement integrity.
 - Manage recreation pressures in this landscape and avoid new development which detracts from the rural character and tranquillity of the area.
 - Avoid the urbanisation of B1080 where it undermines the perceived separation and individual identity of Stutton and Holbrook.
 - Improve recreational links from Alton Water to local settlement and the Orwell and

Stour Estuaries.

- Enhance views to open water from the valley sides, through vegetation management and removal to create scenic vistas.
9. However, the large scale waterworks complex, excluded from the AONB designated area, has an adverse impact on both the setting of the village and the AONB. The buildings are not well integrated into the landscape, are stark against the unvegetated banks of the dam and accompanied by detracting elements such as coloured security fencing and plant.
10. The AFA report states:
- Whilst the margins of the reservoir have a natural character the presence of more engineered features such as the reservoir dam... appear intrusive in the otherwise rural context.*

Planning policy and the AONB

11. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states 'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes'. para 176: 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. ... The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas'.
12. The landscape setting of the Site is therefore to be considered within the setting of 'Valued' landscape under the definition provided in Box 5.1 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (3rd Ed). (In any event, whether or not the site qualifies as a 'valued landscape' planning policy at all levels requires development to be sympathetic to its landscape setting.)
13. The AONB Management Plan responds (p46) and says that it recognises this does not mean that development should not take place in AONBs, rather that it should not detract from the purposes of the AONB designation.
14. With respect to development the 2018-23 Management Plan it states (p47):

4.0 Designations and policy *continued*:-

- Where existing development, be that housing or business, is expanded the impacts of incremental developments need to be considered against the purposes of the AONB. This could include negative impacts on tranquillity, such as increased traffic movements, lighting etc and need to be judged against the cumulative impacts on the designated landscapes. A similar impact is possible from developments **within the setting of the AONB**.(p35)
- Development should respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

SLA

15. A further indicator of local landscape value is the Special Landscape Area in which the Site is located. This policy designation, covered under old Local Plan Policy CRO2, is soon to be replaced by a district wide policy directing a landscape character based approach in the new Joint Local Plan (currently under examination). This will require all development to minimise impacts on the landscape and enhance landscape character. The Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk Landscape Guidance is now in place to provide direction.
16. Policy LP19 of the new JLP specifically focuses on landscape. It states:
1. *To protect and enhance landscape character development must:*
 - a. *Integrate positively with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforce the local distinctiveness and identity of individual settlements.*
 - b. *Proposals must be sensitive to their landscape and visual amenity impacts (including on dark skies and tranquil areas); subject to siting, design, lighting, use of materials and colour, along with the associated mitigation measures;*
 - c. *Enhance and protect landscape character and values and heritage assets such as; locally characteristic landscape features, for example by use of materials which complement the local individual landscape character, archaeological and historic patterns of settlement and land use and designations; being demonstrably informed*
- by local guidance, in particular the Council's Joint Landscape Guidance, the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment.*
- d. Consider the topographical cumulative impact on landscape sensitivity.*
17. Whilst the SLA policy will not form part of the new Local Plan, the removal this local landscape designation does not mean that the qualities of the landscape that led to designation have somehow changed. The past inclusion of part of the study area within a Special Landscape Area is therefore relevant to this study and forms part of the area's designation history.
18. **The JLP also has a specific policy covering Sites on or near the AONB:**
- Policy LP20 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*
- The Councils will support development in or near the AONBs that:*
- a. *Conserves and enhances the landscape and scenic beauty;*
 - b. *Integrates positively with the character of the area and reinforces local distinctiveness of the AONB;*
 - c. *Are sensitive to their landscape and visual impacts (including on dark skies and tranquil areas); subject to siting, design, lighting, use of materials and colour, along with the associated mitigation measures;*
 - d. *Supports the provision and maintenance of local services and facilities and assets(including affordable housing), so long as it is commensurate with the character and objectives of the AONB;*
 - e. *Demonstrates special regard to proposals that enhance and protect landscape character and values and heritage assets in the AONB such as; locally characteristic landscape features, for example by use of materials which complement the local individual landscape character, archaeological and historic patterns of settlement and land use and designations.*

5.0 Landscape Character

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

1. Planning policy at all levels now sets out the importance of development having a sympathetic interaction with its surrounding landscape. In order to understand how landscape might be affected by development and how a proposal can best be accommodated sympathetically, it is necessary to first define and understand its character. The first step is to identify and refer to available published Landscape Character Assessments. These provide the baseline conditions for understanding what effects development might have on local landscape character and the implications relating to planning policy which requires enhancement and conservation of those characteristics.

Suffolk Landscape Assessment

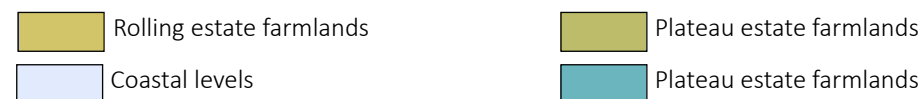
1. At the national level the site is within the 'Suffolk Coast and Heaths' national character area (No. 82). This is a belt of sandy landscape that stretches from Yarmouth to the north, to Harwich in the south. More relevant and offering a finer grain of detail is the Suffolk County Council Landscape Character Assessment¹ which was first published in 2008 (updated 2011). The site is in the Rolling Estate Farmland landscape type. On the peninsula, this type is found in a narrow strip along the south side of the Belstead Brook and then along the coastal edge of the Shotley peninsula to Brantham on the Stour estuary.
2. This is a valley side landscape of deep loams, with parklands plantations and Ancient Woodlands. The key characteristics are listed as:
 - Gently sloping valley sides and plateau fringes
 - Generally deep loamy soils
 - An organic pattern of fields modified by later realignment
 - Important foci for early settlement
 - Coverts and plantations with some ancient woodlands
 - Landscape parks with a core of wood pasture
 - Location for mineral workings and related activity, especially in the Gipping valley

Image reproduced from www.suffolklandscape.org.uk.



Shotley Peninsula Landscape Assessment

Figure 5.1 Suffolk Landscape Character



1 <http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/>

5.0 Landscape Character *continued*:-

3. The AONB management group also has published their own Landscape Character Assessment - The Shotley Peninsula Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by AFA. It developed the landscape types described out in the Suffolk County Council 2008 character assessment. The Site is in a type called simply 'Estate Farmlands'².
4. The special qualities described in the type include 'spring cereal crops and their important wildlife, large open views from the uplands down to the Orwell and Stour estuaries, ancient woodlands, distinctive field patterns and designed parkland, landscapes with ancient trees'.

Stutton Neighbourhood Plan LCA

5. The parish commissioned an LCA in 2020 (from this author) which is available on the NP website. Although the Plan is not yet 'made' and therefore of limited weight in planning terms, the Character Assessment is useful nonetheless.
6. The Site is in a character area called 'Fringe Character Area 2'. It describes a belt of landscape between the northeastern edge of the village and the reservoir. It describes it as '*Plateau and valley edge landscape made up predominantly of large open fields growing high value crops. Woodland is generally absent but present in adjoining areas and fringes views along the horizon. Views can be open and long*'.
7. The study presented a series of Management Objectives for each character area. FCA2 relevant to this proposal is: '*Avoid, or effectively mitigate, impacts from further expansion of recreational or tourist related land uses at Alton Water in order to preserve landscape character and open views. Indirect impacts from recreational or tourist-related land uses must also be carefully considered, such as from increased traffic and effects on the rural tranquillity must also be fully assessed.*'

Summary

8. The aspects of value in the setting of the Site are set out in a number of available assessments, which have been briefly summarised here. It is important these are sympathetically addressed in any development proposal.
9. The following points set out the principles that would define acceptable development that would harmonise with landscape character, protect visual amenity and protect the scenic beauty of the (adjoining) AONB:
 - The area is visually sensitive owing to the often flat and open landscape, which has limited capacity to accommodate development without change being noticeable from the wider landscape. Development must, therefore, be low-rise and small in scale.
 - Avoid development that impinges on the skyline - views can be long and open in this area, and the distinctive RHS clocktower should remain an unchallenged skyline feature.
 - Ensure the scenic beauty of the AONB is not compromised. Avoid development with significant negative impact on the character of the local landscape, i.e. ensure the field patterns and vegetative features are conserved, the estate farmland character is conserved.
 - Ensure the qualities of the views are conserved and visitor enjoyment of the landscape is not eroded.

2 <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/AONB-Management-Plan-20132018.pdf>

6.0 Landscape appraisal results





1. This appraisal considers effects on landscape under three headings;
 - a) physical effects on the land and its vegetative features
 - b) effects on the character of the landscape
 - c) effects on people's perceptions, particularly of tranquillity.

CONCLUSION: The development will not have a significant adverse effect on any of the three factors. Any new native structural planting associated with the development would lead to landscape enhancement over time.

a) Impact on physical landscape /features			b) Impact on landscape character			c) Impact on perceptions/tranquillity		
Factor	Nature of impact	Value judgement	Factor	Nature of impact	Value judgement	Factor	Nature of impact	Value judgement
Value / sensitivity of receptor:	- Native hedge present - Site is otherwise amenity grassland with low intrinsic ecological value. - No trees will be affected	LOW sensitivity	Value / sensitivity of receptor:	The Site is not in the AONB but views from the edge of the AONB are possible to the east - the Site is within its setting. The Site is within a Special Landscape Area and adjacent to a County Wildlife Site. Setting has high recreational value with Alton Water circular path/cycle route passing to the south. It is a valued and potentially sensitive landscape, however given the scale of the proposal, the landscape is only moderately sensitive.	MOD sensitivity	Value / sensitivity of receptor:	There is a strong feeling of tranquillity, in parts, around Alton Water but less so in the vicinity of the sailing club which has movement and noise during the day with visitors coming and going. Car movements can be frequent in summer months. Nevertheless the tranquillity of the expanse of open water dominates perceptions.	MOD sensitivity
Magnitude of effect:	Loss of circa .15m of hawthorn hedge and small area of amenity grass. However, as noted in the PEA, this is a young hedge, and the section could be suitably re-planted/ replaced.	SLIGHT	Magnitude of effect:	Effects will be limited given the low rise scale of the proposal which will have a negligible effect on the character of the wider landscape. No lighting at night anticipated. Effects will be very localised. No deterioration of natural beauty, or features contributing to landscape character anticipated. Development would not be readily apparent or discordant - will appear integrated with adjacent land use.	VERY SLIGHT	Magnitude of effect:	Sensitivity of perceptions to a new portacabin structure is low. Increase in visitor numbers is not expected as result of the development - RHS school pupils already using Alton Water.	SLIGHT
Impact significance:	No significant adverse impact	NEGLIGIBLE (neutral)	Impact significance:	Slightly noticeable change with introduction of structure, but no significant adverse impacts.	LOW (negative)	Impact significance:	No significant adverse impact.	NEGLIGIBLE
Recommended mitigation	New native hedge planting recommended to contain Site - good capacity to compensate losses. New planting would constitute and improvement to landscape structure and wildlife value.		Recommended mitigation	Use native planting to help integrate building into landscape and provide screening.		Recommended mitigation	New hedging would help screen the movement of people and provide additional privacy for students.	

7.0 Visual appraisal results

KEY

	Site boundary		Viewpoint photo locations
	Footpaths		Approx. visual envelope - the area from where the new dwellings will be seen.

Viewpoints

1. Visual impact appraisal selects a number of representative points from where views of a development will be possible. It assesses the degree of change, the nature of the effects that will result and the significance of those changes on the receptor.
2. The four points selected for assessment were publicly accessible - as mapped and presented on figure 7.1.
3. The photos were taken with a Canon 700D SLR camera with a 50mm fixed lens. The panoramic photos presented are made up from two or three consecutive images, with approx. a 50% overlap. They are Type 1 Visual Representation (for illustrative purposes and not be treated as 'verifiable'). This level of accuracy was sufficient for a project of this scale/nature.
4. Note on receptor sensitivity: During passage through the landscape, certain activities or locations may be specifically associated with the experience and enjoyment of the landscape, such as the use of paths, tourist or scenic routes and associated viewpoints. Such receptors are considered more sensitive especially in designated landscapes. Views from residences are also considered sensitive owing to the regular nature and duration of the viewing experience. Views from highways can be more fleeting (although often experienced by high numbers) and views from workplaces, where the focus of attention is internal, are also considered less sensitive. Viewpoint sensitivity is primarily judged by receptor type, but can be adjusted, for example varying with distance.
5. A site visit was undertaken on January 21st 2022. Weather conditions were reasonably sunny and bright.

Figure 7.1 Viewpoint locations



7.0 Visual appraisal results *continued*:-

Viewpoint 1



Receptor sensitivity (to change proposed): MODERATE

Nature of current views:

These photos show short to mid-range view towards the sailing school from public viewpoints to the southeast. The reservoir wraps behind the sailing school which occupies a shallow promontory. The hedge, which has an uneven appearance, partly screens the yard and the low rise structures within, but its use for boat storage is apparent. Willows are scattered along the shoreline and a birch and oak tree break the skyline, along with the dingy masts. The skylines on the opposite shores are very wooded and contribute positively to the views. The open water is scenic but the sailing school has a utilitarian appearance and does not itself enhance views of the landscape, although it reinforces perceptions of the recreational function of the reservoir.

Predicted visual effects at year one:

The new cabin will be a noticeable addition to the scene, sitting outside the line of the existing hedge. It will read as part of the group of structures and activities at the sailing school. At 2.8m high it will not project into the skyline, and the oak tree will continue to form the skyline behind it. Whilst noticeable, its green colouring will ensure it is not prominent. It will have a very minor adverse visual impact on the public views from the southeast.

MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL EFFECT: **SLIGHT**

IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE: **LOW adverse**

Predicted visual effects at year 15:

With growth of a new enclosing hedge and maturing of some scattered trees, providing enclosure, the Cabin will be well integrated after 15 years and have negligible impact.

MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL EFFECT: **NEGLIGIBLE**

IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE: **Negligible**

Viewpoint 2



7.0 Visual appraisal results *continued*:-

Viewpoint 3



Receptor sensitivity (to change proposed): MODERATE

Nature of current views:

Mid-length views from the footpath that crosses the dam to the east. Open water dominates the view and beyond, the shallow slopes of the reservoir form a narrow strip, rising to meet a big sky overhead. The shallow slopes are partly wooded and the distant skyline is composed of tree cover. The sailing school is perceived in the centre of the views as a cluster of masts, structures and low-rise buildings, partly absorbed by tree cover. The expansiveness of the sky and open water help provide a perception of and tranquillity sought out by visitors to the reservoir.

Predicted visual effects at year one:

The proposed cabin will be detectable on the left side of the sailing school complex. However, its green and grey tones will mean it will not be obvious addition, when seen from this range. The height of the trees that back the sailing school mean it will sit well below the skyline. It will read as part of the complex and will have little visual impact at this range. The expansiveness of the water dominates the views and minor changes on the opposite shore will be barely perceptible at this range.

MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL EFFECT: **VERY SLIGHT**

IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE: **LOW adverse/ NEGLIGIBLE**

Predicted visual effects at year 15:

With growth of the hedge and maturing of some scattered trees, providing enclosure, the Cabin will be well integrated after 15 years and have negligible impact.

MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL EFFECT: **NEGLIGIBLE**

IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE: **NEGLIGIBLE**

Viewpoint 4



8.0 Summary and Conclusions

1. Review of the designations and available landscape character assessments, followed up with a site visit, led to the conclusion that the Site for the new sailing school facility is in a potentially sensitive and susceptible landscape. It would be considered a 'landscape of value' in the new LI guidance - 'Guidance Note TG02/21 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations' (published in 2019)'. Given its position within the setting of the AONB, its SLA designation, the adjacent County Wildlife Site and its high scenic and recreational value it would be predicted to fulfil the relevant criteria.
2. However, the proposal appraised in this report is of a sufficiently small scale, and sympathetic design (in terms of colour), that the landscape has capacity to absorb it without harm.
3. In terms of **landscape character** the impacts are judged **LOW** to **NEGLIGIBLE** - no 'significant' impacts were identified. Effects and will be very localised:
 - The main impact will be the removal of a length of scrubby hedge - this can be mitigated by replacement planting to the south and east of the new cabin, along with some new trees.
 - The small scale of the (only semi-permanent) structure means impacts on the landscape character LCT 'Rolling Estate Farmlands' will be negligible.
 - The Site is attached to the existing sailing school facilities. It does not represent a new type of land use or cause intrusion into farmland.
 - The Site will not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the AONB or on its scenic beauty. The low rise cabin will be enclosed with boundary planting so it becomes screened by a native hedge and scattered trees.
 - The proposal will not have a detrimental impact on Heritage. There are no listed buildings that will be affected by the proposal.
4. In terms of **visual impacts** the impacts are judged **LOW** to **NEGLIGIBLE** - no 'significant' impacts were identified. The visual change that will be experienced is generally very minor in magnitude, and/or the nature of the change is harmonious with the composition of the existing views.
 - There are no views from dwellings so no there will be no impact on residential amenity.
 - The immediate slopes of the reservoir shore here face north and are not generally seen from the AONB to the south and east. The Site is screened from Stutton and the main road to the south by tree cover and falling contours. There will be no visual impact on the village or on public roads.
 - The only receptors that will experience a degree of change are the footpath users within the immediate environs of the Site. They would be considered sensitive to visual change as they are engaged with the views and taking advantage of the amenity on offer around the reservoir. People to the south and east of the Site will experience a minor degree of visual change. This will reduce over time with the establishment of native boundary vegetation. There is good scope for appropriate mitigation of the minor adverse effects identified.
5. It is considered the development accords with Babergh's planning policies as well as the guidance set out in the AONB Management Plan; the small scale proposal will have no adverse effects on the special qualities of the adjacent AONB, so the development will not be contrary to policy CR02. With regard to the Special Landscape Area policy (CR04) it is also considered the proposal will cause no harm to the special landscape qualities of the area.
6. The proposal would not contradict the principles set out in the Stutton Neighbourhood Plan LCA guidance, for the parish character area FCA2. Namely, the development is low-rise and small in scale, it would not impinge on the skyline, and the scenic qualities of the AONB and local views would be conserved.
7. In landscape and visual terms this proposal is supported. Further detail on the planting proposals should be made subject to a planning condition.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Summary of LVIA methodology

This study follows the guidance in ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3’ (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd Edition, April 2012). Impacts to landscape and visual receptors are considered separately. Landscape Character assessment methodology is set out in ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland’ (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

Values of sensitivity of the receptor (landscape or view type) were cross-referenced against the size and nature of the change likely to occur. Text justifications are provided to validate and explain the judgements reached.

Landscape methodology

ESTABLISH VISUAL BASELINE AND IDENTIFY RECEPTORS

Physical receptors comprise landscape features such as trees or other natural aspects and are identified through site visits. More significant often is the impact on the local landscape character. Identify character receptors through evaluation of available character assessments as well as through site work to establish contribution made by site and any local variances. Assess value and sensitivity of receptors - see tables in Appendix 2.

PREDICT EFFECTS ON RECEPTORS

Describe the likely effects on each landscape receptor and assess the magnitude of the effects likely to arise. Include consideration of the effect of time passing by comparing likely effects at Year 1 to those likely at Year 15 to understand the effect of maturing vegetation. Effects should be assigned a positive, negative or neutral value.

ASSESS SIGNIFICANCE

Derive judgement of the significance of landscape effects by cross referencing the values of magnitude and sensitivity using the table below and through the application of professional judgements. Judgements must be described and justified fully in the text.

Visual methodology

ESTABLISH VISUAL BASELINE AND IDENTIFY RECEPTORS

Map the area within which the site is visible on foot or from a vehicle, assuming an observer eye height of approx. 1.7m. Within this ‘zone of visual influence’ identify the number and type of visual receptors. i.e. the routes, places and people, that are likely to be affected by the proposals. Select representative and specific viewpoints for the assessment of likely changes to the view and describe the current views. Provide illustrative photographs of each viewpoint. Assess value and sensitivity of receptors - see tables in Appendix 3.

PREDICT EFFECTS ON VIEWPOINTS

Describe the likely visual effects on each viewpoint and assess the magnitude of effects likely to arise. Include consideration of the effect of time passing by comparing likely effects at Year 1 to those likely at Year 15 to understand the effect of maturing vegetation on the selected viewpoints. Visual effects should be assigned a positive, negative or neutral value.

ASSESS SIGNIFICANCE

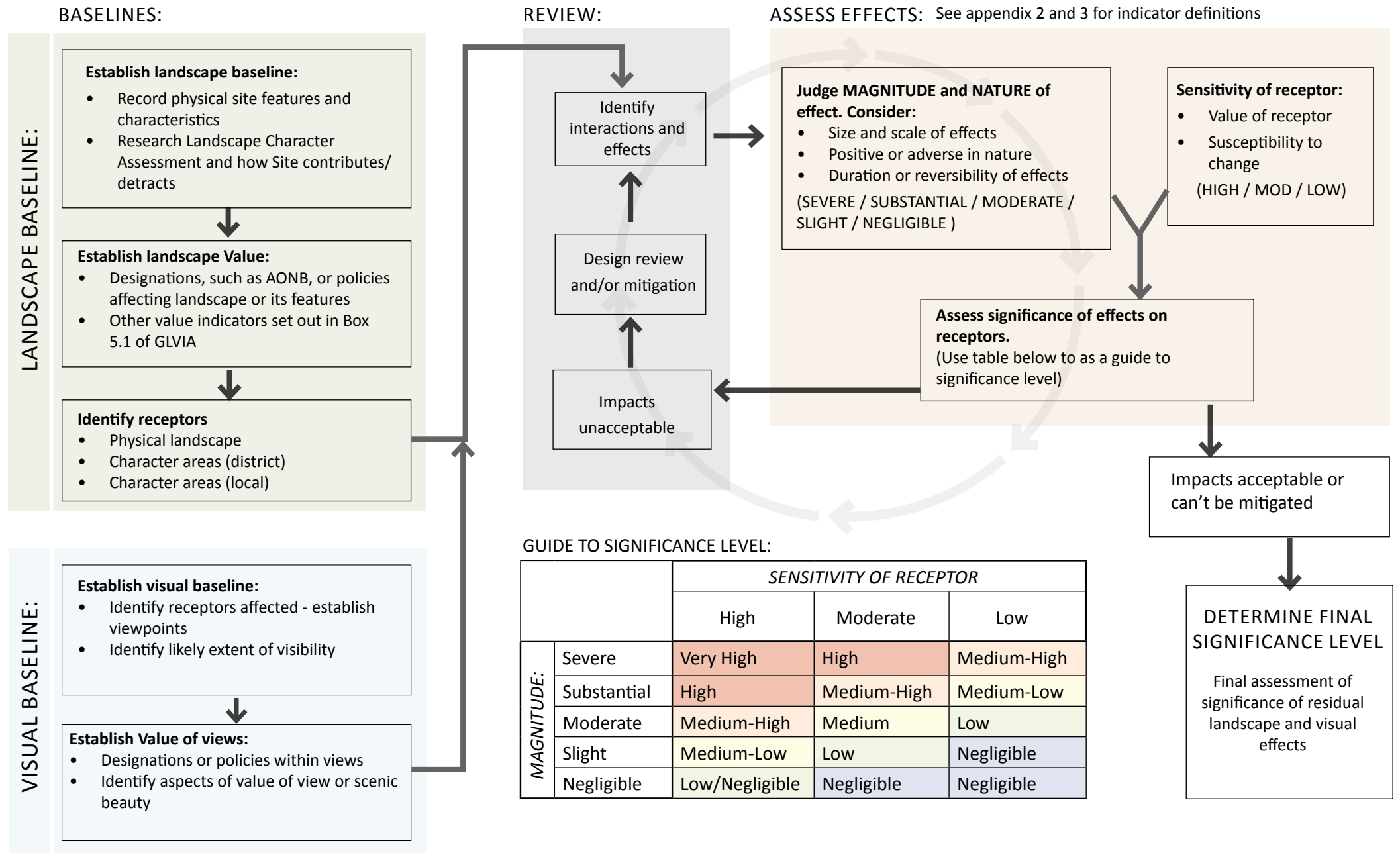
Derive judgement of the significance of visual effects by cross referencing the values of magnitude and sensitivity using the table below and adjusted if necessary through the application of professional judgement. Judgements must be described and justified fully in the text. Values mid- way between those shown can be attributed if the situation is felt to be transitory.

Magnitude of effect	Sensitivity of receptor		
	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
Severe	<i>Very high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium-high</i>
Substantial	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium-high</i>	<i>Medium-low</i>
Moderate	<i>Medium-high</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
Slight	<i>Medium-low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Negligible</i>
Negligible	<i>Low/Negligible</i>	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Negligible</i>

Significance values in red and orange are deemed ‘significant’ and cause unacceptable effects and strenuous efforts should be made by designers to reduce the significance level.

Values in green or blue are not deemed significant and represent an acceptable level of landscape or visual impact. Values in yellow are dependent on context and significance should be fully discussed in the assessment. Efforts to mitigate effects should be fully explored to reduce impacts to an acceptable level. Finally, proposals for mitigation are presented to prevent/avoid/reduce the potential negative effects identified. Any ‘significant’ residual effects remaining after mitigation should be identified.

Appendix 2: Landscape and visual assessment process summarised



Appendix 3: VISUAL assessment - explanation of terms used:

VISUAL RECEPTORS - EXAMPLE INDICATORS		
HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
<p>People whose activities are focused on enjoyment of the scenic views and perceptual aspects of the landscape. Recreational users in high value landscapes. People experiencing views of long duration - eg views from the living areas of residential dwellings.</p>	<p>People with enjoyment of the landscape is a moderate priority and the landscape is of moderate interest. Walkers in non-designated landscapes. People experiencing views of modest duration eg views from the upper floors of dwellings, or where view very oblique. Views from scenic drives or railways.</p>	<p>People not prioritising enjoyment of the landscape, or their focus of activity means the landscape is only of cursory interest, or their experience is brief as they pass through in a vehicle. - Places of recreation where the landscape is not relevant - Places of Work - Roads and railways in lower value landscapes</p>

VALUE OF VIEW - EXAMPLE INDICATORS		
HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
<p>View over international or national statutory designated landscape, or view with high levels of scenic value and/or strong cultural associations. Valued by regular visitors. High visual amenity.</p>	<p>View over landscape designated at a local or district level, or other view with moderate scenic value and/or cultural associations. Valued by occasional visitors. Moderate visual amenity.</p>	<p>View over undesignated, 'everyday' landscape, or view with lower scenic value and lacking cultural associations. Valued by local people but not a focus for visitors. Low visual amenity.</p>

MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE - EXAMPLE INDICATORS				
SEVERE	SUBSTANTIAL	MEDIUM	SLIGHT	NEGLIGIBLE
<p>Proposals would introduce very dominant visual effects, becoming the most prominent aspect within a view causing major deterioration to qualities of view and major loss of visual amenity. And /or permanent or irreversible change.</p>	<p>Proposals would introduce large scale visual effects, becoming a prominent aspect within a view, causing notable deterioration to qualities of view and loss of visual amenity. And /or permanent or almost irreversible change.</p>	<p>Noticeable visual effects, causing modest deterioration to qualities of view and some loss of visual amenity. And /or moderate to long term or partly reversible change.</p>	<p>Very little change or minor visual effects, causing a small degree of deterioration to qualities of view and little loss of visual amenity. And /or moderate to short term or generally reversible change.</p>	<p>No change or almost imperceptible visual effects, causing negligible deterioration to qualities of view and no real loss of visual amenity. And /or short term or fully reversible change.</p>

Appendix 4: LANDSCAPE assessment - explanation of terms used:

LANDSCAPE RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY - EXAMPLE INDICATORS		
HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
Receptor with low ability to absorb change without substantial deterioration of character/quality, including significant loss of valued features, aspects of value or characteristics. The change proposed would be highly intrusive and prominent.	Receptor with some ability to absorb change of the type proposed, without significant deterioration of character/quality. May include some loss of valued features, aspects of value or characteristics. The change proposed would be noticeable but not especially discordant.	Receptor with some good ability to absorb change of the type proposed, without deterioration of character/quality. No or minor loss of valued features, aspects of value or characteristics. The change proposed would not be readily apparent.

LANDSCAPE VALUE - EXAMPLE INDICATORS		
HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
Receptor with international or National Statutory designation for its character or scenic quality, or high ecological value. / Rare landscape character type that is irreplaceable or not easily be replaced.	Receptor with non-statutory designation or Policy designation such as Local Plan Special Landscape Area. / Moderate ecological value. / Pleasant character with reasonably common landscape characteristics that are not irreplaceable	Landscapes with no designations or applicable landscape or ecological policies, though likely valued at community level. / Ordinary 'everyday' landscapes with some detracting elements. / Commonly found landscape character type or easily replaceable.

MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE - EXAMPLE INDICATORS				
SEVERE	SUBSTANTIAL	MEDIUM	SLIGHT	NEGLIGIBLE
Permanent, wide reaching or very dominant influence, or affecting a large area across the landscape receptor.	Long term, or fairly substantial changes, or change across a reasonably large proportion of the landscape receptor.	Some longer term, or notable changes, or change across a moderate proportion of the landscape receptor.	Noticeable change over a small area of the landscape receptor. Or change of larger magnitude but short in duration.	Very minor to unnoticeable visual or perceptual change to the landscape receptor