

Plot 4200
ARC Oxford

Townscape/ Landscape and
Visual Impact Assessment

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Townscape/ Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Plot 4200, ARC Oxford

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CONTENTS

	Page
1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Methodology	4
3.0 Planning Policy Context	4
Local Planning Policy	4
Landscape, Ecology & Heritage Designations – Conservation Areas, Oxford Urban Forest Strategy A Master Plan to 2050 (2021)	8
Planning Designations	9
4.0 Landscape/ Townscape Baseline	10
Site Location	10
Site Context	10
Site Description	10
Physical Townscape/ Landscape Analysis	10
Townscape Character	13
Townscape Activities – Public Use and Interest	16
Recreation Amenity Space, Social Function or Play	16
5.0 Visual Baseline	17
Zone of Theoretical Visibility	17
Cumulative Developments	17
Tonality and Materials	18
Visual Receptors	18
Baseline Summary	22
6.0 Impact Assessment – The Proposals	23
7.0 Effects During Construction	25
Physical Townscape and Landscape Changes	25
Townscape Character Effects	26
Mitigation	29
8.0 Effects on Operation (Completion)	29
Physical Townscape and Landscape Changes	30
Townscape Character Effects	31
Effects on other Aspects of Townscape, Use and Interest	33
Visual Effects	33
Planning Policy Effects	37
Mitigation	38
9.0 Summary	39
10.0 Conclusion	41

Appendices :

Appendix A	Methodology
Appendix B	Baseline Figures
Appendix C	Proposed Development Figures
Appendix D	Existing and Verified Views
Appendix E	National and Local Planning Policy Response

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Macgregor Smith Landscape Architects have been appointed to provide the Townscape/ Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for Plot 4200, at ARC Oxford. The assessment includes details of the existing landscape/townscape of the Application Site and its surroundings. This work was also relevant to the preparation of the architecture and landscape strategy as set out in the DAS accompanying this application. This document should also be read in conjunction with the Heritage Assessment prepared by Montagu Evans.
- 1.2 The proposals entail the demolition of existing office buildings and the erection of 1no. laboratory-enabled office building for research and development with ancillary commercial space (all within use Class E). Provision of new access, enhancements to existing footpath, motor vehicle and cycle parking, landscape and services infrastructure.
- 1.3 Plot 4200 is situated at the southwest edge of ARC Oxford, previously known as Oxford Business Park. The development of a Business Park was granted outline planning approval in 1992 (ref: 91/01303/NO) and the subsequent developments have been progressed through various planning applications submitted over time.
- 1.4 ARC (Advanced Research Clusters) is currently embarking on a process of "reprogramming" the existing 'Business Park' into an 'Innovation Campus'. This is focused on the delivery of new, high-quality lab-enabled office space to satisfy burgeoning demand in the Oxfordshire sector, accompanied by landscape improvements and design principles that will alter the layout and experience of the campus, contributing to the enhancement of this site as a life science cluster. This ambition is currently being delivered through several planning applications, including these proposals for Plot 4200.
- 1.5 The Plot 4200 proposals have been developed following a collaborative design process between architecture and landscape disciplines to ensure careful integration of the building into the existing green infrastructure. The scheme submission includes a comprehensive architectural response to the locality and a detailed landscape design strategy set out within the application Design and Access Statements. As part of the design process, key views were established and shared with the City Council for detailed study and the production of verified photomontage views. The architectural design has also been discussed with the City planning and urban design officers to ensure the proposals are considered from different design perspectives.
- 1.6 Separate work has also been undertaken to provide other detailed information for the planning application. Related to landscape, these include a detailed tree survey, analysis of the extent of tree coverage, ecology and drainage. The findings of these studies have been drawn into this assessment where appropriate.
- 1.7 The success of the scheme as a commercial development is noted as connected to the quality of the building and its setting. This assessment provides an analysis of the anticipated effects on both the landscape conditions and local visual amenity; in line with the design objectives the development is intended to deliver aspects of beneficial change in both townscape and visual impact terms.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a recognised process used to help identify and explain the various ways in which developments may affect the landscape (as a resource) and visual amenities of an area. The approach taken to this follows good practice guidance as set out by the Landscape Institute and IEMA.
- 2.2 The current guidance for this part of the assessment is contained in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition, published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (GLVIA3, 2013). This guidance has been followed for this appraisal.
- 2.3 *In summary, the GLVIA3 states: “Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of, and the effects of, change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity (1.3)”.*
- 2.4 LVIA may be carried out either formally as part of an Environmental Impact Appraisal (EIA), or informally, as a contribution to the ‘appraisal’ of development proposals and planning applications. Both are important and the broad principles and the core of the approach is similar in each case (1.3).
- 2.5 In this case the requirement is for a standalone ‘appraisal’. The process is essentially the same in describing the existing landscape and the views and the visual amenity in the area that may be affected; predicting the effects and considering how these effects might be mitigated still applies. There is, however, no reference to significant effects in the terms defined for EIA reporting.
- 2.6 There are two components which are described separately within this report:-
Appraisal of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right, and appraisal of visual effects; assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.
- 2.7 This appraisal deals with Landscape and Townscape. The definition of ‘landscape’ by the European Landscape Convention (ELC) adopted by the UK since 2002, is inclusive: ‘...this Convention ...covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It concerns landscapes that *might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes*. This includes the landscapes of villages and cities (townscapes). Townscape refers to areas where the built area is dominant. The terms ‘landscape’ and ‘townscape’ are used interchangeably in this report according to the relevant circumstance. The abbreviation ‘LVA’ or ‘TVA’ applies to both.
- 2.8 The guidance highlights the need to take a comprehensive view of the many ways in which landscapes may be used, viewed or otherwise valued. The assessment of effects then identifies in a systematic manner the various ways and relative degrees to which changes in the landscape may occur. As a general approach, the assessments are based on professional judgments on the relative sensitivity and susceptibility to change and the nature of the predicted effects.
- 2.9 For a comprehensive methodology detailing the full process of selecting and evaluating both the townscape elements and the viewpoints, please refer to Appendix A – Methodology.

3.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Local Planning Policy

Oxford Local Plan 2036

- 3.1 An extract of the current local plan is the Oxford Local Plan 2036. Refer to Appendix B, Figure 06 for Oxford Local Plan 2036 Policies Map. The following text provides a brief commentary on relevant

policies and how they relate to the existing Application Site. The impact on policy will be discussed in the relevant section at completion, refer to Appendix E:

3.2 Policy E1: Employment sites Intensification of uses: Planning permission will be granted for the intensification, modernisation and regeneration for employment purposes of any employment site if it can be demonstrated that the development makes the best and most efficient use of land and does not cause unacceptable environmental impacts and effects.

3.3 Policy RE2: Efficient use of land

Planning permission will only be granted where development proposals make efficient use of land. Development proposals must make the best use of site capacity, in a manner compatible with the site itself, the surrounding area and broader considerations of the needs of Oxford, as well as addressing the following criteria:

- a) *the density must be appropriate for the use proposed;*
- b) *the scale of development, including building heights and massing, should conform to other policies in the plan. It is expected that sites at transportation hubs and within the city and district centres, in particular, will be capable of accommodating development at an increased scale and density, although this will also be encouraged in all other appropriate locations where the impact of so doing is shown to be acceptable;*
- c) *opportunities for developing at the maximum appropriate density must be fully explored; and*
- d) *built form and site layout must be appropriate for the capacity of the site.*

3.4 Policy DH2: Views and building heights :

The City Council will seek to retain significant views both within Oxford and from outside, in particular to and from the historic skyline. Planning permission will not be granted for any building or structure that would harm the special significance of Oxford's historic skyline. Planning permission will be granted for developments of appropriate height or massing, as demonstrated by the following criteria, all of which should be met:

- a) *design choices regarding height and massing have a clear design rationale and the impacts will be positive; and*
- b) *design choices regarding height and massing have a clear design rationale and the impacts will be positive; and*
- c) *any design choice to design buildings to a height that would impact on character should be fully explained, and regard should be given to the guidance on the design of higher buildings set out in the High Buildings Study TAN. In particular, the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained; and*
- d) *it should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street, and the potential impact on important views including both into the historic skyline and out towards Oxford's green setting.*

Policy DH2: Views and building heights:

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- g) *any design choice to design buildings to a height that would impact on character should be fully explained, and regard should be given to the guidance on the design of higher buildings set out in the High Buildings Study TAN. In particular, the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained; and*
- h) *it should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street, and the potential impact on important views including both into the historic skyline and out towards Oxford's green setting.*

3.6 The Site sits amongst several Areas of Change, which the local plan considers should be “where significant change is expected or best directed”. More specifically, ARC Oxford relates to the Cowley Branch Line AOC (Policy AOC7), where it is considered the planned re-opening of Oxford’s Cowley Branch Line can provide the opportunity to make more efficient use of space through intensification of existing sites.

Area of Change: Cowley Branch Line AC07

3.7 *The area surrounding the Cowley branch line is a major employment hub with the large employers of BMW Group, Unipart, Oxford Science Park and Oxford Business Park. The area consists of large scale, low density, modern commercial developments, many of which are visually prominent. The landscape is semi-rural and the Northfield and Littlemore Brookes are important ecological features.*

Planning Permission will be granted for re-development within the area of change where it would take opportunities to deliver the following where relevant:

To make more efficient use of space through intensification of existing sites; and

- *rationalisation of parking and reduction in surface-level car parking;*
- *improved connectivity between different parts of the area.*

3.8 There are several more general policies within the local plan relating to good practice in design and implementation of development, which follow standard urban design guidance. These include:

G2 : Protection of biodiversity and geo-diversity

3.9 *Development that results in a net loss of sites and species of ecological value will not be permitted. Compensation and mitigation measures must offset the loss and achieve an overall net gain for biodiversity. For all major developments proposed on greenfield sites or brownfield sites that have become vegetated, this should be measured through the use of a recognised biodiversity calculator. To demonstrate an overall net gain for biodiversity, the biodiversity calculator should demonstrate an improvement of 5% or more from the existing situation. Offsetting measures are likely to include the identification of appropriate off-site locations/projects for improvement, which should be within the relevant Conservation Target Area if appropriate, or within the locality of the site. When assessing whether a site is suitable for compensation, consideration will be given to the access, enjoyment and connection to nature that the biodiversity site to be lost has brought to a locality. A management and monitoring plan might be required for larger sites. The calculation should be applied to the whole site.*

Policy DH1 : High quality design and placemaking

3.10 *Planning permission will only be granted for the development of high-quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness.*

3.11 Further relevant policy documents include:

A View Cones Assessment Study (2015)

- 3.12 The city's built heritage and its relationship to its landscape setting are of great importance and can be harmed by inappropriate development of high buildings.
- 3.13 This policy deals with the protection of the valued silhouette of Oxford - the characteristic 'Dreaming Spires' - as seen from high points in Oxford and from the surrounding hills. The policy seeks to protect views from within and outside Oxford. Special emphasis is placed on protection of the 10 View Cones shown on the Proposals Map. See Appendix B, Figures 07 28, and 29.
- 3.14 The accompanying evidence based report acknowledges that whilst these ten viewpoints provide the most widely recognised views of Oxford, including those appreciated by travellers and artists in the past, it is important to note that other views of Oxford do exist. The Oxford View Cones should, therefore, be treated as a series of important viewpoints but they are not a comprehensive list of all available views towards the city.

High Buildings Guidance Technical Advice Note 7 (2018)

- 3.15 The TAN encourages a positive and creative approach to be taken to the planning design of high buildings, supporting innovative and imaginative design that enhances the city's environment and built fabric.
- 3.16 The document determines that the site is situated within the 'South-East suburbs, one of four areas considered 'Area of Greater Potential'. where proposals for new high buildings are more likely to be appropriate. These areas are less constrained by heritage considerations and also represent areas where there is more potential for them to contribute to regeneration opportunities, are areas with significant connectivity and are existing district centres.
- 3.17 In addition to the 'Areas of Greater Potential' Oxford City Council has identified 'Dynamic Areas' where growth and regeneration are envisaged as part of the Local Plan. Dynamic areas are the areas of the city where significant change is expected or best directed. These areas include the district centres and areas where there are significant clusters of potential development sites. The impact of the development of sites in these areas needs to be considered in terms of the wider context of the area and other potential developments. The site is immediately adjacent to Dynamic Area 8, The Cowley Branch Line, which is to the south of the site bordered by the ring road.
- 3.18 The TAN identified four principal visual characteristics of the city:
- The iconic spires and silhouette of the historic city centre.
 - The open and natural character of the river floodplains.
 - The green (wooded or agricultural) backdrop to the city formed by the surrounding hills.
 - The enclosed and often intimate views within the city centre.
- 3.19 *These contribute to the city's distinct character and sense of place. When proposing a tall building, four visual tests must be applied to views from, to and across the city to understand any effects on these four characteristics:*

Visual Obstruction

- 3.20 *Physical obstruction of a feature or component in the view is caused by a high building. This may result in full or partial blocking of the feature or component and may affect the interpretation of the feature and/or the legibility or character of the townscape.*

Visual Competition/ Complement

- 3.21 *Siting of a high building within the same view as the feature such that the two are viewed together. The high building may be perceived to compete with the feature either in the foreground, middle ground or background of the view affecting the ability to discern or interpret the feature.*

Skylining

- 3.22 *The breaking of the skyline, horizon or silhouette, which may be formed by built form or vegetation. Skylining represents the breaching of an existing perceived 'threshold' and can often result in the high building acting as an eye-catching feature within views drawing the viewer's attention and increasing visual competition.*

Change of Character

- 3.23 *Occurs when the composition of a view is altered to the extent that the character of the view is discernibly different to that of the existing. This may be a result of an individual high building strongly influencing the composition or cumulative small incremental changes within the view leading to a notable change. Change of character may include a combination of obstruction, competition/complement and skylining.*

- 3.24 Applying these four tests enables the impacts of the proposals to be understood in the context of the visual amenity and character of Oxford.

Landscape, Ecology and Heritage Designations – Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Registered Parks and Gardens

- 3.25 There are no landscape, ecology or heritage designations in the immediate vicinity of the site. Refer to Appendix B, Figures 08 and 09. The nearest conservation areas are:

- Oxford Stadium, Sandy Lane
- Temple Cowley

- 3.26 All 18 Conservation Areas in Oxford are considered to be susceptible to harm from high buildings. The closest notable asset is the Oxford Stadium Conservation Area c. 300m to the south

- 3.27 The stadium was originally built as a Greyhound venue but also used for other activities The Conservation Area is limited to the curtilage of the stadium itself. Despite its proximity to Site, it is separated by the Eastern By-Pass and its heavily planted embankment. The Stadium is significant for its social and economic history rather than architectural interest.

- 3.28 Temple Cowley conservation area comprises a collection of surviving buildings from the 18th century rural settlement. The 19th and 20th century saw great change stemming from the urban expansion of Oxford heralded by the arrival of the Morris Motor Works, which began here when the former 19th century Salesian College and Military academy were converted to Morris' first car factory. The conservation area meets the busy Garsington Road some 400m north of the Site, and has long been set amongst a residential, industrial and commercial backdrop.

- 3.29 These assets will be reviewed in more detail in the Heritage Impact Assessment provided by Montagu Evans.

Oxford Urban Forest Strategy A Master Plan to 2050 (2021)

- 3.30 This strategy seeks to increase tree cover and recognises the need for trees to improve well-being and help respond to the climate crisis and ecological emergencies. It makes reference to the Landscape Character Assessment and acknowledges the role that tree planting can play in enhancing and conserving distinct character areas.

- 3.31 The strategy aims to:

- maintain and enhance Oxford's Urban Forest to secure its biodiversity value and the ecosystem services which flow from it
- ensure our urban forest plays a role in the city addressing and adapting to climate change and other challenges
- create a healthier place for people in nature and provide richer biodiversity in deprived parts of Oxford
- engage and involve all communities and citizens

3.32 The 2015 review of Oxford's canopy cover by ward determined that the Cowley ward has one of the lowest areas of tree cover in the city.

3.33 Oxford City Council planning policy requires new developments to demonstrate an increase in overall canopy cover and there are also requirements with regards to net gain and off-site compensation measures.

Planning Designations

3.34 The Site itself is not subject to any restrictive designations within national or local planning policy. It is not within a Conservation Area, does not affect the setting of any listed buildings, and contains no TPOs or any habitat designations. Within the policies of the local development plan, it does not fall within any of the protective 'view cones' designed to restrict development, which may impact of views of the City Centre from outlying areas.

3.35 An outline planning permission (application reference 12/01424/EXT) has recently lapsed. This was for the delivery of business and hotel uses on the site. This permission has established the acceptability of such uses and catalysed much of ARC Oxford as it exists today.

3.36 As well as considering the policy implications for new development, the condition of the existing Site in terms of townscape, landscape and visual amenity is described in the following section below.

4.0 BASELINE CONDITION

Site Location

- 4.1 As illustrated in Figures 01-03 Appendix B ARC Oxford is located in south-east Oxford. ARC Oxford spans both the north and the south side of the B480, Garsington Road, which divides it into two distinct parts.
- 4.2 Plot 4200 occupies a site within the southern section of the business park on the western edge. It is accessed from John Smith Drive, a private internal road that connects to Garsington Road. It backs onto neighbouring residential roads Phipps Road, Frederick Road and Bailey Road.

Site Context

- 4.3 In the broader context, the site lies in the city district of Cowley approximately 4km from the heart of the historic city centre (see Appendix B, Figure 03). Cowley developed as an extensive suburb around the major car plant established in the City in 1914. The Oxford Motor Works originally extended further west to include ARC Oxford land and was later bisected by the Eastern Ring Road construction.
- 4.4 Developed in phases, the city ring roads vary in character with the A34 extending around to the west through more open countryside. To the east, the route between the A34 and A40 forms an important strategic link between the two trunk roads through the built-up area. For much of the route, the road is contained by roadside planting with occasional views of the surrounding mix of residential and commercial development. In the vicinity of the business park, the roadside screens give way to more open views of urban development and the main carriageway rises over the junction to provide some elevated views.
- 4.5 To the east of the ring road, the extensive car plant is highlighted with the iconic branding for the Mini linking to the industrial history of Oxford. To the north, existing development within ARC Oxford acts as a buffer between residential areas and the elevated carriageway. North of the junction, the road quickly reverts to a stronger landscape setting where the route passes through more wooded areas before another suburban section on the approach to the A40.
- 4.6 Beyond ARC Oxford to the west, existing development comprises mainly inter and post-war development extending towards the city centre. To the east of the car plant, the townscape gives way to open countryside with small villages such as Horspath and Garsington.

Site Description

- 4.7 Plot 4200 is situated within the southern part of ARC Oxford to the west of John Smith Drive. It currently comprises 7 individual two storey office buildings with pitched roofs organised around areas of car parking and intermittent tree planting. Residential development lies to the west and an existing private footpath extends alongside the southern side of the site. The Site is broadly rectangular and flat. A 6 metre wide strip of structure planting featuring mature trees lines John Smith Drive to the eastern edge.

Physical Townscape/Landscape Analysis

Topography and Drainage

- 4.8 Figure 11, Appendix B shows the local topography. The City of Oxford sits in a low-lying river basin (Thames, Cherwell), with the streams running north to south, and is overlooked by low hills in groups

to the east and west. The ground level at the city centre lies at around 65m above the ordnance datum (AOD). To the west, Boars Hill and Wytham rise to a level of 170m AOD at a distance of 5.5-7.5km from the centre. To the east and south-east, the higher ground includes Headington, Horspath and Garsington, extending up to 175m AOD. The latter group of uplands were the location of some of the viewpoint locations used in the Landscape Character Assessment of Oxford (2002) and updated 2022 which include the 'view cones' for the setting of the historic centre used in the current local plan.

- 4.9 To the west of the site, an intervening spur of high ground extending east to west from the Horspath hills in the east towards Rose Hill at 86m AOD in the west lies between the Site and the centre of Oxford. Intervening vegetation and buildings on the ridge further separate the Site from the city centre.
- 4.10 The Site, as shown in Figure 10, is at a general level of 71m with a gentle north-south cross fall of 1m. There is a c. 1.4m high retaining wall to the western site boundary. The neighbouring residential properties sit at the higher level.
- 4.11 Figure 12, Appendix B shows the position of the Site in relation to local soils and geology.

Landscape and Ecological Designations

- 4.12 There are no landscape or ecological designations located within the Site boundary. Figure 08, Appendix B shows that the nearest SSSI is Brasenose Wood with ancient woodland and diverse ground flora c.1.5km to the north of the Site. Shortly beyond this is Shotover Country Park, which features a mosaic of ancient woods, marshes, heaths, ponds, wildflowers and bracken covered slopes.
- 4.13 A further two, smaller SSSIs are identified due north of the Site which is situated within a wider Local Nature Reserve area – Lye Valley Fern rare fenland c. 1.8km away and Rock Edge Nature Reserve c. 2km away respectively.
- 4.14 An ecological survey has been undertaken which reports that the two habitats present are amenity planting and modified grassland which comprise common and widespread species. It identifies limited features of habitats of ecological interest.

Trees and Vegetation

- 4.15 Significant blocks of woodland are found in Brasenose Wood and Shotover Country Park to the north-east of the Site and further afield to the south-west with Bagley Wood (c. 5km away). These woodlands are on raised ground and form an important backdrop and sense of containment to the city. Refer to Appendix B, Figure 13.
- 4.16 Within the built-up area of the suburb, the tree cover is a mix of strategic planting along the line of the Eastern By-pass and more individual trees in the streets and residential gardens. The Oxford City Urban Forest Strategy identifies the local Cowley Ward as one of the lower areas of tree cover within the city at a general coverage of around 15%.
- 4.17 The notable exception to the thinner local cover is the Eastern By-Pass and the railway line to the south which are shielded by dense planting on the embankments. In the neighbouring suburbs, trees are restricted to often smaller trees to front and back gardens, although they still contribute by softening and punctuating the street scenes. In the area to the west namely Barnes Road and Bartholomew Road and the area to the south, namely Balfour Road and Blackbird Leys Road some larger trees feature in designated verges and green pockets amongst the residential developments.
- 4.18 This thinner distribution of tree cover is also noted within the neighbouring retail and industrial areas where tree planting is generally less significant. Where present, it is limited to the periphery of plots. By contrast, trees and planting are more generous within ARC Oxford. A variety of maintained trees,

shrubs and planting beds enclose individual plots and line the internal roads. A 6m wide structural planting zone featuring generous tree cover lines John Smith Drive to all built out plots. Refer to Appendix B, Figure 14.

- 4.19 Figure 15, Appendix B shows the location of the trees within the Site. Within the Ward area the Business Park stands out as having a generally higher canopy coverage. A full arboricultural assessment and a separate Tree Canopy Cover assessment has been undertaken for Plot 4200 site which identifies the existing coverage as 20.4%.
- 4.20 The existing planting within the plot provides value as continuity with the wider business park landscape, especially that to John Smith's Drive. None of the trees are subject to TPOs. There are 63 no. existing trees on application site, with 54 no. Category B trees and 9 no. Category C trees. To the eastern boundary there are distinct groups of Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra maritima*), Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) alternating along the edge of John Smith Drive set within shrub beds, together with groups of Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis*) to the north and south boundaries. The western boundary features predominantly Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*), Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra maritima*) and Limes (*Tilia cordata*) to the edge of the existing car park, with a further 7 no. trees surveyed outside the site area including three Sycamore (*Acer platanoides*) and three Birch trees (*Betula utilis*) immediately bordering the western boundary. The interior of the site is punctuated by Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra maritima*) which extend through the car park area.

Built Environment: Historical Development

- 4.21 Ordnance Survey records show the area of Cowley gradually started to develop from the late nineteenth century, see Appendix B, Figure 16.
- 4.22 The 1886 map shows a network of nucleated small settlements to the north of the site set in rolling open farmland, woodlands and orchards, connected to each other and to the city of Oxford by the precursors of the main road network that exists today.
- 4.23 Oxford Military College is present on this map to the north-west of the Site. This was purchased by William Morris in 1912 who moved his company onto the site from 1914 onwards and pioneered a Henry Ford style mass car production in the UK. This created an industrial centre along with the need for housing.
- 4.24 'Cowley' became a recognised settlement in the twentieth century, with this rapid growth of industry, and the residential areas. The Morris Cowley railway station was opened in 1933 to serve the thousands of workers commuting to the factory.
- 4.25 The aerial photo of 1945, refer to Appendix B, Figure 16, illustrates the Site outline overlaid on the vast collection of the Motor Works buildings.
- 4.26 The Motor Works site was typified by large, lower rise 'factory' blocks with distinctive roof-forms providing for their time, high-quality working environments, as well as 'chimneys' located throughout the site, offering markers within the local area, defining the site.
- 4.27 The site changed hands many times and in 2000 it was resolved that the entire site would be redeveloped, much of the factory was demolished to create the new Mini factory plant called 'Plant Oxford' located to the east of the bypass. The remaining portion of the former Morris Motors Site to the west of the bypass was cleared and redeveloped as the Oxford Business Park, now ARC Oxford.

Existing Scale and Massing

- 4.28 Figure 18, Appendix B illustrates the urban grain in the vicinity of the Site. It is immediately clear that a transition occurs on approach to the Cowley junction from the west. The regular grain of 1930s suburban streets shifts to buildings with considerably larger footprints.

- 4.29 Figure 19, Appendix B illustrates that larger footprints also tend to result in greater massing and building heights with some buildings above 20m in height and the tallest elements reaching around 27m.
- 4.30 The business park as a whole provides a transition between the low-rise residential areas and the massing of the Mini plant. As such, it helps mediate between the pattern of small scale, finer grain residential streets and the large-scale commercial and industrial developments including the Mini Plant and the elevated section of the Eastern By-Pass.
- 4.31 A starker contrast can be found to the north of the Site where the residential streets are terminated with the By-pass and the scale and massing suddenly jumps to the large extents of the Mini Plant.

Townscape Character

- 4.32 Figure 20, Appendix B, shows the wider national and county landscape character areas. The site falls entirely within the urban area, which is covered by a more local townscape character area assessment, as shown in Figure 21, Appendix B.
- 4.33 Fifty-two detailed Townscape Character Areas (TCAs) have been identified for the whole of Oxford as part of the *Oxford and its Landscape Setting Report (2002)* produced by Land Use Consultants allowing an appreciation of character across the city at a detailed level. This was updated with 'A Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting 2022 Update Addendum Report' published in October 2022 by Chris Blandford Associates.
- 4.34 The site is situated within the south-west segment of Townscape Character Area 8A, Cowley Motor Works. This area adjoins four other LCA areas namely: -

5B Cowley Residential Suburb
6A Blackbird Leys
6C Horspath Road Area and
3C Temple Cowley

- 4.35 Of these the Cowley Residential Suburb provides the main backdrop to ARC Oxford to the west. The relevant extracts from the document for the 8A and 5B areas are set out in Box 1 and 2 below:

4.36 Box 1

8A Cowley Motor Works

The Cowley Motor Works character area is focused mainly on the Cowley Motor Works site, but includes several other large-scale retail, business and industrial estates, including Horspath Road Industrial Estate, County Trading Estate, Chiltern Business Centre and the Oxford Business Park. These are identified as discrete units of different scales and styles. The Eastern Bypass passes through the area, dividing the industrial areas from business uses. After the First World War, Morris bought up cheap areas of land in Cowley, creating a larger scale industrial area on the east of Oxford. The factory formerly covered a much larger area than it does today, with areas to the west of the existing works now housing the Oxford Business Park.

The Cowley Motor Works has become a major landmark of Industrial Oxford, most recently with the mini a-top the tallest site building. The area remains the largest industrial area of Oxford, dominated by the motor works. There is a great contrast between the large scale, expansive motor works buildings and car parks in the north and east of the area, with the much smaller scale, formally laid out business park and leisure units to the east of the bypass. There is limited green space throughout this area, including some sports fields in the northeast, wooded railway embankments through the centre of the area and occasional pockets of amenity lawns and verges.

Landscaping including avenues of trees and planted roadside gardens in the Oxford Business Park is more considered, softens the built form and breaks up the massing.

Strength of Character

Positive/strong characteristics and features:

The area is a distinctive large scale industrial zone on the western edge of the city, dominated by the Cowley Motor Works, particularly the MINI plant. The more recent business parks and retail areas have attempted to develop a more attractive working and retail environment through the use of contemporary architecture, ornamental planting and designed landscaping.

Negative/weak characteristics and features:

Many of the older industrial areas are utilitarian in character, with large, monolithic buildings dominating the area, alongside large swathes of hard standing, providing car parking and servicing needs to the industrial buildings.

Sensitivity to change

This area has some sensitivity to change due to its contribution to the industrial heritage of Oxford. Recent changes to the area have generally been positive, in the introduction of high quality architectural and landscape development. There may be pressure in the future for significant change through redevelopment and the expansion of the business parks.

Threats to local character include:

- *New tall development that is highly visible, particularly on the urban edge and in the context of existing urban form*
- *Extensions or alterations to existing buildings which are poorly designed and insensitive to the existing vernacular*
- *Use of low-quality materials in built development and the streetscape*
- *Ageing and deterioration of the built fabric and replacement with other/uncharacteristic styles and materials*
- *Incremental addition of streetscape details such as signs, lighting, bollards and paving materials that result in cluttering of the streetscape*
- *Demolition or redevelopment of historic buildings*
- *Change of use of buildings that would alter the character of the townscape*
- *New landscapes/land use changes that do not respond to their wider landscape context*
- *Ageing, disease and subsequent loss of mature trees and boundary vegetation*
- *Planting of inappropriate tree and shrub species for visual screening/boundary features that are out of character with the rural landscape to the east*
- *Incremental erosion /graffiti/ vandalism and neglect of public areas*

Box 2

5B Cowley Residential Suburb

“The high-density inter-war residential development of Cowley grew rapidly with the arrival of the motor industry. Morris bought up large areas of cheap land in Cowley and large estates were built

by the council to house the factory workers. This is one such area, although many of the original factories have since gone.

Cowley Residential Suburb lies on the Settled Plateaux landscape type, an undulating platform of calcareous sandstone and limestone. These suburbs are characterised by enclosed street blocks with crescents and cul de sacs, which respond to the landform. The areas are densely developed with much consistency in the architectural style of buildings of the inter-war period. These are typically populated by two storey, semi-detached houses with bay windows, pitched roofs and centrally placed chimney stacks. Building materials are predominantly brick and pebble dash, often painted white, and roofs are red clay or concrete tile.

Front gardens and short driveways are enclosed by a variety of materials, including reconstituted stone, brick or concrete as well as wooden fences and hedges in places. Vegetation is limited within the area, although planting in front gardens makes an important contribution to the street scene. There are few street trees and few features unique to Oxford.”

Sensitivity to change

This area is not particularly sensitive to change. However, changes to architectural elements and the condition and style of front garden boundaries have in the past detracted from the townscape quality.

Threats to local character include:

- *New built development that changes the clarity of definition of public and private areas*
- *New housing infill that results in fragmentation of the area and loss of pedestrian access*
- *Conversions, extensions or alterations to existing buildings which are poorly designed*
- *Use of low quality materials in built development and the streetscape*
- *Ageing and deterioration of the built fabric including street furniture, paving, boundary walls*
- *Incremental addition of streetscape details such as signs, lighting, bollards and paving materials that result in cluttering of the streetscape*
- *Increasing traffic levels that alter pedestrian movement*
- *Provision of new driveways that results in the removal of front gardens*
- *Ageing, disease and subsequent loss of vegetation, in the public and private realm*
- *Deterioration of front gardens of properties that result in a general degradation in streetscape quality*
- *Incremental erosion /graffiti/ vandalism and neglect of public areas*

- 4.37 Although the site is some 4km south of the historic centre, the townscape assessment of the Historic Centre of Oxford was also consulted. This underlines the significance of the skyline of the historic core, explaining that viewing this from the surrounding hills, is critical to the perception of Oxford. The view cones have been established to protect key views around Oxford. Since the Site sits outside of the view cones, it should not have any impact on the setting of the historic character of Oxford. However, this will be tested using verified views.

Site Specific Aspects of Landscape/Townscape Character

- 4.38 The character area appraisal accurately captures the nature of the Site. It highlights that distinct parcels of development are present within a piece of townscape that was previously purely industrial. Figure 22, Appendix B helps illustrate this, which broadly demarcates the current land use. A finer grain can be applied within this townscape area. The Business Park within which the Site is

situated, is markedly different. It is a considered development, with circulation, landscape and planting designed as an integral part of it. This is a departure from the simpler, generally more hard landscaped, and often lower quality environments associated with the big box retail, commercial and industrial units elsewhere in the character area. The interface with the surrounding areas is equally recognisable.

Townscape Activities – Public Use and Interest

- 4.39 In its current form, the site offers no public activity or interest value; it is open but private land. The structure planting and trees to the eastern boundary along John Smith Drive are attractive offering visual amenity value and definition to the Plot edge.

Public Rights of Way, Public Access Land and Open Space

- 4.40 Within the wider study area c. 2km away there is a good network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), refer to Figure 23, Appendix B. These are found within the wooded areas of Brasenose Wood and Shotover Country Park, the Ley Valley and Oxford Golf Course to the north. To the east, there is a concentration of routes found in and around the historic villages of Garsington and Horspath. The most significant PRoW is the Green Belt Way which connects the two villages extending through the rolling arable land between them. The Green Belt Way is a 50 mile circular walk incorporating some of Oxfordshire's most picturesque countryside and historic villages.
- 4.41 A private footway/cycle path extends along the southern edge of the application site providing an entrance point into ARC Oxford leading from Boswell Road. Two other such links can be found connecting pedestrians and cyclists to the wider streets in the Southern parcel of ARC Oxford but they do not form part of a comprehensive route and there is little legibility.

Access and Connections

- 4.42 The business park is generally an introspective development. A roundabout on the Garsington Road featuring planting and a carved stone obelisk, suggests a gateway into the development but despite this, there is little sense of arrival or announcement, refer to Figure 24, Appendix B.
- 4.43 The park was originally developed allowing users to mainly approach by car being well situated for this at the base of the slip road off the Eastern Bypass. Refer to Figure 25, Appendix B. The current business park is typically designed around the individual buildings being set amongst landscaped car parking.
- 4.44 However, the site is well located for other sustainable transport access, refer to Figures 25 and 26, Appendix B. The Garsington Road is served by two bus routes, yet pedestrian linkages from these are not apparent. In line with the status of Oxford as a popular cycling city a strategic cycle route extends along the south-east edge of ARC Oxford which is part of a wider route connecting east-west. Furthermore, plans for the re-opening of the Cowley branch line for passengers are underway, which will facilitate further development within the designated 'Area of Change' through the intensification of existing sites in proximity to the station. This will also place greater emphasis on the approach to the business park from the south where the new station is proposed.

Recreation Amenity Space, Social Function or Play

- 4.45 As noted, the Site is not currently used for any general amenity function. Elsewhere on the business park site, there is the Market Place which provides an open social space for occupiers of the various buildings to break out and meet or simply enjoy some open space.
- 4.46 Further afield there are limited open spaces or play areas of note as illustrated in Figure 27, Appendix B. Barnes Road Playground is the nearest area of public open space c. 650m west of the Site. This can be accessed from Barnes Road or from the south-east or south-west corner of the adjacent cycle path, which connects directly to the Site. The space comprises grass with a small play area and a

BMX track to the southern boundary. It is enclosed on three sides by the backs of properties. A sports ground containing grass football pitches sits to the south of the site beyond the Easter -Bypass occupying sunken ground and enclosed on three sides by trees. Small pockets of play are provided within the residential areas.

5.0 VISUAL BASELINE

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 5.1 Views of the Site from a range of vantage points have been explored. These views were identified initially using previous knowledge of the site, a desktop exercise using the Google Earth Pro, topographic plans and satellite imagery, and by local modelling of the Site using Vu City software.
- 5.2 This allowed a ZTVI (Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence) to be drawn, which in broad terms gives an indication of the area, from which the site could theoretically be seen, to be tested by site investigations.
- 5.3 Views are generally restricted by the built-up nature of the suburb – which creates low intervisibility in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Shotover Park to the east occupies a ridge line which extends across to Garsington in the south, beyond which the ground begins to fall. This provides a visual boundary.
- 5.4 The Site sits outside the protected view cones, so it should not impact the setting of the ‘Dreaming Spires’ of Oxford. The view cones are focused toward the city centre, yet they are at some remove from it. This creates opportunities for wider panoramas. It was therefore considered important to test whether the Site would be visible at all from a view cone and understand how that might affect the nature of the view. Raleigh Park has been included to explore this as the only potentially relevant view cone.
- 5.5 The TAN 07 states that within the Area of Greater Potential, where ARC Oxford is located, skylining could occur at a height of 15m when viewed from St. Mary the Virgin Church in the central conservation area. Hence, the historic core of Oxford has been included within the ZTVI. However, views would only be possible from the elevated vantage points within the centre. The Site is some 4km to the south of the historic core and distance and intervening built form and vegetation would prevent any views at ground level.
- 5.6 As part of wider forthcoming proposals at ARC Oxford, the project team has engaged in detailed pre-application discussions with the City Council regarding the number and type of views to be considered. In total, 44 viewpoints have been visited and agreed (see Figures 31-34 in Appendix B). These views are wide-ranging and seek to cover; immediate views within ARC Oxford itself, local views from the surrounding areas, distant views from the historic core and wider landscape (including Raleigh Park, Garsington, Horspath, Toot Baldon and Shotover Park) and relevant heritage assets. These views have been tested during the design process, with the proposed development verified as appropriate.
- 5.7 As part of pre-application discussions in respect of Plot 4200, due to its scale and nature, it has been agreed that a reduced scope of five fully rendered views should be verified in support of this TVIA. These continue to provide an understanding of potential landscape/visual impacts from relevant locations set out in the visual receptors section 5.14-5.47

Cumulative Developments

- 5.8 In addition to the existing baseline condition, the effects of cumulative development will also be considered. Cumulative effects can result from additional changes to the landscape or visual

amenity caused by the proposed development when considered alongside other proposed developments and activities, which are ongoing or likely to occur in the foreseeable future. Any developments that have currently received planning consent will be considered and reviewed as a cumulative effect.

See Cumulative Effects Plan Figure 30, Appendix B.

- 5.9 There are three developments that require consideration, the regeneration of Templars Square, which was granted planning consent in 2017. This is a mixed-use development comprising residential (Use Class C3), hotel (Use Class C1), and retail (Use Class A1/A3/A4) with associated car parking. This will be accompanied by public realm improvements and landscape, highway works the refurbishment of existing car parks and the enhancement of shopping centre entrances. The residential component comprises a nine storey high tower block. The demolition of an existing car park, high level walkway and public house will facilitate these proposals.
- 5.10 The second is 244 Barnes Road 21/01539/DDW56 which concerns the demolition of an existing three storey office building (Use Class E) and the erection of a four storey building to provide 20no. flats (Use Class C3) and provision of bin stores.
- 5.11 The third is Trinity House, Plot 1000 also within the business park, situated at the southern entrance to the business park at the junction of John Smith Drive and Garsington Road. This will result in the demolition of the existing office building and the construction of a new ground plus a five storey commercial building, for life sciences/research and development uses (Use Class E) with the provision of basement car parking and cycle parking.
- 5.12 It should also be noted that a live planning application (22/002880/RES) under ARC's proposals is currently being determined by the Council on Plot 2000. Following discussions with the Council post-submission, the design of this building is currently being reviewed. Therefore, its massing is not included in this assessment at this stage and subsequent updates will be provided if and when required.

Tonality and Materials

- 5.13 The materiality of built form across Oxford was studied and a palette of existing colours and tones was produced as part of the visual baseline to understand the architectural vernacular of the city. See Figures 38, Appendix B. This considers the different townscape areas within Oxford including the warm buff sandstone tones reflected in the Colleges and primary street frontages within the historic core and Temple Cowley village centre, the brick and rendered detailing of the inter and post war suburbs in the residential areas close to ARC Oxford and the rhythm of brickwork, glazing and larger format cladding in white and grey metal tones to the adjoining fringe areas containing commerce, industry and retail.

Visual Receptors

- 5.14 The views have been considered under three categories:
- a) local - those within ARC Oxford itself
 - b) intermediate – views from neighbouring areas;
 - c) long distant views, which can be subdivided into -
 - i: views from prominent buildings within the city centre and;
 - ii: views towards the Site from the surrounding hills
- 5.15 The key selected views were then submitted to the City Council's planning officers for approval.
- 5.16 The viewpoints have been recorded, visited, photographed and tabulated. Verified views have been provided for each of these categories.

- 5.17 Based on the ZTVI, the previous verified views exercise undertaken (refer to para 5.6), the nature of the development, its surroundings and the likely impacts, it was considered that five fully rendered views across the categories, focussed where receptors are most sensitive, would be sufficient and proportionate. These views have been carefully selected to accurately represent typical views of the proposed development. In addition, a further eight wireframe views would be tested to ensure that there is no further impact.
- 5.18 The impact caused by a change in the view is a balanced judgement made on the basis of the nature and scale of change, set against the sensitivity of the viewpoint or the people experiencing it. As part of the LVIA process, the extent of available views is established and then the relative sensitivities of the various locations are assessed. The various types of viewpoints are set out in categories as part of a systematic approach. Consideration is given to the potential difference in sensitivity of viewers in relation to the type of viewpoint or activity people may be involved with in each location.
- 5.19 Views from areas of important public spaces are generally more sensitive than those from busy roads or commercial premises. For example, in some locations it is reasonable to assume that people may well be there specifically to enjoy a view, e.g. the view of the setting of Oxford from the elevated spires in the centre. Elsewhere, the view may well be incidental to the day-to-day activity of the location e.g. driving past by road.
- 5.20 The quality of existing views and the impact of any intrusive elements are considered in assessing sensitivity.
- 5.21 The sensitivity of the view is also related to the relative numbers of people who are affected. The final aspect of the sensitivity of different views considers the current condition of the Site and the relative change affected.
- 5.22 For a detailed definition of Sensitivity of Visual receptors used, refer to the methodology set out in Appendix A.

Local Views

- 5.23 The numbering of the views is such because they have been extracted from a much larger verified view study. It was considered important to retain consistent references across all related studies.

View, from within ARC Oxford: Views 41, 42

- 5.24 These are two sequential views from John Smith Drive, see Figure 35, Appendix B. One view is taken at the gateway into the southern part of ARC Oxford and the second offers a close-up view. John Smith Drive is a quiet, internal road within ARC Oxford. A grass verge lines both sides of the road beyond which, there are layers of ornamental planting and mature trees, which provide a consistent edge. Buildings are set back from the plot edges within areas of car parking. They are predominantly 2-3 storey brick buildings and can be seen intermittently through the vegetation with Plot 4200 on the right.
- 5.25 These views are localised to ARC Oxford and would be experienced by workers, visitors or those transiting the site.
- 5.26 None of the four visual characteristics of Oxford as set out in TAN 7 are present in this view.

Low Level of sensitivity

Intermediate Views

Views from surrounding residential streets: View 44, (View 5, View 9)

- 5.27 Residential views can be sensitive on the basis that they are fixed and may be of particular importance to occupants. The degree of sensitivity depends on several considerations, including the presence of development or other intrusions in the view the proximity and prominence of the project and the number of dwellings affected.

- 5.28 The site is not currently visible from many properties to the surrounding streets. The urban grain provides limited intervisibility and generally open sky views.
- 5.29 In view 44, ARC Oxford forms a view stop framed by residential streets. See Figure 35, Appendix B. The buildings are partially screened by a line of trees to the roadside boundary, although this screening is limited during winter months when the trees have lost their leaves. The heights of the long pitched grey tiled roofs of the existing buildings are comparable with the neighbouring residential properties. Bailey Road is a typical suburban 1930s street comprising short runs of 2 storey terraced houses, in red brick and render set back from the street by curtilage car parking. There are limited street trees and planting is limited to property curtilages.
- 5.30 Two additional views will be tested as verified wireframe views. One from the north of the Site on Garsington Road, a main arterial road at the junction where the suburban residences meet the business park, close to the Cowley Conservation Area (View 9). And one from Bartholomew Road to the west close to a local heritage asset, Hockmore Cottages (View 5). This location comprises post war properties, bounded by hedges and organised around green verges with tree planting. For more information on these settings, please refer to the Heritage Impact Assessment report.
- 5.31 None of the four visual characteristics of Oxford as set out in TAN 7 are present in these views.

Medium level of sensitivity

View from Oxford Stadium, View 33

- 5.32 This view is taken from the terraces of the Stadium, the extents of which is designated a Conservation Area. The Conservation Area status acknowledges the social and historic interest associated with the growth of greyhound racing as a popular leisure pursuit. It is not noted for its architectural merit or contribution to the local townscape.
- 5.33 The Greyhound stadium is the focus of the view. A line of trees to the railway embankment extends through the middle ground and separates the stadium from the retail park beyond. This reinforces the edge of town location and the track's intrinsic relationship with the employment / industrial zone which gives rise to the stadium's significance.
- 5.34 The visual receptors would be limited to those using the stadium and the focus would be on the activity of greyhound racing. The surroundings and setting of which are largely inconsequential.
- 5.35 None of the four visual characteristics of Oxford as set out in TAN 7 are present in this view.

Low level of sensitivity

Long Distant Views

Views from elevated towers/spires within the City Centre : View 13, View 30 (View 29)

- 5.36 These views are from towers within the historic core of Oxford. See Figures 36 and 37 Appendix B. Views can vary between the elevated viewing points, due to height, orientation and the respective position within the central area. Therefore, two views – one at the eastern edge, St Mary the Virgin Church (View 13) and one to the western edge of the historic core, Oxford Castle (View 30) have been selected to provide a good overview and be representative of views from a number of other vantage points at height. A further view taken from the centre of the historic core, Carfax Tower (View 29) will also be tested as a wire frame verified view. The sensitivity of these views is very high since they are from internationally recognised viewpoints over the historic City. Neither the Site nor the surrounding business park are currently visible. Tall buildings such as the Hockmore Tower, Blackbird Leys tower blocks and the hospital buildings are conspicuous within the 360 panorama.

- 5.37 The significance of these views is that they contain some of the visual characteristics of Oxford. Laid out in the foreground is the historic core with the visually rich rhythm of spires, turrets and chimneys. To the horizon are gently rolling hills framing the city and the Chilterns ridgeline beyond can be seen on a clear day, which form an important green backdrop allowing the city to be understood within the wider landscape context. The intervening built form and vegetation of the city extends through the middle ground documenting a range of townscape typologies illustrating how Oxford has developed and expanded over time.

High level of sensitivity

- 5.38 Verified wireframe views will also be included from the following sensitive locations for completeness and to confirm the extent of the zone of visual impact.

Views from outlying hills to the east and south-east, Garsington and Shotover Park: View 14, View 15, View 36.

- 5.39 These views capture key recreational routes and spaces to the south and east of Oxford. They all show Oxford within its wider green setting with rolling hills forming the backdrop, noted as an important visual characteristic in TAN 7.
- 5.40 Views 14 and 36 are taken from the historic hilltop village of Garsington on a ridge of higher ground some 2.7km due east of the Site. See Figure 36 Appendix B. View 36 is taken from the Churchyard of St. Mary Church, Garsington, a Grade II* listed building alongside a public right of way. View 14 is from a footpath which forms part of the Oxford Green Belt Way. It is a key leisure route, developed to celebrate 50 years of Oxford's Green Belt and mark its significance in protecting the open countryside surrounding England's cities. It connects to View 15, Shotover Country Park, an extensive wildlife haven and popular public amenity space c. 3km away from the Site.
- 5.41 All three locations offer a series of open and glimpsed views towards Oxford. The rolling hills beyond are a dominant feature, which is one of the four visual characteristics of Oxford. The 'Dreaming Spires of Oxford' are not discernible in the view due to the distance c.5-6km away.
- 5.42 The centre ground to View 14 is dominated by the industrial, urban fringe that hugs the southern edge of the city. A long brick and fenestrated elevation along with a lower saw-toothed industrial unit extend through the view. Layers of industrial buildings including the Mini Plant are present beyond but are less clearly articulated. The regularity of the forms and colours do provide some sense of visual harmony and arguably the Mini Plant is a landmark within Oxford. But collectively this massing is colossal, dwarfing the wider built form and appearing highly conspicuous. Power lines also bisect views from this location and act as a visual detractor.
- 5.43 View 36 is focused to the west of this and the industrial fringe present in view 14, is largely screened by trees and vegetation. Instead, the two residential towers in Blackbird Leys and an electricity pylon are prominent built features in the background rising out of the otherwise low-lying suburb shrouded in trees. Beyond this, the hills of northern Oxford extend across the horizon.
- 5.44 View 15 from the western edge of the city provides a more filtered view looking west across the Oxford suburbs. Shotover Country Park is heavily treed with limited clearings. This view is taken from both the largest clearing and highest point. Trees extend through the centre ground obscuring large swathes of the city. Individual built forms are harder to discern from this perspective.

High level of sensitivity

View from Raleigh Park Cone : View 25

- 5.45 This view from within a designated View Cone is highly significant in terms of the four visual characteristics of Oxford. The elegant, historic 'Dreaming Spires' rise from the city below. The view is framed by trees with rolling parkland in the foreground and is contained by the green hills (Headington) beyond. However, there are also some negative interventions – largely blocky roofscapes in front of the spires, and the large rectilinear structure of John Radcliffe Tower behind.

High level of sensitivity**Baseline Summary**

- 5.46 The Site sits within ARC Oxford which is part of a wider zone of commerce, retail and industry.
- 5.47 The area was historically industrial, due to the rise of the motor industry with the arrival of Morris Motor Works. The neighbouring residential suburbs grew in tandem with this to house workers. A reduction in the number of industrial works following the demolition of the Morris Motor Works in 1992 and the creation of ARC Oxford has now provided a more comfortable neighbour for the surrounding 1930s residential streets. In terms of urban grain, the business park plays an important role in mediating between the small-scale residential properties and the vast scale and massing of the Mini Plant beyond.
- 5.48 The townscape area that the Site sits within, and the surrounding townscape areas are not generally considered as sensitive.
- 5.49 The townscape character that the Site falls within can be considered at a finer grain to separate the Business Park from the larger industrial and retail elements. In so doing it is clear, that ARC Oxford contributes positively to the surrounding streets with extensive planting which combines structural tree planting and layers of shrubs and ornamental planting in an area otherwise limited in urban greening. The tree lined frontage to the Site itself forms an important part of this
- 5.50 The Site, however, offers no intrinsic value beyond this in terms of outdoor recreational, social or cultural value.
- 5.51 ARC Oxford has been gradually developing in accordance with an approved outline planning approval. However, this permission has now expired and over time, priorities and precedents have changed. The low-rise buildings, surrounded by car parking, linked with tree lined roads that form the current Business Park context are a standard, recognised typology. But this is now considered a land hungry way to develop, creating areas that can lack definition and identity. In this strategic part of the city, under the latest Local Plan, the Site has been placed within an 'Area of Growth Potential' where intensified use of existing sites is favoured and potential for height is acknowledged.
- 5.52 A ZTVI has been generated based on a combination of desktop exercises and site work. This is very limited.
- 5.53 There is currently low-intervisibility within the surrounding areas due to the nature of the urban grain.
- 5.54 There are limited local visual receptors restricted to the houses that are immediately adjacent to the Site and workers, visitors or those transiting the site. This grants a low sensitivity.
- 5.55 The long-distance receptors are highly sensitive and much more susceptible to change. While the TAN tests must be considered carefully, the Site is at some distance away within a field of vision containing other prominent elements in the skyline.
- 5.56 There are two local landmarks in proximity to the site – the Hockmore Tower with a highest point of 52m and the Mini Plant with a highest point of 27.4m both have a visual dominance and strong

presence in the south-east section of the city and from views further afield. The Hockmore Tower is visible from the Spires in Oxford's centre.

6.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Proposals

The application proposals for Plot 4200 are illustrated in Appendix C, Figures 01-02.

- 6.1 The proposals involve the demolition of all seven existing buildings on the site, facilitating the redevelopment of a single laboratory-enabled office building 17.13m high (or 89m AOD). The building will contain internal ancillary amenity in the form of a café and gym on upper floors. Some servicing infrastructure will be provided in the landscape. The proposals will also deliver enhancements to the existing private footpath leading into the ARC Oxford site from Boswell Road, alongside car and cycle parking.
- 6.2 The scope of the landscape design comprises a green framework for the development with distinct character areas. These include the retention and enhancement of all site boundary trees and the structural landscape zone bordering John Smith Drive, which has been extended to create a thicker green edge and define an arrival space to the building frontage. Vehicular access roads and car parking, well-defined pedestrian and cycle routes together with infrastructure for ancillary servicing, and a biodiversity roof are all incorporated. In addition, the landscape design will deliver enhancements to the existing private footpath bordering the plot's southern boundary providing an access into the ARC Oxford site from Boswell Road. The design proposals include both hard and soft landscape elements which seek to maximise available external space to provide amenity, ecological, well-being and water management benefits to the scheme.
- 6.3 The application submissions include a landscape master plan, and a Design and Access Statement (DAS). Within the DAS the development proposals and design rationale is set out following robust urban design principles and a comprehensive landscape and public realm strategy. Extracts of the landscape statement are included in Appendix C to provide an overview of the proposals.
- 6.4 The effect of the Proposed Development has been assessed in terms of those effects arising during the construction period and then when 'operational' or 'post construction'. The construction phase effects include the potential loss of existing features and intrusion of construction activity. The impact assessment includes the consideration of these aspects based on the expected phasing and overall maximum durations to provide a reasonable 'worst case assessment'.
- 6.5 The operational stage assessment assumes all the construction works are complete and the site is fully occupied. Areas of new landscape will become established over a few years and then mature as trees grow around the site. The impact assessment for this stage will cover the net difference between the current baseline and future conditions.
- 6.6 Post construction, the development is intended to create an attractive place for people to work. Parts of the development provide facilities designed to be accessible and attractive to the site occupants and visitors. There is potential for some aspects of the townscape and landscape to benefit from the proposed development. Such positive changes are assessed following the same approach as used for adverse effects.

Design Development

- 6.7 In discussion with Oxford City Council, the proposed building and site layout has been robustly assessed in relation to their design, relationship with the surrounding built form, impact on neighbouring amenity and both local and long-distance views. Through a process of testing these views, the building design and site layout have evolved, with particular emphasis on the proposed building's impact on views from the neighbouring residential properties on Phipps Road, Bailey Road and Frederick Road to the west of the application boundary.
- 6.8 As a result of this design development process, the building is positioned 33.7m from the shared boundary of the rear gardens on Bailey Road, Frederick Road and Phipps Road – a significant increase of 16.3m from the line of the existing buildings. The building has also been subject to articulation in the form of setting back the second floor by 1.1m from the lower levels; setting back the roof-top plant screen by 2.6meters; and incorporating a central 'crown' element as seen from John Smith Drive. This creates a more elegant, neater resolve. Collectively, this helps break up the perceived weight and massing of the building.
- 6.9 Massing amendments to the building were partially achieved by moving parking bays initially proposed to the eastern site frontage into the western part of the site. This enlarged rear area provides space for additional landscaping between the building and the western plot boundary, including more trees to provide further softening and screening.
- 6.10 In addition to changes to the building position and massing, the façade treatment of the western building elevation which faces the residential properties has also been simplified through a process of design development. Fenestration has been revised for windows to include a central mullion / fin which breaks down the size of glazing and obscures overlooking from oblique views. A warm material palette of reconstituted stone and light-coloured brick walling draws inspiration from the textures and tones of historic Oxford, complimenting metal cladding with protruding fins proposed to the second floor façade. This cladding has been extended to the roof-top plant screens again helping to reduce the perceived massing of the building.

7.0 EFFECTS DURING CONSTRUCTION

Physical Townscape and Landscape Changes

- 7.1 The Site currently contains few features of inherent townscape or landscape value, which ensures the potential for adverse effects is strictly limited.

Topography and Drainage

- 7.2 The development works will not fundamentally change the topography of the Application Site. Most of the works will take place at existing ground level with a surface soil strip and minimal regrading. No significant changes to levels are proposed and the scheme will tie into existing levels at all the Site boundaries.
- 7.3 The Site is currently developed with water connections and drainage infrastructure. The construction works would need to work around this tapping into the existing infrastructure.
- 7.4 Summary : Sensitivity of receptor: Negligible
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Negligible
 Overall Townscape Effect: No effect

Trees and Habitat

- 7.5 The existing trees are the most significant site feature. During the early construction stage twenty trees will be lost as a direct result of the development (thirteen of which are category B and four category C). None of the trees are subject to a TPO.
- 7.6 The loss of trees will have a limited arboricultural impact in the short-term period of the project construction. Trees would normally be removed as part of the preliminary stage of construction, but the fifty three replacement trees would not be planted until the end of the construction phase. However, all key structural trees that form the boundary to the site will be retained helping to maintain the general impression of good tree cover around ARC Oxford.
- 7.7 Aside from the retained trees, some of the ground level vegetation would be cleared during the construction phase. The existing habitat, as outlined in the ecology report, has negligible intrinsic or wider amenity value.
- 7.8 As illustrated by Figure 03, all the key structural trees and planting that form the boundary to the site will be retained helping to maintain the general impression of good tree cover around ARC Oxford both during and after the construction works.
- Summary : Sensitivity of receptor: Medium
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Negligible
 Overall Townscape Effect: No effect

Built Environment and Current Land Use

- 7.9 The Site currently contains seven individual offices, some of which are currently vacant. The construction works will involve the demolition of these seven buildings and the erection of a single building to be used as lab-enabled office space. This is appropriate in the context of the existing built environment of ARC Oxford and has no implications for local land use.
- Summary : Sensitivity of receptor: Negligible
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Negligible

Overall Land use/ built environment impact: No effect

Townscape Character Effects

- 7.10 The works do not affect any characteristic landscape features identified as specifically important. Character Area (OCC – LCA 8A) comprising ARC Oxford, the retail park and the continuation of the Cowley Motorworks is defined by commerce and industry, which has been evolving over recent years. Construction work is an intrinsic part of this and would be unremarkable in this context. The presence of the construction activity will form a localised intrusion of unsightly and disruptive activity in the business park environment.
- 7.11 The character areas outside of the surrounding business park would be much less affected by the temporary presence of construction works.

Summary : Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Negligible
 Overall Townscape Effect : Negligible

Effects on other aspects of Townscape – use and interest

- 7.12 In its current form, the site is publicly accessible private land which contains limited value or interest. The route along the western boundary, which connects to the business park, forming part of a wider east-west pedestrian and cycle route would need to be closed during the construction works. The works would pose a temporary inconvenience to users of this access.

Summary : Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Small
 Overall Townscape Effect: Negligible

Visual Effects

- 7.13 By virtue of their very nature construction works can be visually intrusive. Site plant such as excavators and cranes are by necessity brightly coloured. Hoarding, areas of stripped soils or stockpiles of stored materials can stand out in views and partially constructed buildings will also catch the eye. The sight of such works on a modest scale will often be seen as a normal element in a townscape view. When seen for short periods of time, the visual impact from most locations is immaterial. For larger construction projects where works may be in view for long periods of time, the visual impact on the most sensitive views may be a more significant part of the development impact.
- 7.14 Figures 35-37 in Appendix B set out the viewpoints chosen for the visual impact assessment. Visual impact is described below in the numerical order of viewpoints shown on the plan, starting with local and then moving to distant views. The views are described in more detail in the 'Operational' i.e. completed stage of the assessment.
- 7.15 For each viewpoint the change in view is described compared to the existing view. The level of likely impact is described, and any mitigating factors are discussed. The summary provides the level of sensitivity, the magnitude of change and the magnitude of the significance of change.

Local Viewpoints

Views from within ARC Oxford: View 41 and View 42

- 7.16 Views 41 and 42 represent close views from John Smith Drive, an internal ARC Oxford Road when approached from the north.

- 7.17 There will be views of hoarding, cranes, scaffolding and tree removal. However, these views are of low sensitivity since they are located within a place of work. The receptors are therefore focussed on business and transit rather than recreational journeys. There is an absence of any residential properties. Construction will be a notable element in the view but not out of character with a constantly evolving business park.

Summary : Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of visual impact : Medium
 Overall visual Effect : Minor Adverse

Intermediate Views

Views from surrounding residential streets: View 44, View 5 and View 9

- 7.18 There will be numerous views from residential properties, but these are likely to be restricted to the upper floors, on roads close to the Site. Views from streets would be partially obscured by buildings, walls and fences. The most visible effects will be tall cranes, and the scaffolding-clad building.
- 7.19 The properties to the North of the Site in viewpoint 44 are likely to experience the greatest visual impact since they occupy a higher level than the Site and are closest to it.
- 7.20 The construction works will have a negative effect and the scale of the cranes could appear oppressive. However, this is a temporary situation and residential views have been conditioned to repeated change over recent years in this section of the city.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: High
 Magnitude of visual effect: Medium-Small
 Overall Visual Effect: Moderate Adverse

View from Oxford Stadium: View 33

- 7.21 In this context a crane could appear on the horizon beyond the tree line. While visible it would not be unprecedented in an area of change at the suburban/ commercial/ industrial edge of town. It would also be a minor imposition from a viewpoint that is focussed on the activity of Greyhound racing, where the setting itself and wider views are unremarkable.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of visual effect: Small
 Overall Visual Effect: Minor Adverse

Long Distant Views

Views from elevated towers/ spires within the City Centre: View 13 St. Mary the Virgin, View 30 St. George's Tower, Oxford Castle and View 29 Carfax Tower

- 7.22 Views out from the prominent historic Oxford towers are an important aspect of the cultural as well as the visual setting of Oxford and are consequently of very high sensitivity. Due to effective control of building heights within 1.2km of the centre, there are unobstructed views towards the surrounding hills.
- 7.23 However, the distance to the Site is over 4km, which reduces visibility. This distance combined with the fact that the new construction would form only a very small additional component of the overall view, reduces its visual impact. Although the view is highly susceptible to change, the duration of the construction period is temporary, and a crane is a highly precedented feature within an urban skyline view such as this.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Very High
 Magnitude of visual effect: Negligible - Small
 Overall Visual Effect: Minor Adverse

Views from outlying hills to the south and south-east: View 14, View 15, View 36

- 7.24 There are a number of elevated viewpoints from footpaths around the village of Garsington, from the Green Belt Way as it extends between Garsington and Shotover Country Park and from Shotover Country Park itself.
- 7.25 View 14 is dominated by the industrial and commercial buildings focussed around the Mini Plant, situated to the east of the Site. The presence of tower cranes would be visible and they would pierce the horizon line. However, some pylons and powerlines bisect this view in the foreground providing dominant vertical features which would lessen the impact. It is likely that these pylons would still retain dominance and the emphasis of the view would not be shifted from the vast extents of the industrial and commercial buildings.
- 7.26 The Site in View 36 is largely shielded by trees and vegetation. It is possible for a crane to be visible in the distance poking above the tree line.
- 7.27 View 15 is an elevated panorama of the suburbs of Oxford, heavily screened by large groups of trees. A crane could be visible within some views from Shotover Country Park, but this would not break the horizon and would not be a unique feature within such a view.
- 7.28 With regards to these three views, construction work on Site could be visible but represents a minor change in the overall view. In all views, it would be one small component within a much wider view and would again be a familiar element within an expanding city.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: High
 Magnitude of visual effect: Negligible-Small
 Overall Visual Effect: Minor

View from Raleigh Park View Cone: View 25

- 7.29 This viewpoint is at some remove from the Site. Views contain vegetation in the foreground and layers of intervening vegetation and townscape extending towards the Site. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that any aspects of the construction site would be visible from this position.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: High
 Magnitude of visual effect: Negligible/ None
 Overall Visual Effect: Negligible/None

- 7.30 As a large construction site, it is likely there would need to be some level of security and occasional working lighting for the duration of the works. This can cause nuisance for neighbouring properties and general light pollution. Without details of the contractor's working arrangements, it is not possible to assess the visual effect of the construction phase lighting beyond the point where there is the potential for some level of intrusion into sensitive viewpoints.

Planning Policy Effects

- 7.31 Planning Policy *RE7 Managing the Impacts of Development* advocates for measures in a construction management plan in the interests of ensuring the amenity of communities, occupiers and neighbours.

Mitigation

- 7.32 Mitigation of the landscape, townscape and visual effects would be difficult to achieve during the construction process. Inevitably, working within a constrained site envelope, there would be temporary disruptions with construction traffic, hoarding and restriction of through routes.
- 7.33 A programme of traffic management, restrictions and proposals for temporary screening will be required but this is a common feature of urban regeneration and should present no major difficulties. This is partly detailed in the Outline Construction and Management Plan prepared by Stantec.
- 7.34 The replacement of soft landscape, principally the trees, tends to come at the end of construction works so that trees and soils are not subject to damage during the process. Inevitably, this results in a temporary and unavoidable loss of amenity.

8.0 EFFECTS ON OPERATIONAL (COMPLETION)

- 8.1 At completion it is assumed that all the landscape works will be finished, and the building occupied, with new tree planting, other soft landscape and all external amenity features installed. The immediate impact of the new landscape would help ground the building in its site and integrate it with the surroundings of ARC Oxford.
- 8.2 Converting this established plot, comprising seven individual three storey (two storey and pitched roof) office buildings into one large, consolidated lab enabled office is noteworthy in terms of the redistribution of massing on the site but it is contextually relevant in terms of planning policy as described above. Its impacts are limited in terms of visibility and in addition, it has the potential to contribute positively in terms of the local townscape character and Site context.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Negligible
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Negligible
 Overall Townscape Effect: No Effect
 Cumulative Effect : N/A

- 8.3 The development is inclusive of architectural treatments to its massing (through positioning and setbacks) and façade treatment which addresses impact on existing residential properties.
- 8.4 Trees to the boundary have all been retained with additional trees threaded throughout the car park, which when combined with the trees to the Bailey Road side of the boundary largely filter the views towards the building softening the building and helping to ground it.
- 8.5 The materials chosen are understated while providing visual interest. There is a rhythm to the façade that breaks up the massing. In addition, a palette of materials including reconstituted stone interspersed with pale brickwork to the lower levels and a bronze effect metal panelling to the 2nd floor upwards raises the quality of the building.

Physical Townscape and Landscape Changes

Topography & Drainage

- 8.6 As set out in the construction stage section, the development works will not fundamentally change the topography of the Application Site.
- 8.7 The site is nominally sloping and this will not change. There will be no significant changes to levels to blend in with the site boundaries and achieve level building accesses.
- 8.8 The Site is already directly connected to drainage infrastructure. The scheme includes initiatives to maximise water management benefits. This includes rain gardens and green roofs. These features are embedded in the landscape design creating different character areas and mini habitat opportunities and can be highlighted as part of the sustainable design ethos of the development.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Negligible
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Negligible
 Overall Townscape Effect: No Effect
 Cumulative effect: N/A

Trees and Habitat

- 8.9 Trees are an important and defining part of ARC Oxford currently. They make a significant contribution to urban greening in an area where tree planting is otherwise limited. The existing trees within the Site, are currently the most important Site asset. They are significant not just for enhancing the Site itself but as part of wider strategic planting across ARC Oxford.
- 8.10 Twenty trees would be removed in total to necessitate the development.
- 8.11 The development provides an opportunity to diversify the existing tree cover. In total fifty three new semi mature trees are proposed. All trees would be planted in soft landscaped beds. All trees, apart from 6 multi stems to the front of the building, are proposed as clear stem, semi mature trees to ensure good impact at planting and good establishment thereafter. This will provide a positive canopy gain after 25 years in accordance with the city's urban forestry strategy.
- 8.12 The tree selection has been influenced by a visual analysis of species already doing well throughout ARC Oxford, together with trees resistant to known pests and diseases and principles set out in the Oxford Urban Forest Strategy 2021.
- 8.13 A broad palette of tree species would bring a strong character and structure to the development, with a range of predominantly native trees including Field Maple, Common Alder, Silver Birch and Small leaved Lime and some non-native species such as Sweetgum and Zelkova.
- 8.14 The aim is for increased species diversity with new trees forming part of a potential wider campus, species-rich 'Urban Arboretum' to aid resilience to disease and withstand the impacts of climate change. Native species have been prioritised to provide improved habitats and a higher biodiversity value.
 This would perpetuate and enhance the existing tree cover at ARC Oxford further strengthening and thickening the existing tree lines and groups reinforcing the wider planting strategy.
 The additional tree planting combined with biodiversity green roofs, rain gardens and amenity planting has generated a Biodiversity Net Gain of 70.35% which far exceeds the current requirement of 5%.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Small
 Overall Townscape Effect: Minor-Moderate (Beneficial)
 Cumulative effect: N/A

Built Environment and Current Land Use

- 8.15 The massing of the built form and the extents of the car parking have been consolidated to create an arrangement that is both more efficient and more legible. The continued frontage to the plot along John Smith's Drive creates a stronger presence and an improved interface with the wider business park through the introduction of a more active street frontage. Proposals include a new path leading into the western side of the plot, new boundary fencing, together with tree and groundcover planting. The footpath to the south-western edge would be enhanced, ensuring well defined connections to the wider campus amenities and local area. In addition, a new amenity space at the end of the footpath would provide a gateway to the campus and a place to stop, sit and rest.
- 8.16 The plot has been rationalised to define a clear, attractive and separate arrival point for pedestrians and cyclists with a simplified vehicular movement strategy placing the car parking to the rear.
- 8.17 In land use terms, the nature of the building (lab enabled office space) builds on the current offer providing greater flexibility. It is a natural continuity of the surrounding park activities and the wider commercial district. It helps contribute to the campus as a pleasant, attractive and vibrant workplace. Overall, the proposals present an important increase in useable space through efficient land use.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Small
 Overall Townscape Effect Minor-Moderate (beneficial)
 Cumulative effect: NA

Townscape Character Effects

- 8.18 As noted earlier in the Baseline section, the Site is situated within area **8A of the Cowley Motor Works** LCA of the Oxford Landscape Assessment.
- 8.19 Three other character areas are contiguous with character area 8A and were considered as of potential relevance to the Application Site:

5B Cowley Residential Suburb
6C Horspath Road Area
3C Temple Cowley

Impact on 8A

- 8.20 In the baseline, it was determined that ARC Oxford, where the Site is located, can be considered a sub area within the 8A Cowley Motor Works, since this parcel of land to the west of the By-Pass, has characteristics that set it apart from the wider commercial and industrial zone to the east. Namely, this is a considered landscape, with generous urban greening providing a polite neighbour to the surrounding residential suburbs to the north, west and south in contrast to the more utilitarian and lower quality settings typically found to the eastern side of the by-pass. Figure 02 within Appendix C illustrates the proposals in context. Photomontage views in Appendix D illustrate the integration of the proposals into the townscape.
- 8.21 The 8A Cowley Motor works character area has some sensitivity to change due to its contribution to the industrial heritage of Oxford. There have been recent changes to the area, with the evolution of the Business Park and the assessment describes the *'introduction of high-quality architecture and landscape which have generally been perceived as positive.'*
- 8.22 The proposals present the opportunity to further improve the character area. They provide an important upgrade and refresh. The proposals convert a series of low buildings set within car parking

and generous infrastructure planting into a more urbane design response with an efficient use of land centred around quality architecture and landscape. It retains the most positive aspect of the current site, which is the trees to the boundaries and consolidates a convoluted car parking arrangement pushing it to the rear of the plot. This creates a more positive and active street frontage with a clear arrival and improved external landscape setting. The focus on additional planting and areas for biodiversity fulfils objectives set out in the character area assessment which are focused on planting native trees to screen, soften and increase biodiversity value.

8.23 The character assessment considers that there may be pressure in the future for significant change through redevelopment and the expansion of the business parks. However, this focuses on the deterioration of existing built fabric and the introduction of height that would overshadow adjacent areas. Neither concern applies here.

8.24 As set out above, the proposals seek to introduce a building that is contextually relevant, set within the industrial heritage of Oxford. It would help introduce a new focus for the business park and in time there is the potential for the building to become associated with the growth in new scientific industries within the city. It could help continue to bolster Oxford's long standing position as a centre of pioneering research, science and innovation.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Medium
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Small
 Overall Townscape Effect: Minor (beneficial)
 Cumulative effect: NA

Impact on surrounding character areas

8.25 The surrounding adjoining Character Areas are predominantly residential suburbs. With generally limited views out towards the application site.

8.26 The proposed building would be visible from restricted parts of the residential area, much as the seven individual buildings are currently. The proposals would provide a confident and considered form. The height increase associated with an additional storey is modest particularly when read amongst the wider character area of 8A. Therefore, the impact is negligible. It does not have the potential to materially change the character of the current character area or that of the adjoining residential areas. Instead, it offers positive enhancement when considered against the 8A character area appraisal and seeks to perpetuate the introduction of higher quality architecture and landscape design.

8.27 The Business Park would continue to have an important role to play in providing a transition between the low-lying residential streets and the larger scale commercial and industrial developments defined predominantly by the Mini Plant.

8.28 Temple Cowley is the most sensitive of the surrounding character areas, containing a Conservation Area. While it is in close proximity (c. 400m north as the crow flies) bounded by the Garsington Road, this character area is distinctly different and insular in nature. It has long existed against the backdrop of an evolving edge of town industrial/ commercial zone. Significantly, the scale and nature of changes associated with Plot 4200 from this point would but not be discerned and would therefore have no impact.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Low for 5B and 6C, High for 3A
 Magnitude of townscape impact: No Change
 Overall Townscape Effect: None

Effects on other aspects of Townscape – use and interest

- 8.29 The proposals would provide some increased use and interest in the landscape through the creation of a green forecourt to the entrance that includes planters and seating areas.
- 8.30 An improved access route along the southern boundary linking the surrounding residential areas into ARC Oxford would incorporate an attractive seating area marking a gateway into the campus. This route would likely draw a greater level of use and would help promote a more open and legible Business Park. It also creates an opportunity to include aspects of the local heritage in the design. The incorporation of a sculptural element referencing the forms of the old assembly line that extended through the area in the heyday of the Morris Minor Motor Works reflects the industrial history of this part of Oxford.
- 8.31 The landscape design with trees set amongst a diverse ground level planting palette add renewed vibrancy, animation and interest. The wildlife value of the Site is currently limited with no registered or defined interest. These initiatives would also help improve the wildlife value of the site, by introducing new habitats and enhancing species diversity. These measures would be embedded into the landscape such that the everyday function of the outdoor spaces highlights a connection with nature.
- 8.32 The design approach and quality of the intended spaces are illustrated in Figures 09-13 in Appendix C.
- 8.33 In addition to the planting at ground level, there are also two south east facing roof terrace gardens. Although this is private land, the additional garden spaces would further add to the designed landscape and horticultural interest of the site.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Low (current condition excludes potential new building users)
 Magnitude of townscape impact: Small
 Overall Townscape Effect: Minor (Beneficial)

Visual Effects

Local Viewpoints

- 8.34 The list of viewpoints from which the scheme has been assessed has been described in earlier sections and is shown in Appendix D.

Local Views from within ARC Oxford

View 41: from John Smith Drive Roundabout Approach

- 8.35 This view is at the gateway into the southern section of ARC Oxford, is largely unaffected by the proposal. The trees and buildings within the foreground dominate the view and mask the building to the point where the change is barely discernible.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of visual impact: No Change
 Overall Visual Effect: Negligible
 Impact at +15 years: Nominal change - some additional tree growth but impact is already considered negligible.

Cumulative Impact: The consented Plot 1000 is visible in this view, providing a new Gateway building at the entrance to the southern campus of ARC Oxford. Like Plot 4200, it provides a more contemporary and land efficient response. Although Plot 4200 is barely seen from this view, they will be experienced as part of a sequence of views. Plot 1000 is significantly taller and has greater presence overlooking the main road, while 4200 responds more conservatively to the residential neighbours and is an appropriate response against this baseline. Therefore, there is a negligible cumulative impact.

View 42: from John Smith Drive adjacent to Plot 4200

- 8.36 This is a close-up view from the pedestrian path directly outside the Site. The building has a much greater degree of presence than the current scheme. This creates definition to the plot and a positive, more active street edge. The building is grounded and softened by planting. The tree line comprising predominantly existing and some additional proposed trees to the site edge still dominates the view providing continuity to the road edge through the campus.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Low
 Magnitude of visual impact: Small
 Overall Visual Effect: Minor beneficial
 Impact at +15 years: some additional tree growth would further soften the building. However, the change would be nominal since the boundary already comprises a number of semi mature trees.
 Cumulative Impact: N/A

Intermediate Views – Views from surrounding residential streets

View 44: from Bailey Road looking South

- 8.37 This view is taken from the residential area to the north. While the proposed building does draw more attention than the existing, it does not significantly alter the composition of the view. The top of the roof line is higher than the current scheme, yet is still respectful of the residential properties and is lower than the height of the existing trees to the boundary on Bailey Road which continues to provide a foil to the building. These existing trees to the boundary are complemented by several trees within the car park to the rear of the Site that enhance this sense of a green buffer to the site edge, adding layers of foliage and texture.
- 8.38 In the winter views, a large extent of the building façade is revealed. However, a generous proportion of blue sky still remains. The elevational treatment of the building is designed to be calm, with recessive tones. The rhythm of vertical detailing combined with a set back at the 2nd floor and a step in the roof line help break up the massing considerably. The mullion and fin details allow the fenestration to appear recessed, limiting its size and impact. The line of the proposed building is positioned further away from the residential site boundary to reduce the impact on the neighbouring properties. The main building façade is over 16m inboard of the previous buildings.
- 8.39 The sensitivity of the view is high, due to its residential environment. The development has greater presence, but it acknowledges the context and is arguably of higher design quality, which adds greater definition and interest to the view rather than significantly altering it.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: High
 Magnitude of visual impact: Small
 Overall Visual Effect: Minor
 Impact at +15 years: Additional tree growth would further screen the building. At the time of planting the trees to the rear of the car park would all be visible in the view despite the level change offering some screening but it is predicted that by

15 years that a number of trees would reach above the roof line of the building and be very effective at masking any visual impacts. (Refer to Appendix D)
Cumulative Impact: N/A

- 8.40 As previously highlighted intervisibility in the surrounding residential areas is limited. To test this, further verified wireline views have been included to capture the residential areas to the west and the Greyhound Stadium within Blackbird Leys to the south.

View 5: Bartholomew Road:

- 8.41 This view demonstrates that the Site would be slightly higher than the existing plots to the south 4050 and 4100 but irrespective of this, it would not be visible in this view. There would be no change to this view.
- 8.42 It is possible that a small portion of the Site would be visible briefly at the corner of Barnes Road and Boswell Road but that this would be such a nominal change within such a limited area that it would render the difference negligible. Refer to Appendix D.

View 9: Garsington Road:

- 8.43 This view demonstrates that despite the proximity, the Site would not be visible at all from this vantage point. Therefore, there is no change to the view. Refer to Appendix D.

View 33: Oxford Stadium:

- 8.44 This view demonstrates that the Site would be located below the existing tree line, behind the existing retail park and business park. The Site is not visible. There would be no change to this view. Refer to Appendix D.

Long Distant Views

- Views from elevated towers/ spires within the City Centre

- 8.45 Verified views for the fully rendered long-distance views have been taken with both 50mm and a 24mm lens. 24mm is generally accepted to be the standard lens to use for long distance views because it more accurately captures the view as experienced by the naked eye.

View 13: View from St. Mary the Virgin Tower

- 8.46 The tower of St Mary's is a public vantage point well above the general skyline in Oxford. The views from the top take in a panorama of the city. Building heights in a circle of 1.2km in diameter are as standard controlled to a limit of 18m so that there are no obstructions to the view. This view helps the viewer to read and understand the city of Oxford, how it has grown, developed and expanded over time illustrating the range of townscape typologies from the medieval historic core to the Victorian and Edwardian suburbs and the expanding twentieth century residential and industrial developments.
- 8.47 The southern horizon is formed by a ring of hills from Headington, in the east, via Shotover and Garsington to Boar Hill and Wytham in the west. The ability to appreciate the iconic spires and silhouettes of the city centre and the ability to understand Oxford within this green landscape setting of the surrounding hills are two of the four principal visual characteristics of the city that apply to this view and need to be respected. Therefore, the four visual tests set out in the TAN 7 are to be applied:

8.48 Visual Obstruction

Visual obstruction in this context would refer to the green backdrop of Oxford. The development, theoretically, would be just visible behind a clump of trees, sitting at a level and a scale equal to

other buildings in this zone. However, considering the limits of the naked eye, the distance to the Site c. 4km the density of information and visual richness in the view, the Site is incredibly hard to discern. Therefore, any visual obstruction is imperceptible.

8.49 Visual Competition

The most dominant characteristic in the view is the historic city centre in the foreground with the vertical rhythm of spires, turrets and chimneys that rise above the horizon. Layers of buildings and intervening vegetation extend to the horizon beyond.

As stated above, the Site is located at a distance where it is barely visible therefore, it is unable to detract any attention from the focus of the view and has a negligible impact.

8.50 Skylining

Significant in this view is the Chiltern ridgeline, which is visible on a clear day forming the distant horizon. A slightly lower ridgeline encircling the city of Oxford dips in the centre of the view where the Site is located. The Site is clearly below the Chilterns ridgeline and nestles just below the lower ridgeline, aligned with other elements of the built form and sitting at the level of the existing tree line.

8.51 Change of Character

As a cumulation of the above points, the Site is barely present in the view. It is a minute detail within a vast and sweeping panorama, which has no impact whatsoever on the character of the view.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Very High
 Magnitude of visual effect: Negligible
 Overall Visual Effect: Negligible
 Impact at 15 + years: No change
 Cumulative effect: Since the development is barely perceptible any cumulative effect is equally negligible

View 30: View from St. Geroge's Tower (Oxford Castle)

8.52 St. George's Tower is the tallest vantage point within Oxford Castle, a tourist attraction to the western edge of the historic centre providing a 360 degree open panoramic view. It offers a different angle and lower viewpoint than St. Mary's. The roofscape of the 4-5 storey contemporary mixed used development comprising the 'Castle Quarter' dominates the view stretching out across the foreground. Beyond this to the left are a cluster of historic spires. The wider city is then largely submerged below the tree line which bleeds out to the horizon where it meets the Chilterns ridgeline on a clear day.

The four TAN tests are applied again, with similar results.

8.53 Visual Obstruction

The development just reaches the tree line in the distance which is consistent with the wider built form in this location. Therefore, it is largely imperceptible. This prevents the Site from having an impact in terms of visual obstruction.

8.54 Visual Competition

The most dominant characteristic in the view is the Castle Quarter in the foreground with the historic spires providing noteworthy accents beyond. Layers of intervening vegetation provide a strong foil beyond this preventing the Site from having any impact.

8.55 Skylining

The Chiltern ridgeline is visible on a clear day forming the distant horizon but is less clearly defined in this view. From this height and perspective, the Site appears just below the horizon line or lower ridgeline, aligned with, and largely obscured by the line of the intervening trees.

8.56 Change of Character

As a cumulation of the above points, the Site is barely present in the view. It is a minute detail within a vast and sweeping panorama, which has no impact on the character of the view.

Summary: Sensitivity of receptor: Very High
 Magnitude of visual effect: Negligible
 Overall Visual Effect: Negligible
 Impact at 15 + years: No change
 Cumulative effect: Since the development is barely perceptible any cumulative effect is equally negligible

8.57 A further view was tested from the Carfax Tower (View 29) and is provided as a verified wireframe view. (Refer to Appendix D). This explores one more tower at height within the centre of the historic core. This view confirms that there the Site is not visible from this height and perspective.

Additional Wireframe views:

8.58 Further studies undertaken as verified wireframe views with regards to the outlying hills to the west and south-west confirm the limits of the impact of the Site.

View 14: Green Belt Way, Garsington

8.59 The Site is situated behind the dense mass of industrial and commercial buildings that extend across the centre ground and is consequently not visible. There is no change to this view. (Refer to Appendix D)

View 15: Shotover Country Park

8.60 The Site is submerged behind several layers of vegetation. Even from the limited gaps in the vegetation, it would be incredibly hard to locate the Site amongst the existing built form from this perspective. There is no change to this view. (Refer to Appendix D)

View 36: St. Mary Church Garsington

8.61 The Site is located behind an existing tree line and is engulfed by the existing built form. There is no change to this view. (Refer to Appendix D)

View 25: Raleigh Park View Cone

8.62 The view from Raleigh Park demonstrates that the Site would not be visible. It is positioned behind substantial layers of vegetation in the far distance. The 'Dreaming Spires' are out of view as they do not fall within the same eyeline. There is no change to this view. (Refer to Appendix D)

Planning Policy Effects

8.63 As set out within section 3.0 the application area is subject to various parts of national policy, city policy and framework. The relevant policies have been set out in Section 3.0.

8.64 In terms of townscape and landscape, the proposals meet the requirements of national and local plan policy in Oxford. A range of policies promotes high quality urban design in the form of appreciating the sense of place, permeability, legibility, response to local character and the protection of views of the Oxford skyline. It is considered that the proposals respond positively to all of the relevant policies.

- 8.65 More specifically the proposals successfully respond to the following priorities set out in the current Local Plan.

Policy E1: Employment sites Intensification of uses

Policy RE2: Efficient use of land

Policy DH2: Views and buildings at height

Area of Change: Cowley Branch Line AC07

- 8.66 The proposals use land efficiently through the re development of an existing and underutilised plot within an existing business park.

- 8.67 The consolidation of built form and car parking on the plot creates a building with a bigger footprint and one additional storey. It enables the external spaces to be maximised to provide amenity, well-being and water management benefits. This is a land efficient development that intensifies employment use in an area designated accordingly.

A View Cones Assessment Study (2015)

- 8.68 The location of the Site and modest height of the building as described above does not have any impact on the protection of views of the Oxford skyline – the View Cones.

High Buildings Guidance Technical Advice Note 7

- 8.69 The development is located in an area designated as an Area of Greater Potential where it is recognised that buildings at height are more likely to be appropriate and can contribute to regeneration opportunities. The building proposed is c. 17.13m high (89m AOD) and while technically is visible from St. Mary's, the verified views have illustrated that it provides a successful regeneration and employment opportunity without having any discernible impact on the skyline of Oxford.

Mitigation

- 8.70 Mitigation, in the terms of GLVIA3, involves measures which are proposed to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse impacts. The design of the application proposals has been informed by townscape/landscape and visual impact issues from the outset and the iterative design process was undertaken to develop the proposals. The urban design, architectural and landscape design considerations given to the application proposals have integrated a range of ideas to ensure that the scheme can help benefit ARC Oxford and the surrounding townscape to provide an improved business hub that meets the needs of a key employment site whilst successfully integrating with its surroundings.

- 8.71 The elevational treatment of the building is designed to be calm, with recessive tones and a rhythm of vertical detailing, offsets and steps to the roof line that breaks up the massing. The amount of fenestration is equivalent to the current building. The line of the proposed building is positioned inbound of the current buildings with the proposed western elevation positioned further away from the residential site boundary (16.3m) to reduce the impact on the neighbouring properties on Bailey Road, Frederick Road and Phipps Road.

- 8.72 Additional trees are to be planted and would be carefully positioned to soften and screen views in and out of the plot. New semi mature trees to the western boundary and rear car park are positioned to fill gaps in the existing canopy cover, creating a staggered effect throughout the car park. The aim is to provide additional screening and softening of views in and out of the site especially in views from Bailey Road and the residences on Frederick Road to the west.

- 8.73 The application is submitted with detailed design for the landscape and public realm. Further detail on the landscape would be prepared in advance of construction, including precise details of the layout of hard and soft landscape and management requirements. Tree protection information in respect of retained tree/s would be supervised by a qualified arboriculturalist following guidance in BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Construction.

9.0 SUMMARY

- 9.1 This report provides a townscape and visual impact assessment (TVIA) for development proposals within ARC Oxford at Plot 4200. The assessment process has fed into the development of the application proposals to ensure the scheme is suitably sensitive to its location and setting.
- 9.2 The TVIA assessment process follows a recognised approach and aims to explain the anticipated effects of the development in a structured logical format. In accordance with best practice guidance, the assessment separates out the consideration of landscape impacts from visual impacts. This means that effects which relate to the many different aspects of what may make a landscape interesting or valued are considered irrespective of any public access or view. Visual impacts then concentrate on how the local visual amenities may be affected; with a concentration on mainly public views (private views are considered in relation to views from private dwellings where appropriate).
- 9.3 The assessment involved the establishment of the existing baseline conditions, which considers expected changes in the environment that will occur irrespective of these development proposals. The landscape conditions were analysed in respect of the general context of the site location, the physical features of the locality such as topography, tree cover and the built environment. The City-wide landscape character assessment has been referred to as part of the baseline condition along with consideration of any other aspects of potential landscape function or interest such as access, recreation or heritage and wildlife value.
- 9.4 This assessment confirmed the contextual position of the site within an extensive suburb of Oxford with the established industrial history and current context of the Cowley Mini plant. The site sits at a low position in the local topography and the physical coverage of existing trees on the site are noted as parts of the baseline story. The site contains a mix of trees but no other notable landscape features. In respect of the built environment, the site is noted as a partly vacant office development within a largely developed and evolving townscape. The Site does not currently offer any meaningful access function or amenity space or other aspect of landscape, heritage or ecological interest.
- 9.5 The visual condition and sensitivity of the locality were established with an initial mapping of the visual envelope through a viewshed map and site visits. This was then followed with the agreement on key views to assess with the City Council. The existing condition and sensitivity of these views are set out within the body of this assessment. There is currently low-intervisibility within the surrounding areas due to the nature of the urban grain and local topography, which generated limited receptors.
- 9.6 The viewpoints were organised into three categories: local views internally within the business park, intermediate views within the surrounding neighbourhood of Cowley, representing the day-to-day experiences of residents and then distant views which were concerned with i) the effects of the proposals on the landscape setting from the historic core of Oxford and ii) the impact from the view cones and recreational routes in the outlying villages to the south and west.
- 9.7 The summary of the assessments are provided below for reference:

Landscape Effects

Nature of receptor		Overall Effect:
Context		
Contextual setting	The scheme offers a change to the perception of the suburb with reinforcement of the iconic Mini works and emphasis on a stronger presence of the campus as a focus for science and technology	No Effect
Physical Landscape		
Topography & Drainage	No effect on natural topography, new sustainable landscape drainage features.	No Effect
Trees and Habitat	Net gain in the number and extent of tree cover on the site. Negligible loss of existing habitat but new areas created by scheme with generate a BNG of 70.35%	Minor-Moderate Beneficial Effect
Built Environment & Land use	Development reconfigures the existing Site, consolidates the built form and car parking and brings forward a higher level of active land use. It continues and diversifies the existing use and continues existing structural planting.	Minor-Moderate Beneficial Effect
Landscape/Townscape Character	LCA 8A - Proposals add new building into the existing business park increases general presence and quality of business park portion of LCA.	Minor Beneficial Effect
Adjoining LCA's	Adjoining LCA's 5B, 6A, 6C & 3C – Development sufficiently removed from adjoining character areas such that proposals have no effect.	No change
Access, landscape function or interest	Proposals subtly improve and encourage access into the business park to the plot boundary, create new areas of amenity and useable high quality breakout workspaces and add interest to the landscape with heritage references, wildlife, and sustainable development interest.	Minor Beneficial Effect

Visual Effects

Nature of receptor:	View point:	Overall Effect:
Local Views:		
Business Park users	V41: John Smith Drive roundabout	Negligible
Business Park users	V42: John Smith Drive adjacent site	Minor beneficial
Intermediate Views:		
Residential	V44: Bailey Road	Minor
Residential	V5: Bartholomew Road	No change
Residential	V9: Garsington Road	No change
Leisure attraction	V33: Oxford Stadium	No change
Distant Views from prominent tall buildings in the historic centre:		
Heritage destination	V13: St Mary the Virgin Church	Negligible
Heritage destination	V30: Oxford Castle	Negligible
Heritage destination	V29: Carfax Tower	No change
Distant Views from the surrounding hills:		
Recreational footpath	V14: Green Belt Way Garsington	No change
Recreational park	V15: Shotover Park	No change
Recreational footpath/ historic asset	V36: St Mary Church, Garsington	No change
View cone	V25: Raleigh Park	No change

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The proposals at Plot 4200 include the demolition of seven existing office buildings to be replaced with a single lab-enabled office building, alongside other landscape enhancements to the site.
- 10.2 Whilst contextually minor in a wider sense, they provide an important upgrade to the quality of development and the environment currently existing at the business park.
- 10.3 The conversion of a series of two storey office buildings shrouded in car parking and infrastructure planting into one, single lab-enabled office building represents a more efficient use of land. A clear rationale with regards to height and massing has been demonstrated, with the reconfiguration of the plot bestowing simplicity and clarity.
- 10.4 The proposals consolidate a convoluted car parking arrangement, pushing this to the rear of the plot and in turn creating a more positive and active street frontage with a clear arrival and improved external landscape setting. The most positive aspect of the current site, the trees that define the site

boundary, are retained and enhanced with additional planting (including native trees) which work to screen, soften and increase biodiversity value. Improvements are also made to the public footpath to the southern boundary, encouraging greater use and accessibility. The tonal choices of materials have been sensitively chosen to reflect the surroundings and sit comfortably within the existing context. Overall, this provides a sense of a high-quality development.

Townscape Effects

- 10.5 From a townscape perspective, the proposals perpetuate the positive facets of Character Area 8A, Cowley Motor Works and offer an improvement. In a character area dominated by big box retail, commerce and industry, there is little regard for architectural detail, streetscape and public realm. The business park currently provides a positive digression with a more thoughtful approach featuring structural landscape throughout. The proposals result in a positive addition founded in this context.

Visual Effects

- 10.6 The closest visual receptors are those within the immediate business park which are categorised as low sensitivity because they are localised and are limited to workers, visitors or those transiting the site. The proposals would introduce a more vibrant and inviting area in which to work. The retention of all boundary trees continues the green edge to the plot but interface with the wider business park is reinforced with a more engaging building frontage which offers an improved sense of arrival. The impacts on these receptors are considered positive.
- 10.7 The intermediate visual receptors are considered to be highly sensitive due to the presence of residential development. However, the impacts are limited to properties immediately backing onto the Site. Whilst the height of the building has increased presence, this is mitigated by carefully considered architectural interventions to the buildings positioning, massing and elevational articulation and calm, sensitive façade treatments. Further mitigation is offered through of layers of planting which screen the building.
- 10.8 It is also important to consider that contextually, these properties and others in the Cowley neighbourhood were built in tandem with the rapid expansion of the motor works in the twentieth century. The demolition of large tracts of this industry and the establishment of the business park at the start of the twenty first century created a more considered, human-scale environment and provided a more considerate neighbour.
- 10.9 The proposals, through a carefully considered design enable Plot 4200 to remain a considerate neighbour to the adjacent residential areas providing an important buffer to the larger utilitarian developments beyond.
- 10.10 The long-distance receptors are all highly sensitive and susceptible to change. However, at a significant distance from the site, the changes are barely perceptible within a field of vision that contains many prominent elements and details in the skyline. Nonetheless, the assessment has regard to the tests of visual obstruction, visual competition, skylining and change of character set out in the High Buildings TAN and confirms that there is no change to any of the four principal visual characteristics of Oxford.

Overall Effects

- 10.11 Overall, the proposals have been assessed as having nominal impacts with some beneficial effects. The assessment has not identified any aspect that would merit further analysis of mitigation measures. The scheme offers a positive addition to the locality, raising the design quality of the business park and taking opportunity to reinforce and promote Oxford's long standing position as a centre of pioneering research, science and innovation.

