
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

ON BEHALF OF

ALTUS HOMES

FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF

A FORMER CAR RETAIL SITE

SITUATED ON THE LONDON ROAD,

STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

V2 April 2024

CONTENTS

1.	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL	1
2.	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	3
3.	THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL AND MITIGATION MEASURES	6
4.	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	12
5.	RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY	25
6.	BASELINE CONDITIONS	32
7.	EVALUATION OF RESIDUAL EFFECTS	43
8.	PREDICTED EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY	48
9.	SUMMARY	61
10.	CONCLUSION	67

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ZLA 1	LOCATION PLAN (ref: ZLA_1518-L-101)
APPENDIX ZLA 2	SITE CONTEXT PLAN (ref: ZLA_1518-L-101)
APPENDIX ZLA 3	PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT (ref: 01266-03-002-Rev.P01)
APPENDIX ZLA 4	SUPPORTING INFORMATION Indicative Site Section (ref: 01266-03-017) Illustrative Streetscene (ref: 01266-03-018)
APPENDIX ZLA 5	THEORETICAL VISIBILITY (ref: ZLA_1518-L-102)
APPENDIX ZLA 6	ILLUSTRATIVE LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN (ref: ZLA_1518-L-201)
APPENDIX ZLA 7	REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS Photoviewpoints 1-17 (ref: ZLA_1518-L-300)
APPENDIX ZLA 8	METHODOLOGY

1. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

Introduction

- 1.1. ZLAde Landscape Architects Limited ('ZLA') were commissioned by Altus Homes (the 'Applicant') to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for the redevelopment of the former car dealership and mechanics, situated off the London Road, Stroud, Gloucestershire (the 'site'); see the Site Location Plan contained Appendix ZLA 1.
- 1.2. The site is within the county of Gloucestershire, and the Local Planning Authority of Stroud District Council (the 'LPA'). The application site is situated each side of the London Road at approximately OS Grid Reference: SO 85604 04636; see Appendix ZLA 2 of this LVA.
- 1.3. The Applicant is seeking detailed planning permission for the redevelopment of a former car retail site for residential dwellings plus site access, parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure (the 'proposed development'); see the Proposed Site Layout (ref: 01266-002-Rev.P01) contained in Appendix ZLA 3 of this LVA.
- 1.4. This LVA is part of a suite of documents accompanying a planning application for the proposed development. The site is briefly described in Section 2 of this LVA, with further site details given in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) which accompanies the planning application.
- 1.5. This appraisal details how the proposed development has been designed and planned with consideration to predicted effects on landscape character and visual amenity in the surrounding environment and neighbourhood.
- 1.6. This report has been prepared by a Chartered Landscape Architect and a Professional Member of Landscape Institute with experience in landscape design and planning in the development sector. All drawings referenced within this assessment are in Appendices of the LVA. A site visits and field-based assessment for undertaking representative photography was undertaken in late Winter-time conditions, early February 2024.

The Purpose of this Landscape Visual Appraisal

- 1.7. The purpose of this LVA is to identify the baseline conditions of the site and surrounding area and to determine those landscape and visual characteristics that might inform the design of the development proposals, including recommendations for mitigation. It then provides an appraisal of the landscape and visual effects predicted to arise from the development of the site as follows:
 - Landscape fabric, when there is physical change to components of the landscape; landform, land use or land cover;
 - Landscape character, caused by changes in the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape; and
 - Visual amenity caused by changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of Development.

1.8. This report is set out in the following sections:

- Project Description – This describes the baseline landscape fabric, landscape character and visual amenity.
- The proposed development is discussed in Section 3. The site selection and design reiteration measures incorporated into the final design to help mitigate potential impacts are also outlined, this is contained in Section 3 of the LVA.
- Assessment Criteria – This section identifies the relevant guidance used to carry out the assessment, consultation to date, viewpoint selection and defines the study area; this is contained in Section 4. The detailed methodology can be found in Appendix 4.
- Relevant Landscape Related Planning Policy - The main planning policies, guidance, and background documents relevant to this appraisal; see Section 5.
- Baseline Conditions – The landscape and visual character of the site and its setting is provided, establishing receptors within the study area with theoretical visibility of the proposed Development; see Section 6.
- Potential Residual Effects – An assessment of potential effects on the landscape and visual receptors identified in the baseline assessment, drawing upon a combination of representative and specific viewpoints to demonstrate the potential effects as a result of the proposed Development; see Section 7 and 8.
- Summary of Findings and Discussion – This section provides an overview of the proposed Development in its landscape and visual context, drawing out the key findings of the assessment and concluding on the acceptability of the proposed Development in landscape and visual terms; see Section 9, with a Conclusion at Section 10.

1.9. This application represents a submission for a detailed planning consent for a new residential development, which is based on the Proposed Site Layout (ref: 01266-002-Rev.P01) contained in Appendix ZLA 3 of this LVA.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Site

- 2.1. The application site is situated each side of the London Road at approximately OS Grid Reference: SO 85604 04636 (centre of the site). The whole quantum of the site is within the control of the Applicant which will form the basis of the planning application; see Appendix ZLA 1.
- 2.2. The site was visited in December 2023 for initial inputs into the project development, and iterative development of the masterplan. The site was revisited in early February 2024 for the undertaking of the field-based assessment for this Landscape Visual Appraisal. Both site visits were undertaken during dry fine weather conditions, following which the following is noted:

Topography

- 2.3. The topography of the site has been influenced through the combination of the site's former land use, as well as the general landform with which it is set. The majority of each land parcel is flat, being circa 56m AOD, which is similar to the landform of the London Road as it passes between each land parcel. The existing built form is located each side of this route beyond an aerial of all-weather hard standing, also at 56m AOD.
- 2.4. Beyond the former car showroom building to the east, landform rises to circa 62m AOD to the eastern quarter of the site. At this point, there is further all-weather surfacing where cars were previously stored.
- 2.5. The western part of the site area is found at circa 56m AOD along the site's periphery with the London Road, sloping down to circa 53m AOD to the western edge of this land. There is further all-weather surfacing along this western edge, which would have been used to access the lower level of the existing built form.
- 2.6. In its simplest sense, the London Road passes along the lower level of a valley landform on the south eastern edge of the town. Consequently, landform varies each side of this route – to the east landform generally rises towards the valley summit (circa 167m AOD) around Bisley Old Road, and to the west landform slopes down to the River Frome (circa 43m AOD).
- 2.7. Given the foregoing, landform to the east of the site is rising, and there a number of residential dwellings which neighbour and overlook the application site, and these are situated at circa 62m AOD, with further residential dwellings situated on the sloping ground beyond rising upwards through the valley slope landform. Neighbouring dwellings are accessed from the London Road passed the application via private driveways which rise.
- 2.8. To the southwest and west, there is further residential development, and these are situated off Arundel Mill Lane. These dwellings are situated within sloping landform.

Landscape Fabric

- 2.9. Given our field-based assessment, we note the following:
 - Previously, the application site was used for car retail sales, but is currently disused and un-managed. Given this former land use, the site is predominantly either built form or all-weather surfacing.

- There is small area of grassland with some existing trees situated within the southeastern periphery of the eastern land parcel. These are mature, native trees secluding the southeastern edge of the site

2.10. The application site has not been managed for car sales as a dealership, rather than landscape amenity. Consequently, the site contains no notable intact landscape features or historic landscape character. In its simplest sense, this is a disused employment/commercial site which has been managed for its utility as part of those operations and is set within the urban area of Stroud town.

Neighbouring Land Uses

2.11. The site is situated within an urban area, and as such it is neighboured by extensive residential development. Given the London Road is situated within the lower valley landform, development along the western side of this route has a wayside like arrangement due to the extent of land between the road and the route of the River Frome.

2.12. These dwellings range from two storey and up to three to four storeys, with a number of dwellings taking advantage of the slope change to facilitate lower floors, and where there are apartments there are extensive car parking courts which service these properties.

2.13. Beyond the River Frome, there has been modern housing development (along Bowbridge Wharf) which is a mixture of two and a half storey and three storey residential dwellings.

2.14. To the north along the London Road (before the junction of London Road with Dr Newtons Way), there are residential dwellings up to three storeys with apartment blocks, as well as two storey and a small number one storey bungalows.

2.15. To the north east and east, landform rises and there is extensive residential development. These dwellings are predominantly at least two storeys in height, with two and a half and three storey homes commonly seen. These dwellings are arranged on rising ground and look over to the location of the application site.

2.16. To the south east of the application site, there are further residential dwellings situated along the London Road, which are predominantly two storeys, with some taller homes, and with some dwellings situated beyond retaining walls on elevated positions along the London Road.

2.17. There are further retail and car fuelling stations situated off this road, with road running off the London Road leading to extensive residential areas to the east of the route (on elevated landform), and to the west leading down to the River Frome, with rising landform beyond with scattered, wayside dwellings, which are two storeys, with some three and storey dwellings situated on the Butterow Hill.

2.18. All of the foregoing residential areas form the site's context and make up land use within the initial 0.5km to 1km distance from the site. The wider town of Stroud is found to the north and west of the junction of the London Road and Dr Newtons Way, with commercial, employment land uses, which are greater height than the residential dwellings which form the land use around the application site.

2.19. The route of the River Frome runs roughly parallel to the London Road, and is situated within a lower lying landform, circa 10 metres below that of the roadway. The route of the Thames and Severn Canal (disused) runs parallel to this water course, with the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Log Distance Walking Route passing a riverside walkway. This route is within 0.5km distance from the site at its closest location.

- 2.20. Beyond this, a main railway line passes along a route which runs along the lower valley landform to the west of the River Frome. This route passes within 0.75km distance of the application site at its closest location.

Tranquillity and Sensory

- 2.21. This is an urban site, which is dis-used as a former car retail operation. The London Road is a busy roadway frequently travelled by road users.
- 2.22. The tranquillity of the site is influenced by this urbanised context, which predominantly consists of neighbouring residential development overlooking the site to east, as well as the west and north of the site within its immediate context, with further extensive residential development on rising ground to the east and northeast.

Recreation

- 2.23. The application site is private and has no public access. There are no Public Rights of Way passing through the site, or along its boundaries.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL AND MITIGATION MEASURES

3.1. The Applicant is seeking detailed planning permission for the redevelopment of a former car retail site for residential dwellings plus site access, parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure (the 'proposed development'); see the Proposed Site Layout (ref: 01266-002-Rev.P01).

3.2. The development proposal is summarised as follows; see Appendix ZLA 2:

- The development of new housing including:
 - 2 storey dwellings (up to 8.3 metres overall)
 - 3 storey dwellings built into the slope of the site area (up to 10.6 metres in height overall)
 - 3 storey apartments (up to 11.8 metres in height overall).
- New housing that is reflective of the local context to the site in terms of density and height. N.B. As noted with in Section 2 of this LVA, the southeastern area of Stroud is predominantly settled for residences, which are typically 2 or 3 storey, and in some cases greater in height, up to 4 storey. Commonly, residential streets to the east and west of the London Road have dwellings with a number of storeys built into the sloped landform
- The application site is open along its perimeter with the London Road. Each part of the site is predominantly managed as all-weather hard surfacing. Consequently, the formation of any new access points to the proposed scheme could be sited accordingly. This would not necessitate the removal of any existing boundary hedgerow, trees or vegetation.
- Incidental landscaping and green infrastructure planting to create amenity space within the development - retaining existing landscape fabric, creating new landscaping for amenity and habitat creation to ensure up to biodiversity gain through developing the site.

3.3. The development will be implemented in a single phase (market conditions permitting). The DAS supporting this application provides full details of the development proposals, and proposed schedule of implementation.

Mitigation Measures

3.4. In siting the proposed development, the physical constraints of the site and the surrounding pattern of development have been taken into consideration in order to minimise the potential for the proposed development to break skylines and represent a series of prominent new structures in views towards the site.

- 3.5. The landscape and visual sensitivities of the site have been influential in the development of the Proposed Site Plan (Appendix ZLA 2). This site layout was developed iteratively with the findings of our field-based assessment, and through collaborative working since the site was initially appraised, before the finalisation of the site masterplanning proposals over the course of February 2024.
- 3.6. With consideration of the foregoing, recommendations for the architectural form and vernacular of the proposed development have been integrated into the architectural design and the overall layout of the site (N.B. Landscaping and landscape mitigation is considered further in this section of the LVA):
- The prescription of the building heights for each proposed dwellings, and the relative finished floor level ('FFL') for each proposed unit have been tested through on-site assessment, so that the proposal is not substantially greater, and is reflective of built context of the site which neighbours the application site; as described in Section 2 of this LVA; and
 - These measures contribute to reducing and offsetting the likely landscape and visual effects by reducing visual prominence and overall discernibility of the proposal and are considered to be 'embedded' within the masterplanning of the Proposed Site Plan.
- 3.7. Landscape mitigation measures have been developed through consideration of the host landscape character for the proposed development, as well as reviewing the arboriculture and ecological assessments (which support this planning application). These provide an appropriate solution for a development that offsets and/or reduces landscape and visual effects, and if practicable, enhances the local landscape fabric, as well as the biodiversity of the site through focussed initiatives for habitat creation.
- 3.8. The combination of these factors has iteratively guided the site layout, as well as the landscape proposals for the development contained within the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (ref: ZLA_1518-L-201), see Appendix ZLA 3. Furthermore, these principles will be instrumental in developing the detailed design for the discharge of planning conditions post approval.
- 3.9. The application site is currently un-used. Its former use was that of a car dealership and mechanics, and represents a brownfield site within the southeastern edge of the town. Consequently, the application site is situated within an existing built area, which has urban built form and features.
- 3.10. The application site is not situated within open countryside, but within an urban setting. Open countryside, which is managed agriculture and woodland, provides the setting to the southeastern town edge with the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty extending across the wider area; see Appendix ZLA 1 for the Site Context Plan.
- 3.11. This open countryside setting of Stroud is made up of a number of landscape character areas, which are detailed through the appraisal undertaken by the Local Planning Authority in their Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment (November 2000); see Section 5 of this LVA.

- 3.12. Drawing on the Landscape Character Assessment published by the District Council Stroud District, a number of landscape sensitivities were identified, which included the following:
- 'Larger settlements occur at strategic locations.....and throughout the Stroud and Nailsworth valley where they have grown up around industry centred on fast flowing streams..... More recent development has significantly spread up the valley slopes in many locations, and is visually prominent over considerable distances; and
 - The main pressures for change in this character type are from built development, including improvements to communication routes.
- 3.13. Given this, the District Council do recognise that 'potentially much can be done to integrate new development through sensitive planning and design and response to traditional building types. The main threat arises from visually intrusive development of unsympathetic design and materials.'
- 3.14. Additionally, drawing on this same Landscape Character Assessment, the following key priorities for managing the landscape surrounding the southeastern edge of Stroud; these include:
- Ensure that careful and stringent planning controls on the siting and design of new development are provided to maintain the character of this landscape type and to protect the AONB landscape.
 - Encourage the uptake of grants and other support schemes to maintain traditional land management in the rural valleys.
 - Encourage the continued protection of important wildlife habitats.
 - Conserve and restore important cultural features such as old mill buildings and protect old quarry sites which form distinctive local features where they have revegetated and become important local sites of nature conservation.
 - Protect remnant pastures and small woodlands both on the valley's sides and valley floor within the more urban pressured areas.'
- 3.15. Given Stroud's setting within proximity of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ZLA notes that the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016) provides a written guidelines for integrating new development; for which, measures include:
- 'Avoid development that will intrude negatively into the landscape and cannot be successfully mitigated, for example, extensions to settlements onto the valley sides.
 - New development should be concentrated within existing built-up areas, and be of a density reflecting the characteristic linear settlement forms.
 - Ensure new development is proportionate and does not overwhelm the existing settlement.

- Conserve pattern of settlements fringing the lower slopes and their existing relationship to landform.
 - Ensure that new development does not adversely affect settlement character and form; and
 - Avoid development that may restrict or obscure views to the upper valley slopes and rims and distinctive features.'
- 3.16. In many respects, these measures are influential in terms of site selection, or are to be considered as imbedded mitigation measures, which are to be considered as part of the iterative development of a new development scenario either inside the AONB, or within its setting, such as that of the southeastern town edge of Stroud.
- 3.17. Further to this, the landscape mitigation measures for the proposed development also focus on the following (as per the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016):
- 'Plant trees and hedges within and around new development to reduce impact on the landscape and for Green Infrastructure ideally in advance of the development taking place.
 - Retain existing trees, hedges etc as part of the scheme for green infrastructure and to reflect the former landscape, historic field patterns etc.
 - Tree planting within the development to break up the perception of development mass, and maturation, to filter views of the built form.
 - To provide landscape buffer planting to offset and reduce any potential visual impact to neighbouring residential dwellings; and
 - To establish and manage new tree and hedgerow planting to integrate the proposed development into the local street scene, as well as planting and a mosaic of landscape fabric and habitat creation to create ecologically diverse buffers to the site for bio-diversity benefit.'
- 3.18. In collaboration with the consulting Ecologist for this proposal, several green infrastructure and ecological enhancements have been integrated into the proposed development. The focus of these measures is less about screening and filtering views, rather, the enhancement of the local landscape and habitat value, as well as the best integration of development at the site through new landscaping and the conservation of typical landscape fabric.
- 3.19. The landscape proposal for the development are shown on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (A0ppendix 3). Drawing on this LVA and the forgoing technical information, these proposals respond to the development to offset and reduce the effect of the proposal, as well as the enhancement of the landscape and ecology of the site.
- 3.20. These proposals have been developed through effective inter-disciplinary discussions with the wider design team to determine how best to integrate landscape enhancement and mitigation measures into the Site Layout. In combination, the establishment of these measures serves to reduce the potential for landscape and visual effects on the identified baseline receptors.

3.21. Further to this, ZLA recommends the following three points:

- To endeavour that existing and new landscape elements are appropriately managed to ensure establishment and long-term management for effective mitigation of the proposal in the long term.
- This management strategy will ensure a long-term landscape and ecological management plan for retained landscape fabric and new planting along the northern edge of the site to manage these landscape assets, so reducing the potential for adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor; and
- To develop appropriate landscape proposals for individual plots within the development, including planting of native hedgerows, shrubs and tree species of local importance, and where practicable, allow for fruit trees (species of local importance), and where practicable, local provenance. This will ensure continuity of the overall scheme, preservation of landscape mitigation measures as well habitat enhancement, along with enhancing local landscape character.

3.22. Accordingly, the development of the proposal, will ensure the long-term management of the site's landscape fabric, affording betterment for visual amenity, and wildlife of the area.

Construction Phase

3.23. It is envisaged that the development proposal would be delivered in one phase (subject to market demand). Consequently, given the foregoing, the following activities and elements have the potential to cause a temporary direct effect on the landscape fabric of the application site, and an indirect effect, on the landscape and visual amenity of the study area:

- Erection of, and visual effect, of temporary site hoarding / fencing to enclose the site, and tree protection fencing (to accord to BS 5837: 2012) within the site, and along its boundaries.
- Temporary portacabin structures for site welfare and office, and vehicle parking area.
- Earthworks excavation for the formation of construction levels, and the protection of the existing brook during the construction phase through protective fencing along its route.
- Utility of existing site access for the construction stage, and the proposed access / egress for the proposed development.
- Construction of site structures; and
- HGV deliveries to site and movement of vehicles on site.

3.24. All ground disturbances would be confined as far as practicable and working widths during construction operations would be restricted resulting in a minimal interference with existing soil structures and habitats.

Construction Mitigation

- 3.25. The details of construction methods, timing and phasing are not known at this stage; however, this appraisal has assumed a reasonable worst-case scenario. The following measures should be implemented and adhered to during the temporary construction phase:
- An approved Arboriculture Method Statement (AMS) incorporating best practice guidance set out in British Standard 5837: 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction could be adopted, which would ensure retained trees and other vegetation are not adversely affected during the construction process.
 - Visual screening, such as hoardings, could be adopted around sections of the site boundary to protect more sensitive visual receptors in close proximity, including residential receptors immediate to the site's boundaries, who have the greatest potential to be affected by the project.
 - Construction works that create dust would be kept to a minimum within proximity of residential receptors and receptors in close proximity to the site, particularly the northern and eastern boundaries; and
 - The small number of existing residents who live adjacent to the site would be more sensitive to construction lighting. Mitigation measures for construction lighting are likely to include directional fittings and restricted hours of operation, and if requested by the LPA, could be outlined within the Lighting Strategy for the project.

4. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- 4.1. This LVA has involved desk study, field work, data processing and analysis as well as interpretation using professional judgement undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect based on best practice guidance¹. The site was initially appraised in January 2024, enabling collaborative working with the Masterplanners for the site, before the finalisation of the proposals in February 2024.
- 4.2. Typically, a 15-year time horizon is used as the basis for conclusions about the residual levels of effect. Fifteen years is a well-established and accepted compromise between assessing the shorter-term effects (which may often be rather 'raw' before any proposed mitigation has had time to take effect) and an excessively long time period.

Definition of the Study Area

- 4.3. To establish the baseline context of the site and its surroundings, and to assess the potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at two geographical scales:
- Initially, a broad 'study area' was adopted, the extent of which is illustrated on Site Context plan (see Appendix ZLA 2), which is formed mainly on a desk-based study. This broad study area enabled the geographical scope of the appraisal to be defined based on the site's environmental planning context and the extent of views to and from the site; and
 - After undertaking our field-based assessment, this broad study area was redefined to the land area most likely to experience landscape effects. The extent of this detailed study area is 2km as illustrated on the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility; see Appendix ZLA 5.
- 4.4. Through on-site observations, a Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) was also identified. Through visiting publicly accessible locations, walking PRow and driving the local road network, ZLA have determined a zone by which the site can be discernible.
- 4.5. In this case, the ZPV is generally found to be within close-range and within the setting of the site. This is part due to the valley landform typically found within the southeastern area of the town, through which the London Road passes through within the lower level of the valley. Beyond this, there is scope to see the application site from rising landform to the west of the site, and to the south within the elevated landform of the open countryside beyond the town of Stroud.
- 4.6. This primary zone of visibility is where representative viewpoints are assessed, and whilst there may be views from the wider area beyond the primary zone, views are less open, and likely to be filtered, or to an extent screened by existing landscape features, built development or landform.

¹ *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013)*

- 4.7. Our field-based observations found the following, which then reduced this assessment area further due to the effect of intervening landform (primarily), and intervening mature landscape features and built form (secondarily) then reduce the discernibility of the site area from the open countryside surrounding the site.
- 4.8. In determining the Zone of Primary Visibility, our field-based observations found the following:
- 4.9. **North:** There is limited discernibility of the application site, and where the site is seen, it is from the local context of the site i.e., the urban area of southeastern Stroud within the lower valley landform:
- Discernibility of the application site is limited to within close range of the site to the north. Generally, the landform rises upwards through the valley slope. Upon this rising landform, residential dwellings are arranged along residential streets i.e., Lower Street, Middle Street and Parliament Street. Intervening residential built form is predominantly two to three storeys in scale, which effects the discernibility of the application site.
 - Beyond, landform rises further to the area called Stroud Hill (circa 115m AOD). Upon this rising landform, residential dwellings are arranged along residential streets i.e., Peghouse Street and Swift Hill View. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the effect of intervening landform is sufficient to screen the site from view.
 - The site is neighbored residential development which overlooks the site. These dwellings are situated at a topography relative to the site. Additionally, the site is seen is when passing along the London Road from the north to northwest (from the junction of London Road and Dr Newtons Way). In these situations, the site is experienced as a disused, empty site (previously managed for car sales) within this settled area and is neighbored by multiple residential land uses.
 - Existing housing along the London Road is oriented southwest to north east, and overlooks the London Road. Consequently, views of the site are oblique from these dwellings.
 - To the north beyond the town edge of Stroud, there is very limited scope to see the site. The valley landform rises through the town to the outskirts around Folly Lane (circa 100m AOD). Open countryside is situated beyond the town. However, as demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the effect of intervening landform is sufficient to screen the site from view.
- 4.10. **Northeast to East:** Similar to the above. As the application site is situated within the lower landform along the London Road, the effect of intervening landform, or the combination of landform and built form is sufficient to screen the site from many situations, including the neighbouring open countryside. Where landform rises further with the hilly surroundings of Stroud, the effect of field hedgerows and hedgerows trees, small tree groups as well as woodland is sufficient to substantially filter if not screen direct views:

- Landform rises up from the London Road to Bisley Road and Bisley Old Road (circa 130m AOD and 170m AOD). Intervening residential built form is predominantly two to three storeys in scale, which effects the discernibility of the application site.
- The site is neighbored residential development which overlooks the site. These dwellings are situated at a topography relative to the site. As above, these dwellings are oriented looking towards the London Road, within which the site is experienced as disused, empty site (previously managed for car sales) within this settled area and is neighbored by multiple residential land uses.
- Beyond Cemetery Road and Stroud Old Cemetery, there is open countryside. The effect of field hedgerows and hedgerows trees, small tree groups as well as woodland influences the discernibility of the site. IN general, these features are sufficient to substantially filter if not screen direct views.
- Towards Middle Lypiatt, landform rises further (circa 210m AOD), from which there are broad, panoramic views across the town of Stroud. However, as demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the effect of intervening landform is sufficient to screen the site from view.

4.11. **Southeast to South:** Visibility of the site is limited to the south east. The effect of landform significantly influences sight of the application site:

- As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the effect of intervening landform is sufficient to screen the site from view in many situated to the southeast.
- There is scope to see the site as one approaches and passes the site along the London Road, and from within the urban setting to the site. This route passes through an urban area which has multiple residential land uses along its course.
- Landform rises above the London Road to Minchampton Common (circa 199m AOD at Culver Hill). The effect of intervening tree components and the wooded edges to the intervening hillside is sufficient to influence the discernibility of the site, if not substantially filter and screen the site. Might the site be seen, it is glimpsed through intervening woodland and trees, and is seen as part of the wider urban setting and is surrounded by neighbouring residential land uses.

- The route of the River Frome passes from the town to the wider open countryside to the southeast to south. Generally, the route of the river is situated below that of London Road along the southeastern area of Stroud i.e., 44m AOD at the riverside and 56m AOD relative to the location of the site. The combined effect of landform built form on the western edge of London Road, and mature landscape fabric along the river is sufficient to screen the site from direct view. Along the route of the River Frome, the effect of these features further influences the discernibility of the site.
 - The site is neighboured residential development which overlooks the site. These dwellings are situated at a topography relative to the site. Additionally, the site is seen is when passing along the London Road from the north to northwest (from the junction of London Road and Dr Newtons Way). In these situations, the site is experienced as a disused, empty site (previously managed for car sales) within this settled area and is neighboured by multiple residential land uses.
- 4.12. **Southwest to West:** Generally, there are glimpses views of the site from the south west. The influence of the existing built form along the London Road, and the extensive tree belts and groups along the River Frome, and the nearby railway line, are sufficient to reduce sight of the site. Landform rises to the local landmark of Rodborough Hill, where discernibility of the site is influenced by the combined effect of landform and the wooded and tree'd edge to the valley side (i.e., below the route of Burrow Hill):
- The route of the River Frome passes from the town to the wider open countryside to the southwest. Generally, the combined effect of landform, built form on the western edge of London Road, and mature landscape fabric along the river is sufficient to screen the site from direct view. Similarly, the route of the nearby railway line (Stroud to Bath) which passes west of the River Frome is extensively tree'd which reduce the discernibility of the site further.
 - To the southwest and west, landform rises to the route of Burrow Hill Road, and the intervening sloped sides of the valley are well tree'd and wooded along this route. These features restrict the discernibility of the site.
 - Beyond Burrow Hill is the local landmark of Rodborough Hill. The summit of the valley is extensively tree'd, and the combined effect of these features and the woodland on the valley slopes restrict the discernibility of the site.
 - As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the effect of intervening landform is sufficient to screen the site from view from the wider Rodborough Common to the southwest and west.

- Landform rises to the local landmark around Little London (circa 189m AOD). Generally, the effect of intervening landform and tree components to the wooded edges to the intervening hillside is sufficient to influence the discernibility of the site. Might the site be seen, it is glimpsed through intervening woodland and trees, and is seen as part of the wider urban setting and is surrounded by neighbouring residential land uses.
- 4.13. **Northwest:** There is limited discernibility of the application site, and where the site is seen, it is from the local context of the site i.e., the urban area of south eastern Stroud within the lower valley landform:
- The seen is when passing along the London Road from the north to northwest (from the junction of London Road and Dr Newtons Way). The site is seen as a discussed, empty site (previously managed for car sales) within this settled area and is neighboured by multiple residential land uses.
 - Existing housing along the London Road is oriented southwest to north east, and overlooks the London Road. Consequently, views of the site are oblique from these dwellings.
 - There is very limited scope to see the site from within the urban areas to the northwest i.e., London Road running from Dr Newtons Way to Cornhill/Russell Street. The effect of intervening built form is sufficient to restrict, if not screen direct views.
- 4.14. Given the foregoing, it is considered that the site has a limited zone of primary visibility, which is summarised as follows:
- 4.15. **Close to Medium Range Distance:** Generally, there is scope to see the application site as one pass along London Road within close to medium range of the site:
- The site is overlooked and seen from a number of residential dwellings along the London Road. However, in these situations, the site is experienced as the site is experienced as a disused, empty site (previously managed for car sales) within this settled area and is neighboured by multiple residential land uses.
 - The site is overlooked by a number of residential dwellings on the rising valley landform. However, the effect of intervening residential built form is sufficient to reduce the area by which there are direct views of the site from.
 - The River Frome passes within close range of the site; however, the combined effect of landform, built form on the western edge of London Road, and mature landscape fabric along the river is sufficient to screen the site from direct view.
 - Overall, the zone of primary visibility is experienced as to the southeast and north west along London Road, and from within the urban setting of the town and its immediate hillside landform, which is either developed with existing homes, or within open valley sides, where there is extensive field hedgerows and robust tree components.

4.16. **Medium Range to Long Range Distance:** Generally, due to the site's location within the lower valley landform, the effect of intervening landform on the valley side, or the combination of landform and built form around the edge of the town, is sufficient to substantially filter, if not screen the site, including views from the neighbouring open countryside. Where landform rises further with the hilly surroundings of Stroud, the effect of field hedgerows and hedgerows trees, small tree groups as well as woodland is sufficient to substantially filter if not screen direct views:

4.17. Further to this, we also noted the following:

River Frome

4.18. The River Frome passes through the assessment area for this LVA; see Appendix ZLA 2 for the Site Context plan. The route passes along the lower levels of the sloped valley landform, which characterises the location of Stroud Town.

4.19. The route of the River Frome runs roughly parallel to the London Road, and is situated within a lower lying landform, circa 10 metres below that of the roadway. The route of the Thames and Severn Canal (disused) runs parallel to this water course, with the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route passing a riverside walkway.

4.20. Generally, the site is not seen wholesale, and is frequently filtered from direct view by intervening mature landscape fabric along the course of the River Frome or screened by intervening built form within the town.

4.21. At its closest location, within 0.5km distance of the site, generally there is no sight of the site due to the aforementioned physical features. However, might the proposed scheme be seen, the built form would be experienced against the wider urban setting – in particular, the broad residential area situated on rising landform on the opposite valley side.

Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route

4.22. As demonstrated by the Site Context Plan (Appendix ZLA 2), this National Trail passes within close range of the application site. The route passes along the lower lying valley landform which surrounds and passes through the town of Stroud. The National Trail runs through open countryside to the southeast through an area called 'Golden Valley', and the through the valley situated between Lydiate Hill and Rodborough Hill, which are within the Cotswolds AONB.

4.23. The National Trail passes through the southeastern edge of Stroud town, and the London Road, which the application site is situated on, runs approximately to the course of the river. The National Trail then progresses along the course of the river to the open countryside beyond Stroud to the west between Maiden Hill and Redhill within the sloped valley landform.

4.24. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), there is only a limited geographical area by which there may be site of the proposed scheme. This is indicated within the initial 1km distance of the site to the south, west and northwest, and also intermittent to the south between 1 and 2 km distance.

4.25. Given our field-based assessment (February 2024), the route of this National Trail passes through lower lying landform, with the wider townscape situated elevated above the route of the River Frome, which this National Trail follows. Generally, the site is not seen wholesale, and is frequently filtered from direct view by intervening mature landscape fabric along the course of the River Frome or screened by intervening built form within the town.

- 4.26. At its closest location, within 0.5km distance of the site, generally there is no sight of the site due to the aforementioned physical features. However, might the proposed scheme be seen, the built form would be experienced against the wider urban setting – in particular, the broad residential area situated on rising landform on the opposite valley side.

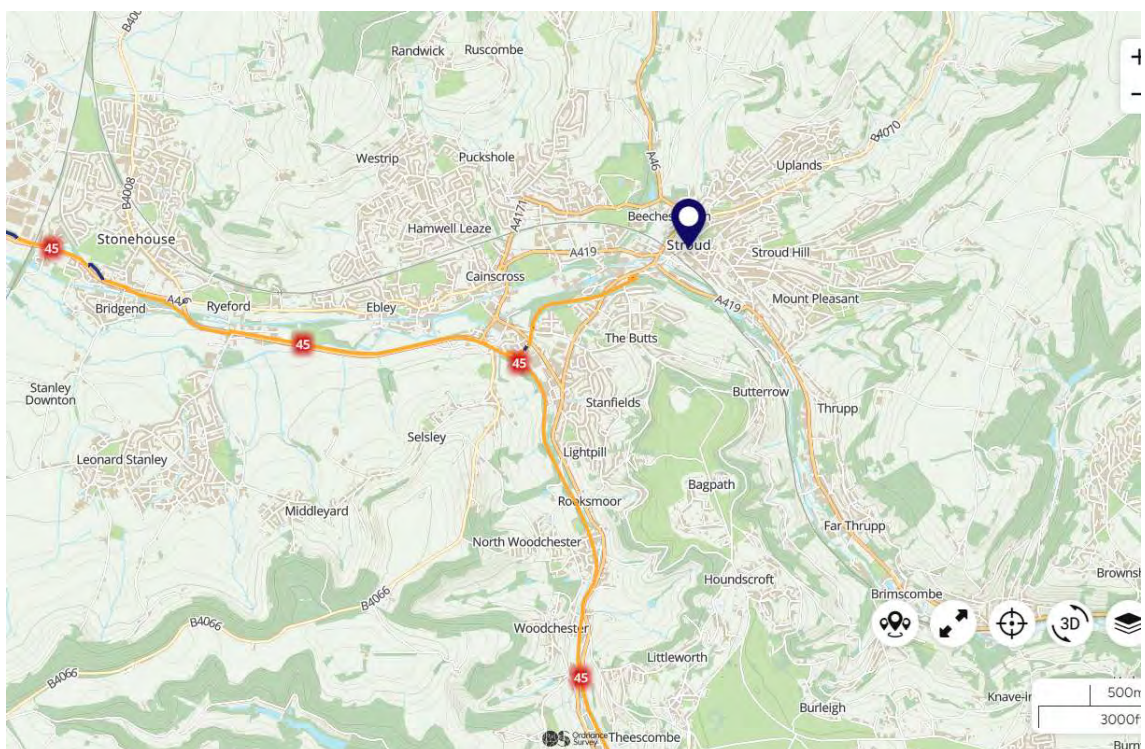
Cotswolds Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route

- 4.27. The Cotswolds Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route passes through the assessment area. The trail is found to the west of Stroud and passes across elevated landform within the Cotswolds AONB; see Site Context Plan (Appendix ZLA 2).
- 4.28. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), there is limited scope whereby the proposed development might be seen, which has a limited geographical area beyond 3km distance of the site to the west and north northwest.
- 4.29. Given our field-based assessment (February 2024), the effect of intervening built form across the wider townscape of Stroud is sufficient to generally screen the application site from view. However, might the proposed scheme be seen, the built form would be experienced against the wider urban setting – in particular, the broad residential area situated on rising landform on the opposite valley side.
- 4.30. Given the foregoing, the effects of the proposed scheme on PRoW users passing along the Cotswolds Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route

National Cycle Routes

- 4.31. To the southeastern area of the town, no National Cycle Route pass on the London Road. The nearest National Cycle Route. The closest National Cycle Route is found passing through the western and southwestern area of the town. The route of NCA 45 is shown on the extract taken from Sustrans website within Image ZLA 4.1:

Image ZLA 4.1: Extract from Sustrans website demonstrating the route of National Cycle Route 45



- 4.32. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the route of the NCR 45 progresses along roadways which would not be influenced by the proposed development. Given this, the assessment of the effects of the scheme on users of NCR 45 is scoped out of this appraisal.

Vehicle Routes

- 4.33. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the potential to see the proposed development across the assessment area is limited. Further to this, the discernibility of the proposed scheme is influenced by the screening effect of intervening residential built form across the wider town of Stroud, and locally to the site's location.
- 4.34. Generally, the effect of the valley landform is an influence on the availability of views, especially, given the character of the sloped residential streets typical of the southeastern edge of Stroud.
- 4.35. Further to this, the effect of intervening mature landscape fabric within these setting, across higher ground around Stroud Hill to the northeast and east, as well as the sloped landform to the west, is also sufficient to influence the availability of direct views to the site from the local road network.
- 4.36. Roadways which cross over the higher landform around Lypiatt Hill to the southeast, Rodborough Common to the south and south west are influenced by sharp sided valley landform, with the application site situated at the foot of the valley. Additionally, the upper slopes of valley sides are extensively tree'd or wooded, which filter views in the winter, and screen views of the site in the spring and summer.
- 4.37. Given our field-based assessment (February 2024), we have scoped out a significant number of local roadways. Where the application site can be seen locally along the road network, the scheme would be seen as part of the wider urban setting, and so not experienced as out of context or unexpected.
- 4.38. Consequently, this appraisal considers the effects of the scheme on road users passing along the London Road nearest to the site i.e., passing the site or within close range of the site.

Viewpoint Selection

- 4.39. Give the foregoing (and with consideration of the analysis of the Zone of Primary Visibility at paragraph 4.15 to 4.16), representative viewpoints have been selected to reflect the principle that this appraisal is to examine the 'worst case' scenario.
- 4.40. In selecting these viewpoints, ZLA has been conscious of appraising the site from all points of the compass, as well as within a range of distances to the site, as well as testing the development proposals from a range of receptor types.
- 4.41. A list of the selected viewpoints and their reasons for selection is provided in Table ZLA 4.1 overleaf. The location of representative viewpoints is illustrated on plan ZLA_1518-L-102 (Appendix ZLA 5).

Table ZLA 4.1: Summary of Representative Viewpoints

View-point	Location	OS Grid Ref	Approx. Distance from Site's Centre	Reason for Selection (Site Topography: circa 56m AOD)
1.	View from London Road looking southeast along this route Through the townscape of south eastern Stroud (outside the AONB)	385530, 204703	0.16km, NW/315 degrees looking SE/135 degrees	View from local vehicle route passing through the urban setting on the southeastern area of Stroud. This location is outside of the Cotswolds AONB. Users of this route would be passing around Stroud and the urban area, to and from the wider outlying area, which is beyond the settlement edge. Users of this route would have a low visual sensitivity. Topography: 57m AOD
2.	View from London Road looking northwest along this route through the townscape of south eastern Stroud (outside the AONB)	385630, 204596	Within 0.1km, SE/135 degrees looking NW/315 degrees	View from local vehicle route passing through the urban setting on the southeastern area of Stroud. This location is outside of the Cotswolds AONB. Users of this route would be passing around Stroud and the urban area, to and from the wider outlying area, which is beyond the settlement edge. Users of this route would have a low visual sensitivity Topography: 56m AOD
3.	View from PRow (LPA ref: ZST 47) situated on elevated landform on the eastern edge of Stroud (within the AONB)	386425, 204797	0.5km, E-NE/70 degrees looking W-SW/250 degrees	This viewpoint is located on the peripheral edge of the Cotswolds AONB situated on a Public Right of Way (PRow) on the edge of Stroud town. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the site from PRow on the outer edge of the settlement within the setting of the AONB, which affords elevated, broad open views. Susceptibility to change is very high, and visual sensitivity is very high. Topography: 116m AOD
4.	View from PRow (LPA REF: ZST50) passing to and from the London Road on the southeastern edge of Stroud (within the AONB)	386111, 204326	0.6km, E-SE/120 degrees looking W-NW/300 degrees	This viewpoint is located on the peripheral edge of the Cotswolds AONB situated on a Public Right of Way (PRow) on the edge of Stroud town. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the site from PRow on the outer edge of the settlement within the setting of the AONB. Susceptibility to change is high as the wider urban edge is readily seen as one approaches the area around London Road. Visual sensitivity is very high. Topography: 73m AOD

View-point	Location	OS Grid Ref	Approx. Distance from Site's Centre	Reason for Selection (Site Topography: circa 56m AOD)
5.	View from PROW (LPA REF: MTH8) situated on elevated landform overlooking Stroud to the southeast (within the AONB)	386826, 204055	1.45 km, SE/135 degrees looking NW/315 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the Cotswolds AONB situated on a Public Right of Way (PRoW) and passes through open countryside between Lypiatt Hill and Far Thrupp. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the site from PRoW on elevated landform from which there are elevated, broad open views, including views across the town of Stroud. Susceptibility to change is very high, and visual sensitivity is very high. Topography: 203m AOD
6.	View from Public Right of Way (LPA REF: ZST47) situated on elevated landform to the east of Stroud (within the AONB)	387520, 204722	1.9 km, E/90 degrees looking W/270 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the Cotswolds AONB situated on a Public Right of Way (PRoW) and passes through open countryside between Lypiatt Hill and Far Thrupp. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the site from PRoW on elevated landform from which there are elevated, broad open views, including views across the town of Stroud. Susceptibility to change is very high, and visual sensitivity is very high. Topography: 214m AOD
7.	View from Bowbridge Wharf, a residential area fronting the River Frome, to the south of the application site (with the settlement boundary)	385707, 204320	0.3km, S/170 degrees looking N/350 degrees	This viewpoint is outside of a National or local landscape designation. Viewpoint situated within a residential area looking across the river corridor of the River Frome towards the application site on elevated landform at London Road. Susceptibility to change is medium and visual sensitivity is medium. Topography: 49m AOD
8.	View at the junction of Public Right of Way (LPA ref: MMH8) situated on elevated landform on the edge of Rodborough Common near Bagpath to the south of Stroud (within the AONB)	385906, 202529	2.15km, S/190 degrees looking N/10 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the Cotswolds AONB situated on a Public Right of Way (PRoW) on the sloped valley landform to the south-southwest of the town. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the site from PRoW on elevated landform from which there are elevated, broad open views, including views across the town of Stroud. Susceptibility to change is very high, and visual sensitivity is very high. Topography: 158m AOD

View-point	Location	OS Grid Ref	Approx. Distance from Site's Centre	Reason for Selection (Site Topography: circa 56m AOD)
9.	View from Public Right of Way (LPA ref: MR046) on elevated landform at Bagpath to the southwest of Stroud (within the AONB)	385638, 202853	1.75 km, SW/225 degrees looking NE/45 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the Cotswolds AONB on the sloped valley landform to the town's edge. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the site from PRow near to local ice cream and coffee shop frequently visited by walkers. This viewpoint is situated on elevated landform from which there are elevated, broad open views, including views across the town of Stroud. Susceptibility to change is very high, and visual sensitivity is very high. Topography: 180m AOD
10.	View from Rodborough Hill, an elevated local landmark to the southwest of Stroud (within the AONB)	385249, 203951	0.8 km, SW/225 degrees looking NE/45 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the Cotswolds AONB situated on Rodborough Hill. This local landmark is on elevated topography from which there are broad open views, including views across the town of Stroud. Susceptibility to change and visual sensitivity is very high. Topography: 190m AOD
11.	View from Public Right of Way (LPS ref: MR01) situated to the west of the main railway line on the southeastern edge of Stroud (within the AONB)	385543, 204367	0.25km, SW 240 degrees looking NE/60 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the edge of the Cotswolds AONB on the peripheral edge of Stroud. situated on Rodborough Hill. This viewpoint is found within rising land on the southeastern edge of the town. Given the route's location, susceptibility to change is less elevated as the route runs along a 'corridor' enclosed by fencing adjoining the main railway line. At most PRow users would have a high visual sensitivity. Topography: 82m AOD
12.	View from Bowbridge Wharf, a residential area fronting the River Frome, to the south west of the application site (within the Settlement Boundary)	385515, 204438	0.2km, SW/240 degrees looking NE/60 degrees	This viewpoint is outside of a National or local landscape designation. Viewpoint situated within a residential area looking across the river corridor of the River Frome towards the application site on elevated landform at London Road. Susceptibility to change and visual sensitivity is medium. Topography 50m AOD

View-point	Location	OS Grid Ref	Approx. Distance from Site's Centre	Reason for Selection (Site Topography: circa 56m AOD)
13.	View from the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route PRoW (LPA REF: ZST97) situated on the River Frome to the west-south west of the Application Site (within the Settlement Boundary)	385543, 204516	0.15km, W-SW/245 degrees looking E-NE/65 degrees	This viewpoint is outside of a National or local landscape designation. Viewpoint situated on the National Trail passing along the course of the River Frome within the southeastern town, with a wider urban setting. PRoW users would have a less elevated visual susceptibility to change and visual sensitivity at high. Topography 48m AOD
14.	View from the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route PRoW (LPA REF: ZST97) situated on the River Frome to the west of the Application Site (within the Settlement Boundary)	385419, 204655	0.2km W/285 degrees looking E/105 degrees	This viewpoint is outside of a National or local landscape designation. Viewpoint situated on the National Trail passing along the course of the River Frome within the southeastern town, with a wider urban setting. PRoW users would have a less elevated visual susceptibility to change and visual sensitivity at high. Topography 45m
15.	View from Rodborough Hill to the west of the Application Site on elevated landform (within the Cotswolds AONB)	384872, 204129	0.9km, W/270 degrees looking E/90 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the Cotswolds AONB passing cross an elevated landform, which forms a local landmark. Users of this route would have a broad open view across the wider Cotswolds, open countryside and the urban area of Stroud within the valley landform below. PRoW users would have a very high expectation of visual amenity, and consequently, a very high visual sensitivity. Topography 190m AOD
16.	View from PRoW (LPA ref: MR01) passing through open fields on the sloped valley sides to the west of the Application Site (within the Cotswolds AONB)	384975, 204420	0.7km, W/260 degrees looking E/80 degrees	This viewpoint is located within the edge of the Cotswolds AONB on the peripheral edge of Stroud. Situated on rising valley landform to the west. Users of this route would have a broad open view down across the urban area of Stroud as they progress to and from the town into the wider open countryside. PRoW users would experience this route on the edge of the town, and consequently, would have a high susceptibility to change and a less elevated visual sensitivity (high). Topography 98m AOD

View-point	Location	OS Grid Ref	Approx. Distance from Site's Centre	Reason for Selection (Site Topography: circa 56m AOD)
17.	View from Stratford Park Public Open Space on the northern edge of Stroud town (outside of the Cotswolds AONB)	384426, 205890	3.4km, NW/320 degrees looking SE/130 degrees	This viewpoint is outside of a National or local landscape designation. Viewpoint is situated when one of the town parks, where visitors would go for recreation and exercise. Users of the park would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity – the park being situated within an area enclosed by urban built form and wider residential development. Topography 73m AOD

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1. The findings of the relevant environmental and planning designations are illustrated on the Site Context Plan ZLA_1127 L-101 (Appendix ZLA 3) and summarised in this section.
- 5.2. The following documents are relevant and will be discussed as appropriate later in this LVA:
- National Planning Policy Framework Revision (revised December 2023).
 - Stroud District Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2015).
 - Stroud Town Centre Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2025 (adopted October 2016).

Landscape-related Designations and Other Considerations

- 5.3. With consideration of the online Stroud District Council Local Plan 2011-2031 online Policies Map, we note the following:
- *National Designations:* The quantum of the site is not situated within, or adjoining, any National designations such as a National Park. Furthermore, the application site is a brown field site situated within the settlement boundary of Stroud, and is not within or adjoining the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
 - *Local Designations:* The site is not situated within, or adjoining, any Local designations such as Local Green Spaces, Strategy Gap, Strategic Wedge, Green Wedge or Important Local Gap.
- 5.4. Given the foregoing, the application site is not afforded elevated protection under National or Local planning policy.
- 5.5. With further consideration of the currently adopted Stroud District Council Local Plan 2011-2031, ZLA also notes the following:
- The application site is situated within the adopted Settlement Development Limits of Stroud; and
 - The application site is not situated within a Conservation Area, and well outside of the Conservation Areas around Stroud – including those at Stroud Top of Town, Central Stroud and Town Centre, as well as outside of the Industrial Heritage Conservation Area.

With regard to Tree Preservation Orders and Ancient Woodland, neither of these are situated within the site, or adjoining its boundaries. As the site is dominated by existing built form and extensive all-weather hardstanding, the site has few trees, and is considered by ZLA to be relatively naked of existing landscape fabric.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.6. Most recently, on the 20th of December 2023, the Government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development; this being the golden thread running throughout the document.

- 5.7. For landscape, this means recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (para. 180 (b)) and balancing any 'harm' to the landscape resource with the benefits of the scheme in other respects. Para 180 (b) states the following:

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

- 5.8. Additionally, paragraph 182 states:

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

- 5.9. This paragraph continues and states:

'The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.'

- 5.10. Whilst the application site is situated within the southeastern townscape of Stroud, and outside of the Cotswolds AONB, its location is within the setting of the AONB, albeit as part of the existing developed area of the town. Consequently, the potential for the proposed scheme to adversely affect the landscape character and views out of the AONB are a material consideration (as per the recently adopted Local Plan and the current Cotswolds AONB Management Plan).

- 5.11. Furthermore, Section 12 of the NPPF addresses the issue of good design and recommends that planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments respond to the local character and history. Specifically, in paragraph 131 it is stated that development should seek to create 'high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.'

- 5.12. Paragraph 131 continues and emphasises that 'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities' and paragraph 135 stating that high quality development will function 'well and add to the overall quality of the area' and are to be 'visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping' and 'sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.'

- 5.13. This balancing exercise is to be undertaken by the decision taker (in this case the LPA) and falls outside the remit of this appraisal. The benefits of the scheme are to be weighed against the effects on the landscape character and visual amenity as set out in this report, as detailed in the Planning Statement accompanying this application. The policy framework is supported by the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) where relevant.

Stroud District Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2015)

- 5.14. The Local Plan (2011-2031) was adopted in November 2015 by the Local Planning Authority (Stroud District Council). No policies are specific to the site in landscape and visual terms; however the following overarching policies of relevance are set out as follows:

Delivery Policy ES7

- 5.15. Delivery Policy ES7 is entitled 'Landscape Character', and states the following (N.B. Emphasis is added by ZLA by underlining):

'Within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), or on land that may affect its setting, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural and scenic beauty of the landscape whilst taking account of the biodiversity interest and the historic and cultural heritage.

Major development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated to be in the national interest and that there is a lack of alternative sustainable development sites.'

- 5.16. This policy continues (N.B. Emphasis is added by ZLA buy underlining):

'In all locations development proposals should conserve or enhance the special features and diversity of the different landscape character types found within the district. Priority will be given to the protection of the quality and diversity of the landscape character.

Development will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

1. The location, materials, scale and use are sympathetic and complement the landscape character; and
2. Natural features including trees, hedgerows and water features that contribute to the landscape character and setting of the development should be both retained and managed appropriately in the future.

Opportunities for appropriate landscaping will be sought alongside all new development, such that landscape type key characteristics are strengthened. The Stroud District Landscape Assessment will be used when determining applications for development within rural areas.'

- 5.17. This is the main landscape policy by which the planning application will be tested. There are further pertinent policies, which include the following:

Delivery Policy ES8

- 5.18. Delivery Policy ES8 is entitled 'Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands'. Development should seek where appropriate to enhance and expand the district's tree and woodland resource.
- 5.19. Development that would result in the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, or threaten the continued well-being of protected trees, hedgerows, community orchards, veteran trees or woodland (including those that are not protected but are considered to be worthy of protection) will not be permitted.
- 5.20. Where the loss of trees is considered acceptable, adequate replacement provision will be required that utilise species that are in sympathy with the character of the existing tree species in the locality and the application site.

Delivery Policy ES12

- 5.21. Delivery Policy ES12 is entitled 'Better design of places'. The District Council will require the layout and design of new development to create well designed, socially integrated, high quality successful places, where people enjoy living and working with legible and well-planned routes, blocks and spaces, integrated residential, commercial and community activity, safe attractive public spaces and pedestrian/cycle routes without traffic conflict, secure private areas, better designed buildings and landscaped spaces.
- 5.22. New development should be designed to offer flexibility for future needs and uses taking into account demographic and other changes. The Council will expect the improvement of existing buildings to meet changing needs and to sustain the district's housing and commercial building stock.

- 5.23. All new development must be based on thorough site appraisal including reference to any Design Statements, Design Codes, Neighbourhood Plans, Secured by Design standards and be sensitive to its context as well as contributing to sustainable living.

Delivery Policy ES14

- 5.24. Delivery Policy ES14 is entitled 'Provision of semi-natural and natural green space with new residential development', and states the following:

'Strategic and major residential development shall be accompanied with additional accessible natural green space, proportionate to the scale of development.'

Stroud Town Centre Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2025 (October 2016)

- 5.25. The application site is situated within the area of the Stroud Town Parish but is outside of the boundary of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Consequently, policies within this Neighbourhood Development Plan are not a material consideration when appraising the proposed development.

Wider Considerations: Supplementary Planning Guidance: Cotswolds AONB Management Plan (2018-2023)

- 5.26. The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the AONB for the period 2018-2023. The application is a previously development land parcel within the southeastern area of Stroud. The site is located within 0.5km of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and therefore, forms part of the setting for the AONB, albeit as part of this urban setting.

- 5.27. Amongst a number of objectives, the Management Plan is a key mechanism for 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB'. Furthermore, the Board has identified three key issues, one of which is pertinent to the undertaking of this assessment, which is the 'erosion of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and its special qualities.'

- 5.28. The policies of the Cotswold AONB Management Plan are a material consideration for determining the scheme proposed by the Applicant, and to ensure the effect of the proposed development (at the application site outside of the AONB) would not harm the landscape character and visual amenity of the Cotswolds AONB. Those policies most pertinent to undertaking this assessment are as follows:

Policy CE1

- 5.29. Policy CE1 entitled 'Landscape' states the following (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

'1. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines.

2. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views - including those into and out of the AONB - and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced.'

5.30. This policy highlights the following in support notation which is pertinent to assessing the proposed develop in this report:

'The surroundings and setting of the AONB are important to its landscape and scenic beauty. For example, views out of the AONB and into it from surrounding areas are a significant consideration for development and land management.'

Policy CE3:

5.31. Policy CE3 is entitled 'Local Distinctiveness' and states the following (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

'1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to be compatible with and reinforce this local distinctiveness. This should include:

- being compatible with the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change.
- being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials.
- using an appropriate colour of limestone to reflect local distinctiveness....'

Wider Considerations: Supplementary Planning Guidance: Stroud District Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study June 2019

5.32. This document states that (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

- 'All open space and GI should be afforded protection unless it can be clearly proved it is not required.
- New open space/GI provision will be required where there is a new development and a planned increase in population, and/or an existing deficiency in supply or access to facilities exists.
- Development proposals will protect as well as contribute to new and existing GI. The starting point will be the protection and enhancement of existing GI on site and ensuring GI links (both for biodiversity and access) with the surrounding area. GI must be embedded into the layout of new development from initial project thinking, identification of constraints and opportunities identified in the master planning process, through to implementation, management and future maintenance.
- Development that will cause material or demonstrable harm to the functioning of the GI network should not be permitted, unless mitigation or compensation can be provided to ensure the overall multifunctionality and connectivity of the GI network is maintained.
- The design and management of GI in housing and commercial developments shall follow the Building with Nature Benchmark standards.
- Development will contribute to protecting, enhancing and creating habitats to provide a network of well-connected ecological corridors, enhancing connectivity for both people and wildlife, both within the development Site and connecting to the wider surrounding area.'

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Interim Summary

5.33. ZLA summaries the planning policy background for this site as follows:

- The NPPF shows a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- The site is a previously developed site (brownfield site), which has an obvious urban setting.
- The site is bounded by, and neighboured by multiple residential land uses and overlooks by existing residential development and urban built form (neighbouring the site) and across the sloped valley landform situated above the site on rising land.
- The site is situated outside of a National or local landscape designation and is not located within the Cotswolds AONB. Rather, the site is located within the engaged Settlement Boundary of the adopted Local Plan (Stroud District Council Local Plan 2011-2031).
- The site is not situated within, or adjoining, the Stroud Conservation Area.
- The application site is situated within the area of the Stroud Town Parish but is outside of the boundary of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- There are no heritage assets within the site. There are no Tree Preservation Orders and Ancient Woodland, neither of these are situated within the site, or adjoining its boundaries.
- There are arboriculture and ecological features within the site and are considered in this LVA only in so far as, they contribute to the landscape character of the site context.
- The site is overlooked by residential development and is influenced by existing residential development and domestic curtilages.
- The Cotswolds AONB from the setting for the southeastern edge of Stroud, and the urban area within which the site is found can be considered to contribute to the setting of the AONB. Primarily, this is due to the sloped valley landform within which the town is located below the AONB on rising landform.

5.34. In summary, the Local Planning Policies contain a number of overarching policies of relevance to this study. The main themes of these policies, against which the proposed development could be tested, have been summarised here for convenience:

- Development proposals should consider the latest Landscape Character Assessment and its guidelines to retain and manage landscape features that contribute to wider landscape character and the setting of development.
- New development should seek to protect and restore the primary characteristics defined in character assessments and important features of the host landscape character area.

- The location, materials, scale and use of any proposed development should be sympathetic to and complement local landscape character; and
- An assessment of landscape and visual effects is required to support a planning application where there is possibly a detrimental effect on landscape as a resource.

6. BASELINE CONDITIONS

Existing Landscape Character Assessment

- 6.1. This section appraises the existing, or baseline conditions of the character of the site, and its landscape context through consideration of published landscape assessments.
- 6.2. Whilst the site has been previously developed and is located in an urban setting, such an assessment is worthwhile enabling a better understanding of the site's context. Published regional landscape character assessment facilitate this contextual appreciation, but rarely delivers sufficiently site-specific or contemporary information to enable robust conclusions about the significance of any change through the proposed development. As such, ZLA has also undertaken its own field-based assessment of the site and its context, which is included later in this section.

Background Published Evidence Base Documents

- 6.3. The following documents are relevant and will be discussed as appropriate later in this LVA:
- Natural England National Character Assessment; and
 - Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment (November 2000).
 - The Stroud District Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal (July 2013); and
 - Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016).

National Character Assessment

- 6.4. Natural England has described and classified landscape character areas across large, broad regional area. These are published in the National Character Area (NCA) profiles. Natural England finds the site to be situated within, on the periphery of National Character Area 107: Cotswolds; see Image ZLA 6.1:

Image ZLA 6.1: Extract from Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 107. N.B. ZLA has marked the approximate location of the site with a red circle.



- 6.5. NCA 107 extends across a total area exceeding 288,000 Hectares, with which the site is circa 0.0005% of the overall quantum of NCA 107.
- 6.6. The Cotswolds NCA contains 188,089 ha, or 65 per cent of the area, of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and whilst this NCA is broadly representative of the site's landscape, and its context, the description is far too generic to robustly inform an appraisal of the suitability of the development proposals at a site of such modest proportions within a wider urban setting.
- 6.7. Hence, ZLA will refer to the published Landscape Character Assessment developed by Charnwood Borough Council, which is county-specific in its focus and concentrates on defining smaller landscape types.

Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment (November 2000)

- 6.8. The Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment was adopted in November 2000, and identifies the types of landscape within the administrative areas, as well as the key priorities and actions for managing the landscape for the future.
- 6.9. This assessment identifies the application site to be situated within a 'Major Town', with the urban area at the southeastern edge of the town. The assessment washes over the urban area of Stroud (see Image ZLA 6.2) and finds the application site to be situated within the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area. This landscape character area is found within a broad zone along the southeastern edge of Stroud town; see Image 6.2.

Image ZLA 6.2: Extract from the Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment (November 2000) - Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area, page 33. N.B. ZLA has marked the approximate location of the application site with a solid red circle



6.10. This assessment was undertaken nearly 25 years ago, and at that time, Local Planning Authority identified the following the key characteristics (N.B. ZLA has underlined those common to the site's context):

- 'Enclosed, scheduled character.
- Enclosed, secluded character. Steep sides, concave narrow valley form steeper upper slopes forming abrupt break of slope with Wold Tops landscape.
- Complex interlocking valley/ridge forms in some areas.
- Extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims.
- Tall hedges forming enclosure within the valleys with many hedgerow trees.
- Predominantly pastureland. Field size varies relative to degree of slope; more open character where valleys join and broaden out. Scrub and unimproved grassland on steep and broken slopes.
- Fast flowing streams draining to River Severn and tributaries; and
- Dry stone walls on higher land.'

6.11. Many of the foregoing characteristics are intact within the wider open countryside, which is found outside of the town. However, given the brownfield, previously developed nature of the site (former car retail facility), there are no intact key landscape features within the site area. In terms of settlement, the assessment does recognise the following characteristics (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

'Larger settlements at valley mouth and junctions on flatter land; smaller settlements, e.g. cottages and mills along valley bottoms and along upper valley rims.'

6.12. The settlement pattern is diverse within this landscape character area, and its distribution is reflective of 'topography and drainage, and in the rural areas settlement tends to be concentrated towards the valley rims to exploit the gentler valley slopes.'

6.13. ZLA notes that the LPA recognises the following trend for larger settlements, and the effect of ore recent, contemporary development within this more urban area (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

'Larger settlements occur at strategic locations.....and throughout the Stroud and Nailsworth valley where they have grown up around industry centred on fast flowing streams..... More recent development has significantly spread up the valley slopes in many locations and is visually prominent over considerable distances. This has occurred at Cashes Green, Paganhill and Whiteshill, at Uplands and along Bisley Road by Stroud. Further development at locations such as Eastcombe and Bussage by the Toadsmoor Valley has spread up the valley sides and on to the Wold Tops, bearing little relationship to traditional settlement patterns.'

6.14. ZLA notes, that the application site is not situated within the locations stated by the LPA in their appraisal as having a landscape sensitivity to existing and contemporary development, rather the site is found within the lower lying valley landform prevailing around the southeastern edge of the town.

- 6.15. Furthermore, under the heading 'Sensitivities to Change', the Local Planning Authority highlights the following (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

'The main pressures for change in this character type are from built development, including improvements to communication routes. Potentially much can be done to integrate new development through sensitive planning and design and response to traditional building types. The main threat arises from visually intrusive development of unsympathetic design and materials.'

- 6.16. The Local Planning Authority lists the following 'Key Priorities for Action' for the future management of this landscape character area (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

- 'Ensure that careful and stringent planning controls on the siting and design of new development are provided to maintain the character of this landscape type and to protect the AONB landscape.'
- Encourage the uptake of grants and other support schemes to maintain traditional land management in the rural valleys.
- Encourage the continued protection of important wildlife habitats.
- Conserve and restore important cultural features such as old mill buildings and protect old quarry sites which form distinctive local features where they have revegetated and become important local sites of nature conservation.
- Protect remnant pastures and small woodlands both on the valley's sides and valley floor within the more urban pressured areas.'

- 6.17. The foregoing are issues and sensitivities that should be taken into account when considering new development within this landscape character area.

The Stroud District Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal (July 2013)

- 6.18. The purpose of this appraisal is to:

'.....examine landscape sensitivity for a number of Potential Locations (PLs) for growth (housing, mixed-use and employment) that have been considered as part of the Stroud Local Plan-making / Sustainability Appraisal process. It presents a summary sensitivity 'score' for each PL as well as a summary and justification of key findings relevant to each.'

- 6.19. The sensitivity of each PL was made following the baseline analysis of all information and field survey verification.

- 6.20. However, in 2013, the application site was not considered as one of the Potential Locations in this appraisal. Consequently, this study is not a material consideration in testing the proposed development.

Landscape Designation: Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 6.21. This site is situated outside of the Cotswolds AONB. Whilst the landscape character of the AONB applies only as far as the AONB's boundary. The site lies beyond this, but within 0.5km at its nearest location. Consequently, the site (and the wider southeastern urban area of Stroud) is potentially in the setting of the AONB.

6.22. Given the elevated landform of the AONB beyond the Stroud Nailsworth Valley, intervisibility between the AONB is to be expected. Consequently, this LVA considers the landscape character and visual amenity of the adjoining AONB.

Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016)

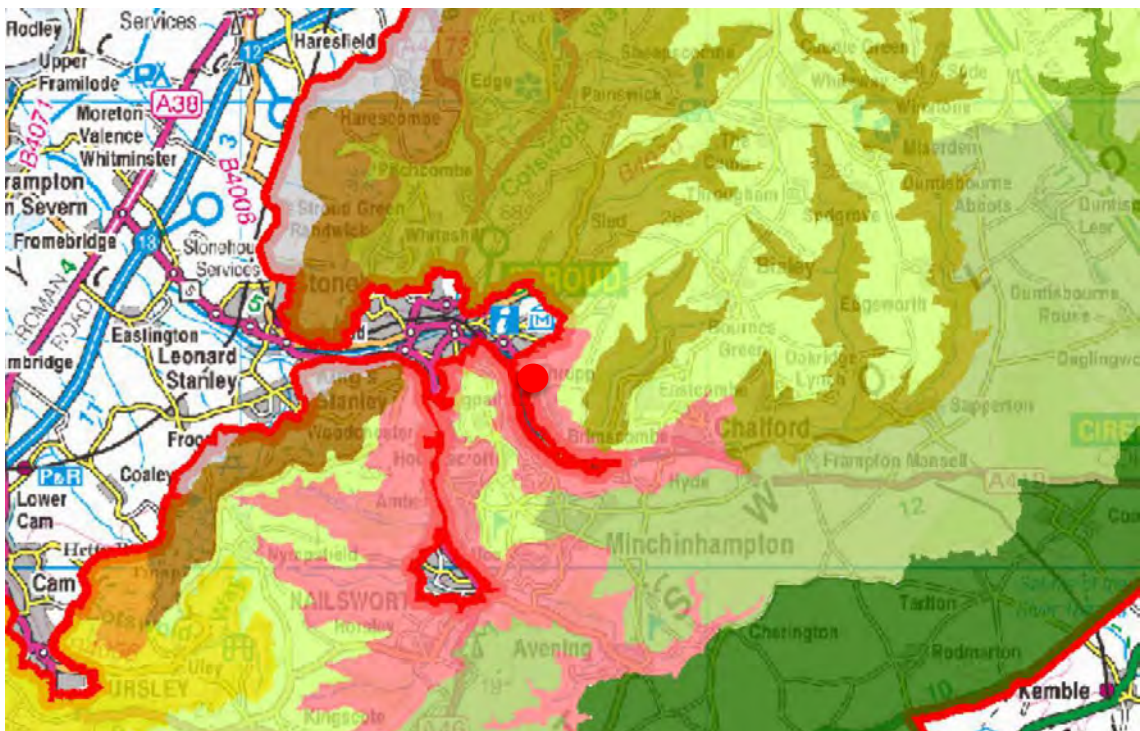
6.23. This LCA divides the Cotswolds into 19 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) which are subdivided into 68 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).

6.24. The purpose of this Landscape Character Assessment is as follows:

- 'To identify the forces for change impacting on each of the 19-landscape character types and considers the implications of these changes on landscape character, with particular reference to the identified key characteristics;
- To develop broad landscape strategies and guidelines to inform the decision-making process and help manage change in a sustainable and positive manner; and
- To provide a framework within which the Cotswolds Conservation Board and other stakeholders can review and add to the landscape strategy and guidelines and identify opportunities for their involvement and long term delivery of the strategy'.

6.25. This Landscape Character Assessment finds the site outside of the AONB. The AONB wraps around the southeastern edge of the town (see Appendix ZLA 2 for the Site Context Plan), and the nearest landscape character is the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5); see Image ZLA 6.3):

Image ZLA 6.3: Extract from the Landscape Character Types, Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016). N.B. The approximate location of the application site has shown by ZLA with a solid red circle



6.26. The Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5) is described as follows (N.B. ZLA has underlined those characteristics common to the AONB backdrop to the southeastern edge of Stroud):

- 'The Settled Valleys comprise areas of relatively narrow, high-sided valleys with steep upper slopes forming an abrupt break of slope with the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope.
- Land use is predominantly pastoral with scattered areas of arable, mainly enclosed by a network of hedgerow boundaries. Stone walls are confined mainly to the valley bottoms, particularly surrounding settlements.
- Significant areas of development dominate the valley floors and extend up the valley sides in terraces, lending these areas a particularly urban character.
- Evidence of a strong industrial past, including communications, infrastructure and mill development, is confined to the valley floors.
- An extensive road network within the majority of the valleys connects the settlements with the High Wold above.'

6.27. This study continues and highlight the following in terms of landscape sensitivity:

'The settled valleys are under particular pressure from the outward expansion of existing urban areas onto the steep, highly visible valley sides. Such development would detract from the characteristic wooded, rural backdrop of valley towns and their typical linear form. The valleys are also sensitive to the coalescence of settlements along the valley floor, resulting in the loss of their distinctive identity.

Despite the close proximity of large urban areas, some valleys retain an isolated rural character. The remoter sections of these valleys are highly sensitive to change that would compromise their intrinsic secluded character.

Valley settlements are also sensitive to the ongoing loss of features of industrial heritage interest. Disused mill buildings and chimney stacks are striking landmark features that contribute to their character and local identity.'

6.28. This study highlights 'Local Forces of Change', and with the prospect of 'Development, expansion and infilling of settlements, including residential, retail, industrial leisure etc, along the valleys including expansion up the valley slopes', highlights a number of landscape implications from new residential development within this landscape character type; these include (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

- 'Expansion of valley settlements onto the highly visible valley sides, which would require significant amounts of terracing.
- Encroachment of built development into the valleys intruding into the landscape.
- Erosion of distinctive form, scale and character of smaller settlements including their relationship to the landscape.
- Loss of distinctive valley settlement identity due to settlement growth and coalescence and the development of 'rural sprawl'.
- Proliferation of suburban building styles, housing estate layout and materials and the introduction of ornamental garden plants and boundary features.
- Degradation of the views to and from the valley sides and rim.

- Loss of meadows and riverine habitat; and
- Interruption, weakening or loss of the historic character of settlements and the historic context in how they have expanded, especially the importance of the relationship between the historic core of the settlement and surviving historic features such as churchyards, manor houses, historic farms, pre-enclosure paddocks and closes.'

6.29. This study also provides a written guidelines for integrating new development; for which, measures include (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

- 'Maintain the open, undeveloped slopes of the valleys.
- Avoid development that will intrude negatively into the landscape and cannot be successfully mitigated, for example, extensions to settlements onto the valley sides.
- New development should be concentrated within existing built-up areas, and be of a density reflecting the characteristic linear settlement forms.
- Ensure new development is proportionate and does not overwhelm the existing settlement.
- Conserve pattern of settlements fringing the lower slopes and their existing relationship to landform.
- Ensure that new development does not adversely affect settlement character and form.
- Avoid cramming development right up to the boundaries resulting in hard suburban style edge to the settlement.
- Conserve dark stretches of the valleys and valley slopes forming the backdrop to settlements.
- Adopt measures to minimise and where possible reduce light pollution.
- Avoid development that may restrict or obscure views to the upper valley slopes and rims and distinctive features.
- Conserve the rural character of the road network.
- Plant trees and hedges within and around new development to reduce impact on the landscape and for Green Infrastructure ideally in advance of the development taking place.
- Retain existing trees, hedges etc as part of the scheme for green infrastructure and to reflect the former landscape, historic field patterns etc.
- Consider the impact on local Public Rights of Way as settlements expand and take into account any required improvements.'

Site Specific Appraisal

- 6.30. To independently assess the likely level of landscape and visual effects which the development proposals might incur will require an appropriately detailed assessment of the site itself and its immediate surroundings.
- 6.31. A qualified Landscape Architect from ZLA undertook a site-based assessment during early springtime conditions. This assessment was undertaken in clear, dry weather conditions, and the site is described as follows.
- 6.32. Recognising that 'landscape' is a multi-dimensional concept embracing 'what we see', its time-depth and physical attributes, this LVA reviews and assesses change to landscape character in terms of the physical landscape, the site's visual and sensory character, landscape fabric and habitats and cultural connections; see Table ZLA 6.1 overleaf:

Table ZLA 6.1: Site Specific Landscape and Visual Qualities appraisal by ZLA (early February 2024)

Landscape Character and Visual Qualities Observations	
Landscape Quality:	Very limited. The site is a brownfield site that has been previously managed as a car dealership. There is very limited landscape fabric at the site. The site has an urban setting.
Landscape Fabric and Representativeness:	<p>Nil/none. The site is a brownfield, urban site which is found within a wider steep sided, concave narrow valley form'. However, the site has no representation of the landscape character area – the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area – with the site not directly demonstrating 'no 'extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims' and landscape fabric within the site being very limited, but not made up of 'tall hedges forming enclosure within the valleys with many hedgerow trees' or 'predominantly pastureland' and not 'scrub and unimproved grassland on steep and broken slopes' with dry stone walls on higher land' (as pe the Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment (November 2000).</p> <p>Additionally, the site is situated within a wider area of 'significant areas of development dominate the valley floors and extend up the valley sides in terraces, lending these areas a particularly urban character'. The site has a setting which has a 'relatively narrow, high-sided valley with steep upper slopes'. However, the site has no representation of the host landscape type – the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5) – with the site not directly demonstrating the wider 'predominantly pastoral with scattered areas of arable, mainly enclosed by a network of hedgerow boundaries' (as per the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016)). Rather the landscape character area and the landscape type form the setting for the southeastern edge of the town, beyond which the wider landscape has a greater degree of intactness that is representative of these features. In this setting, the site has an urban setting.</p>
Rarity:	In terms of typical landscape fabric – nil/none. Regarding the site situated within the landform, this is quite typical of the valley floor environment, which is experienced as urban, which is common to the southeastern edge of Stroud as its extends along the London Road.
Topography:	The landform within the site is predominantly flat with stepped areas which have been built into the valley slope around each side of London Road. This arrangement is commonly found within the southeastern edge of the town. As noted above, the site is found within the approximate valley floor within a 'wider steep sided, concave narrow valley form'.

Conservation Interests:	There is no known archaeological or historical and cultural conservation interest on the site. There are no heritage assets within the application site. There are arboriculture features bounding the site (albeit minimally), which share very limited/if no relationship to the wider landscape character area and landscape type. Rather these trees contribute to the landscape and amenity of the local urban context.
Built Form:	The site is previously developed. The site contains previously used car showrooms, mechanics/car preparation/storage area. The site area is dominated by all-weather surfaced areas. The site is bounded, and overlooked by existing residential development (predominantly two, two and a half and three storey- see Section 2 of this LVA).
Recreational Interest:	No public access is available into the site, being wholly within private ownership.
Sensory, Perceptual & Tranquillity:	<p>The site is bounded by, and neighbored by multiple residential land uses and overlooks by existing residential development and urban built form (neighbouring the site) and across the sloped valley landform situated above the site on rising land.</p> <p>The site is situated in two parts with the London Road running between. There is an obvious traffic noise from users of this roadway. Overall, ZLA considers this site to have a less than moderate sense of tranquillity.</p>
Skyline:	There are no views where the application site breaks the skyline. The site is not found within the valley floor. The site is not found on the sloped valley sides whereby it may be easily seen across the wider townscape, river corridor of the River Frome or from the elevated areas of the AONB.

Landscape Sensitivity of the Application Site

- 6.33. Landscape sensitivity, the susceptibility of the landscape to change, is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation.
- 6.34. With consideration of the Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment (November 2000), ZLA note that the application site is found within a 'Major Town', rather than open countryside. There are a number of landscape pressures identified by the LPA in this document, in particular, 'the main pressures for change in this character type are from built development' which have 'significantly spread up the valley slopes in many locations and is visually prominent over considerable distances.'

- 6.35. With consideration of the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016), whilst the site is not found within the AONB, it does form part of the urban area of its setting. Within the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5), the AONB Management Committee identify the following pressures (N.B. Emphasis added by ZLA by underlining):

'The settled valleys are under particular pressure from the outward expansion of existing urban areas onto the steep, highly visible valley sides. Such development would detract from the characteristic wooded, rural backdrop of valley towns and their typical linear form. The valleys are also sensitive to the coalescence of settlements along the valley floor, resulting in the loss of their distinctive identity.'

- 6.36. From a sensory perspective, the site is influenced by existing built form with which it can be seen in combination with locally, and the influence of the London Road running through the southeastern edge area of the town. Moreover, there is an absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; and those features within the site have been degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors. Given the foregoing, ZLA considers that the site has a very low landscape sensitivity. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.
- 6.37. The site's location has a medium landscape sensitivity outside of the urban area, which becomes more elevated to very high within the confines of the Cotswolds AONB area, with high sensitivity on the periphery of the AONB whereby the townscape is experienced in combination around these peri-urban locations.

Landscape Value

- 6.38. Landscape value can apply to a landscape area, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. In all landscapes, there will be variances in the level of landscape value depending on several factors.
- 6.39. When looking at value, GLVIA3 advises that in the first instance: 'A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding value...'
- 6.40. The site and the surrounding landscape are not subject to any landscape quality designation at a national or local level. Whilst landscape designations are not an exclusive indicator of value and that the lack of a designation does not render a landscape as having no value, designated landscapes are widely acknowledged as being of particular importance and generally of high susceptibility to change.
- 6.41. However, the site is situated within the engaged Settlement Boundary of the adopted Local Plan (Stroud District Council Local Plan 2011-2031), which reflects its settled, urban location. Consequently, the application site is considered to have a very low landscape value.

7. EVALUATION OF RESIDUAL EFFECTS

Potential Effect on Landscape Character

- 7.1. Given the nature of the development proposal, it is inevitable the character of the site's interior would fundamentally change from a disused car retail facility to that of a residential development. However, the application site is situated within the adopted settlement boundary of the current Local Plan, and is bounded by, or neighboured by multiple residential land uses and urban built form.
- 7.2. Such a change of landscape character should not be a detriment to the enjoyment and appreciation of the wider landscape. The site is a brownfield site, which has been previously developed. Consequently, the redevelopment of the site would not fundamentally alter the land use at the site and would not have a significant impact on the minimal landscape fabric within the site, so as to be to the detriment of the intactness of landscape character.
- 7.3. The proposed development would introduce a variety of native, valuable landscape and habitat elements and features, which would positively contribute to the character of the area, as well as protect and integrate existing green infrastructure into the overall scheme (where existing at the site). This new landscape infrastructure will be appropriately maintained for longevity to restore and enhance the character of the local area and facilitate bio-diversity improvements.

Effects upon Landscape Fabric and the Site

- 7.4. The application site is defined by a mixture of existing buildings and all-weather hardstand surfaces. The character of the site is therefore primarily employment/commercial.
- 7.5. The proposed development would be sited within an urban location with the southeastern area of Stroud town. Outside of the town, and in a wider sense, the landscape is a predominantly defined valley'd landform with 'steep sided, concave narrow valley form steeper upper slopes', 'extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims' and 'all hedges forming enclosure within the valleys with many hedgerow trees'.
- 7.6. Also of note are the land use of 'predominantly pastureland' with 'scrub and unimproved grassland on steep and broken slope', as well as 'fast flowing streams' and 'dry stone walls on higher land.' The site of the proposed development itself, however, bears little to no resemblance to this wider character; rather, the site is a dis-used, previously development car retail facility situated on one of the main vehicle routes into Stroud.
- 7.7. As a result, landscape features on site are relatively sparse due to the commercially developed nature of the site which mainly comprises of buildings or hardstanding. Whilst there are valuable features within the immediate context, given the description above, the landscape sensitivity of the site's landscape fabric and features is considered to be very low.
- 7.8. **Construction Effects:** Construction activities, movement of site traffic, lighting, noise, and dust would be present during the construction process. This is not unusual and would be carefully controlled by a conditioned construction method statement. Recommendations for protection of the retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with relevant British Standards such as BS 5837: 2012, would ensure the rooting areas of the trees and hedgerows are not adversely affected by the construction process.

- 7.9. The magnitude of change would however be substantial through a considerable alteration to the current makeup of the site and how the site is experienced, resulting in a substantial change to the baseline condition. When combined with the very low landscape sensitivity of the site, would result in a moderate/-minor adverse level of effect. However, these adverse effects would not be permeant extending only for the duration of the construction process in the worst-case scenario.
- 7.10. **Year 1 and 15 ('Operation')**: Following construction and the establishment of the landscape strategy, existing landscape fabric and new landscaping will be managed in accordance with an appropriate landscape management plan, or similar, to ensure the longevity of the green infrastructure as part of the development, and the effectiveness of proposed landscape mitigation measure to integrate the new scheme into its setting.
- 7.11. Apart from minor re-grading, the site will remain physically similar to the baseline and would not require extensive land remodelling. Rather, the proposed development has been designed to complement the level change within the site with the new homes and apartment block to reflect the local architectural format of multiple storey and split levels.
- 7.12. The development would result in a complete variance to the existing character of the site's ground cover. However, the development proposal has retained and integrated existing tree canopies and would reduce the overall are of all-weather surfacing/hardstanding with the new homes and apartment block affording either private gardens or communal amenity space, as well as landscape planting along London Road. New planting would be of locally important species to enhance the streetscape of the urban setting, as well as afford ecological betterment locally.
- 7.13. Additionally, the landscape mitigation measures integrated within the Illustrative Layout (see Section 3, paragraph 3.17) would establish new landscape infrastructure across the wider site area with further tree and hedgerow planting, as well as the provision of a mosaic of grassland types with rain gardens for hydrological benefit.
- 7.14. The foregoing aims to create a mosaic of landscape and habitat for amenity value, biodiversity as well as landscape mitigation measures. These features replace the existing hardstanding and built form, which have a beneficial effect in landscape terms.
- 7.15. In the first year, the prevailing characteristic would be the new development, car parking courtyards and lighting, whilst the proposed trees, ground cover and hedgerow would still be in relative infancy within a wider mature landscape setting through retained landscape fabric within the site. With the cessation of construction activities, the magnitude of change would reduce from substantial to medium. This would yield a minor/-negligible, adverse level of effect when combined with very low sensitivity of the site.
- 7.16. **By year 15**: The maturation of the landscape features, with tree, hedgerow and native structure planting would make an obvious contribution to the character of the site where they are able to grow more freely, establish and mature. This contributes to an overall beneficial effect through an overall magnitude of change resulting in a minor/-negligible beneficial level of effect.
- 7.17. As is described previously, scale and type of the proposed development is such that changes to the site as a result from the proposed development would be limited to an area of what is currently an existing former car retail site.

Predicted Effects on Landscape Character

7.18. The area immediately surrounding the site would be subject to the greatest change to the defined host landscape character types. The site has an urban setting, and the predicted effect of the proposed scheme is expected to diminish considerably just a short distance into the surrounding area.

7.19. The effects on the immediate surrounding and the wider area are described below:

The wider urban setting within the southeastern area of Stroud

7.20. As is described previously, scale and type of the proposed development is such that changes to the site as a result from the proposed development would be limited to an area of what is currently an existing former car retail site. Consequently, there would be no direct effects on the wider urban setting of the site's location.

7.21. In the long term, the maturation of the landscape features, with tree, hedgerow and native structure planting would make an obvious contribution to the character of the site where they are able to grow more freely, establish and mature. This would result in a minor/-negligible beneficial level of effect locally to the site area.

Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area

7.22. The proposed development would be sited within an urban location with the southeastern area of Stroud town. Outside of the town, and in a wider sense, the landscape is a predominantly defined a valley'd landform with 'steep sided, concave narrow valley form steeper upper slopes', 'extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims' and 'all hedges forming enclosure within the valleys with many hedgerow trees'.

7.23. The site of the proposed development itself, however, bears little to no resemblance to this wider character; rather, the site is a dis-used, previously development car retail facility situated on one of the main vehicle routes into Stroud.

7.24. The actual change as a result of the proposed development, to both perceptual characteristics and those physical changes described above, would only result in a very low magnitude of change to landscape character from Year 1.

7.25. By the year 15, the residual effect on this landscape type would be influenced extensively by the establishment and maturation of new landscape fabric at the site. The growth of new hedgerows and trees, ongoing management of existing hedgerows and trees is expected to strengthen the contribution these features make to the character of this part of the host landscape character area.

7.26. This would render an effect of negligible on the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area.

7.27. The construction stage would result in a more elevated effects indirectly on the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area. This will be a result of the effect of demolishing the existing built form, noise, possibly temporary construction lighting, scaffolding and the general activity of the construction workforce and the movement of plant and delivery vehicles. The likely magnitude of change would be medium, which combined with a medium sensitivity would resulting a moderate/-minor, adverse effect.

- 7.28. This level of effect would diminish rapidly with distance across the landscape character are due to the influence of the valley landform and the 'extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims' and 'tall hedges forming enclosure within the valleys with many hedgerow trees. These features typically result in an 'enclosed, scheduled character' across the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area as a whole.
- 7.29. It is also the case, as described within the viewpoint assessment, that there are very few publicly accessible locations where the change in usage of this discrete area of town would be apparent, which conforms the limited extent of landscape change as appreciated by local people.

The Cotswolds AONB - Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5)

- 7.30. The site is situated outside of the Cotswolds AONB, at the periphery of the designation's setting. The site is located the settlement boundary of Stroud and surrounded by a settled environment of residential development and urban form. Consequently, the proposed scheme would have no direct effects on the Cotswolds AONB.
- 7.31. With regard to the 'Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5)', the addition of proposals into the site would not create any disturbance to the 'open, undeveloped slopes of the valleys', the 'dark stretches of the valleys and valley slopes forming the backdrop to settlements' or the 'relatively narrow, high-sided valleys with steep upper slopes forming an abrupt break of slope with the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope'.
- 7.32. The proposed scheme would continue the characteristic pattern of development within Stroud around the southeastern edge of the town with residential development across multiple storeys including two storey and greater. The new residential development would be situated each side (east and west) of the London Road in a wayside fashion, which is typical of the existing built environment along this route.
- 7.33. The proposed scheme would not extend beyond this perceived built limit of the town on the south eastern edge, and would be sandwiched between existing residential development situated on rising land to the east, and along the route of the London Road to the west. Additionally, the scale and mass of the development would be experienced as similar to the existing characteristics of the urban setting and those multiple residential land uses which surround the application site, with the proposed scheme not being prominent, or breaking the skyline due to its relative valley bottom location.
- 7.34. The proposed dwellings would be in keeping with the existing development in the settlement, being up to three storeys in height and using a material palette to reflect the site's local context, including the historic dwellings within this southeastern region of the town. Once mitigation planting has had chance to mature and building materials have weathered over time, it is anticipated that the magnitude of change upon Settled Valley Landscape Character Type no more than very low, if not indiscernible against the wider urban backdrop within which the site is sandwiched.
- 7.35. Within the lower areas of Settled Valley Landscape Character Type proposals will incur no direct change to the 'predominantly pastoral with scattered areas of arable, mainly enclosed by a network of hedgerow boundaries' and whilst the scheme is situated within the valley floor, it would not 'extend up the valley sides in terraces, lending a particularly urban character'.
- 7.36. Consequently, the proposed scheme would not constitute and 'outward expansion of existing urban areas onto the steep, highly visible valley sides', which is noted through the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016) as a particular landscape sensitivity within this landscape type.

- 7.37. In addition, proposals would not detract from the 'characteristic wooded, rural backdrop of valley towns and their typical linear form' and would not disturb the 'isolated rural character' of the AONB backdrop to the south eastern edge of Stroud town.
- 7.38. Given the foregoing, the proposed scheme would lead to a very low, if not indiscernible effect across this landscape type of the Cotswolds AONB. When combined with the very high landscape sensitivity, the resulting residual effect would be less than significant, if not leading to an imperceptible change within the AONB nearest to this area of Stroud.

8. PREDICTED EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

8.1. An assessment of effects on each representative viewpoint has been undertaken, and a summary of the result contained in Table ZLA 8.1 below:

Table ZLA 8.1: Summary of Visual Effects on Representative Viewpoints (February 2024)

View-point	Receptor Type	Visual Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect
1.	View from London Road looking southeast along this route Through the townscape of south eastern Stroud (outside the AONB)	Low	High (construction) Medium (Yr1) Low (Yr 15)	Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse Minor/-negligible, beneficial
2.	View from London Road looking northwest along this route through the townscape of south eastern Stroud (outside the AONB)	Low	High (construction) Medium (Yr1) Low (Yr 15)	Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse Minor/-negligible, beneficial
3.	View from PRow (LPA ref: ZST 47) situated on elevated landform on the eastern edge of Stroud (within the AONB)	High	Indiscernible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
4.	View from PRow (LPA REF: ZST50) passing to and from the London Road on the southeastern edge of Stroud (within the AONB)	Very High	Indiscernible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
5.	View from PRow (LPA REF: MTH8) situated on elevated landform overlooking Stroud to the south east (within the AONB)	Very High	Negligible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Moderate/minor, adverse Imperceptible Imperceptible

View-point	Receptor Type	Visual Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect
6.	View from Public Right of Way (LPA REF: ZST47) situated on elevated landform to the east of Stroud (within the AONB)	Very High	Negligible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Moderate/minor, adverse Imperceptible Imperceptible
7.	View from Bowbridge Wharf, a residential area fronting the River Frome, to the south of the application site (within the settlement boundary)	Medium	Low (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Minor, adverse Imperceptible Imperceptible
8.	View at the junction of Public Right of Way (LPA ref: MMH8) situated on elevated landform on the edge of Rodborough Common near Bagpath to the south of Stroud (within the AONB)	Very High	Indiscernible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
9.	View from Public Right of Way (LPA ref: MR046) on elevated landform at Bagpath to the southwest of Stroud (within the AONB)	Very High	Indiscernible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
10.	View from Rodborough Hill, an elevated local landmark to the southwest of Stroud (within the AONB)	Very High	Indiscernible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
11.	View from Public Right of Way (LPS ref: MR01) situated to the west of the main railway line on the southeastern edge of Stroud (within the AONB)	High	Low (construction) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse Imperceptible

View-point	Receptor Type	Visual Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect
12.	View from Bowbridge Wharf, a residential area fronting the River Frome, to the southwest of the application site (within the Settlement Boundary)	Medium	Low (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Minor, adverse Imperceptible Imperceptible
13.	View from the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route PRow (LPA REF: ZST97) situated on the River Frome to the west-southwest of the Application Site (within the Settlement Boundary)	High	Negligible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Minor, adverse Imperceptible Imperceptible
14.	View from the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route PRow (LPA REF: ZST97) situated on the River Frome to the west of the Application Site (within the Settlement Boundary)	High	Negligible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Minor, adverse Imperceptible Imperceptible
15.	View from Rodborough Hill to the west of the Application Site on elevated landform (within the Cotswolds AONB)	Very High	Indiscernible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
16.	View from PRow (LPA ref: MR01) passing through open fields on the sloped valley sides to the west of the Application Site (within the Cotswolds AONB)	Very High	Low (construction) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Moderate adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse Imperceptible
17.	View from Stratford Park Public Open Space on the northern edge of Stroud town (outside of the Cotswolds AONB)	Medium	Indiscernible (construction) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr 15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible

Summary of Visual Effects

8.2. As demonstrated by our field-based assessment, and the appraised representative viewpoints has shown that close, medium and long range of the site would be predominantly unaffected. In undertaking this assessment, ZLA considers the following factors are influential in the discernible of the proposed scheme, and how its implementation would, or would not fundamentally alter the baseline views. These factors include the following:

- (i). As demonstrated through our field-based analysis, the zone of primary visibility is influenced by the nature of the intervening landform, valley and ridgeline features. Given the application site is found within the lower valley landform, the following observations are noted (see also Section 4, paragraph 4.9 to 4.13):
 - The valley landform to the northeast, east and south east rises sharply (see Section 4, paragraph 4.10 and 4.11) and is developed to the eastern side of the London Road. The combination of the valley landform, and the extensive developed sides with existing residential development (up to three storeys, or greater in places), which reduces the overall area by which the site can be seen from directly.
 - The ridgeline beyond the valley slopes to the northeast and east is situated beyond extensive areas of existing town edge development, and the combined effect of landform and urban built form and features, is sufficient to screen direct views of the application site. Additionally, the sharpness of the valley landform finds the application site indiscernible (within the lower valley floor), which is screened by intervening landform.
 - To the south and southwest, land rising through the valley, across open agricultural fields (see Section 4, paragraph 4.11 to 4.12). The combined effect of intervening field boundaries, tree components, tree groups and woodland plantation on rising land is sufficient to restrict sight of the application site.
 - To the southwest to northwest (see Section 4, paragraph 4.12 and 4.13), the opposite side of the valley rises. However, this valley side is less developed with existing dwellings. The wooded edge to the valley landform and ridgeline extends further down the slope (than to the east) and restricts views of the site. In many situations, the sharpness of the valley landform finds the application site indiscernible (within the lower valley floor), which is screened by intervening landform.
- (ii). The upper valley sides and ridgelines are frequently lined with extensive tree groups, or wooded edges. As found during our field-based assessment, even during winter months, views of Stroud from the upper ridge lines are filtered by intervening trees. During winter-time conditions, there is a perception of the urban areas situated below in the valley floor and upon rising landform; however, during spring and summer months, these same views would be substantially filtered, if not screened by the same tree groups and wooded valley edges when tree components are in leaf; see Section 4, paragraph 4.11 to 4.13 and 4.16.

- (iii) The application site is found within the lower valley and is not prominent in views from the higher ridgelines above the valley. For instances; around The Uplands (to the east), Swift Hill and open countryside Lypiatt Hill (east to southeast), Far Thrupp (southeast to south) and Rodborough Hill (south west to north west). In these situations, the application site is situated below the ridgeline of higher ground and not seen, or substantially filtered (or screened) by existing tree components. See ZLA's analysis with Section 4, paragraph 4.15 and 4.16.
- (iv). Views from the valley sides are limited due to the screen effect of existing urban features and residential built form situated on both sides of the valley, predominantly in greater frequency to the northeast-southeast. In these situations, site is seen against the wider urban setting and its built form and experienced well within the built-up edge of the town; see ZLA's analysis with Section 4, paragraph 4.15 and 4.16.
- (v). the River Frome passes along the valley floor. The river is found within marginally lower topography to the application site. The route of the river is extensive vegetated with substantially tree cover. These tree components filter views towards the site; see Section 4, paragraph 4.17 to 4,21.

8.3. The site visit was carried out in early February 2024, during late winter-time conditions within dry weather and clear visibility from the surrounding area. To summarise, the undertaking of this appraisal found the following:

Public Rights of Way

Public Rights of Way passing through the Site:

8.4. The site is privately owned, and there are no PRoW passing through, or around the periphery of the application site.

Public Rights of Way passing within close range of the Site (up to 0.5km):

8.5. As demonstrated by the Site Context Plan contained with Appendix ZLA 2, there are only a small number of PRoW passing within close range of the application site (i.e., up to 0.5km radius of its location). A number of these routes pass through the existing urban area situated to the northeast to south east; i.e., ZST41 and ZST 46 to the north east, ZST47 to the east and MR070 to the west northwest.

8.6. In these situations, the application site is either screened by the valley landform, or the proposed scheme would be seen against the wider urban setting or screened by existing residential built form within the town. Consequently, there would be an imperceptible effect on PRoW users passing through the urban area along these routes.

8.7. To the east, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 4, the passage of PROW (LPA REF: ZST50) passes to and from the London Road on the southeastern edge of Stroud (within the AONB). This route passes through the group of existing residential dwellings (as can be seen within the representative photography); see Appendix ZLA 7.

8.8. In these situations, the application site is screened by the intervening built form, and whilst there would be some discernibility of the scheme's construction, the effect of noise, vibration, construction lighting and the movement of plant, labour and delivery to and from the site would be experienced against the wider urban area and road users passing along the London Roads.

- 8.9. The effect of the building out the scheme would be imperceptible. From Year 1, might the implemented residential scheme be seen, it would be experienced against the wider backdrop of residential built form and urban features situated around the southeastern area of Stroud.
- 8.10. Consequently, the proposed scheme would not fundamentally alter the baseline view at Year 1, and through the maturation of the proposed landscaping, the scheme would integrate into this urban setting, and be experienced as part of this wider setting in the lower valley area of Stroud. The overall effect at Year 1 and Year 5 would be imperceptible.
- 8.11. To the south-southwest, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 12 and 13 (Appendix ZLA 76), the route of the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route (LPA ref: ZST97) passing through a river corridor that is extensively vegetated with trees. The river is found to the west of the site and passes within close range.
- 8.12. As shown within Viewpoint 13 and 14, there is no direct view of the application site due to the screening effect of intervening residential built form situated along the London Road, as well as situated along Arundell Lane; see Appendix ZLA 7.
- 8.13. There would be some discernibility of the scheme's construction, the effect of noise, vibration, construction lighting and the movement of plant, labour and delivery to and from the site would be experienced against the wider urban area and road users passing along the London Road. PRow users would have a high susceptibility to change and high visual sensitivity. The building out of the scheme would have a negligible magnitude of change i.e., a limited alteration to key components through the addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing view. The resulting level of effect would be minor, adverse.
- 8.14. The effect of the building out the scheme would be imperceptible. From Year 1, might the implemented residential scheme be seen, it would be experienced against the wider backdrop of residential built form and urban features situated around the southeastern area of Stroud.
- 8.15. Consequently, the proposed scheme would not fundamentally alter the baseline view at Year 1, and through the maturation of the proposed landscaping, the scheme would integrate into this urban setting, and be experienced as part of this wider setting in the lower valley area of Stroud. The overall effect at Year 1 and Year 15 would be imperceptible.
- 8.16. Additionally, a further PRow was appraised within close range of the application site. Public Right of Way (LPS ref: MR01) situated to the west of the main railway line on the southeastern edge of Stroud. This PRow passes through the Cotswolds AONB, albeit passing along the peripheral edge of the AONB alongside a main railway line; see Viewpoint 11 (Appendix ZLA 7).
- 8.17. Given the route's location, susceptibility to change is less elevated (than the wider AONB) as the route runs along a 'corridor' enclosed by fencing adjoining the main railway line. At most PRow users would have a high visual sensitivity.
- 8.18. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 11, there would be some discernibility of the scheme's construction. However, the effect of noise, vibration, construction lighting and the movement of plant, labour and delivery to and from the site would be experienced against the backdrop of the main railway line, as well as the wider urban setting and the traffic movement along the Bristol Road.

- 8.19. The building out of the scheme would have a low magnitude of change i.e., the proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible, with the construction of the two and three storey dwellings being experienced against the wide backdrop of the urban area. The resulting level of effect would be moderate/-minor, adverse. This level of effect is not permanent and would cease on completion of the construction stage.
- 8.20. From Year 1, the new residential dwellings would be experienced against the extensive residential area rising up the valley side east of the London Road, as well as the existing residential areas situated between the London Road and the River Frome. The new dwellings would not be experienced as unexpected or out of character in this location.
- 8.21. Consequently, the proposed scheme would not fundamentally alter the baseline view at Year 1, and through the maturation of the proposed landscaping, the scheme would integrate into this urban setting, and be experienced as part of this wider setting in the lower valley area of Stroud. The overall effect at Year 1 and Year 15 would imperceptible.
- 8.22. ZLA summarises the finding of this appraisal as follows:
- Within close range of the application site, there are a number of PRoW passing through the urban area. The effect of intervening residential built form and/or intervening landform often screens the site from direct view.
 - The application site is situated within an urban setting, and where there are views towards the site from the open countryside beyond the built-up environment, direct views of the site are often screened.
 - The construction of the scheme might be discernible from along these routes through the effects of noise, lighting, vibration or the movement of plant, deliveries and workforce on the local road network. These effects would be experienced against the wider impacts of traffic movement along the London Road and the main railway line west of the River Frome.
 - Might the completed scheme be discernible, the new residential dwellings would be seen as a part of the wider urban setting, and within its context of two and three storey dwellings with some dwellings being up to four storeys around this location.
 - The site is situated within the lower landform of the valley, with rising valley site extensively developed to the east, with some further development to the west. The built out scheme would not be prominent in views due to its location. The proposed scheme would have a similar scale and mass as residential development seen with these views.

Public Rights of Way passing within medium range of the Site (up to 1km distance):

- 8.23. As demonstrated by the Site Context plan contained with Appendix ZLA 2, there is a PRoW network situated within medium range distance of the site. To the north – northeast, these routes pass through the urban area around Stroud Hill.
- 8.24. However, as demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix ZLA 5), direct views of the site are screened by intervening landform. There would be no discernible effect from the proposed scheme on these PRoW users i.e., ZST41 and ZST46.

- 8.25. To the east, there is a network of PRoW which pass to and from the urban edge of Stroud. However, as demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix ZLA 5), direct views of the site are screened by intervening landform, specifically, the incised valley landform typical of the site's setting along its southeastern edge. In these situations, there would be no discernible effect from the proposed scheme on these PRoW users i.e., ZST50, ZST54 and ZST47 around Lypiatt Hill.
- 8.26. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 3 (Appendix ZXLA 7), the combined effect of landform and the intervening hedgerows and tree groups within the open countryside of the AONB is sufficient to restrict the sight of the site.
- 8.27. PRoW users passing through then AONB around the eastern and southeastern edge of the town would have a very high susceptibility to change. Often these routes afford broad, open views of the wider town with a big sky back drop. However, in these situations, the site was indiscernible, and the effect of the scheme would be imperceptible across the intervening distance.
- 8.28. Within medium range of the site, ZLA appraised the effects of the scheme on PRoW users passing up and down the valley landform west of the London Road (leading up to Rodborough Hill) and also those walkers progressing across the open access land of the hill itself.
- 8.29. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 10 and 15 (Appendix ZLA 7), around the higher ground of Rodborough Hill. Direct views of the site are screened by intervening landform, specifically, the incised valley landform typical of the site's setting along its southeastern edge.
- 8.30. In these situations, there would be no discernible effect from the proposed scheme on users of the common around Rodborough Hill, and as demonstrated by the representative viewpoints, whilst there is a perception of the wider town, the effect of the trees and wooded valley tops to filter views in the winter, and substantially filter, if not screen views during spring and summer time from this part of the AONB.
- 8.31. Viewpoint 16 (Appendix ZLA 7) is taken from PRoW (LPA ref: MR01) passing through open fields on the sloped valley sides to the west of the London Road. This PRoW is passing to and from the urban edge of Stroud into the wider Cotswolds AONB, and forms part of a PRoW walking route to Rodborough Hill and common land.
- 8.32. From this route, there are direct views of the application site. However, the site is not seen wholesale due to the effect of intervening built form (along the London Road), as well as tree components within the surrounding field hedgerow boundaries and along the route of the River Frome. In these situations, the site is seen against the wider urban backdrop (not at the settlement edge, but within the townscape) with extensive residential development on rising landform to the east of the London Road.
- 8.33. The construction of the scheme would be readily seen from this location. The effect of noise, dust and vibration are unlikely to be experienced across the intervening distance. However, the demolition of the existing built form and sequential building of the proposed residential dwellings would make a discernible change to the baseline view.
- 8.34. ZLA considers that this is not down to the site having a prominent location, or the proposed scheme being of significant scale to dominate the view. However, the scheme would be noticeable during this temporary phase. This would lead to a notice able change during the construction stage; however, this change would be partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.

- 8.35. PRow users passing to and from the AONB would have a very high visual sensitivity. The building out of the scheme would lead to a low magnitude of change, and result in a moderate, adverse level of effect.
- 8.36. From Year 1, might the implemented residential scheme be discernible, it would be experienced against the wider backdrop of residential built form and urban features situated around the southeastern area of Stroud.
- 8.37. Consequently, the proposed scheme would not fundamentally alter the baseline view at Year 1, and through the maturation of the proposed landscaping, the scheme would integrate into this urban setting, and be experienced as part of this wider setting in the lower valley area of Stroud.
- 8.38. The overall effect at Year 15 would be imperceptible as the urban edge of Stroud would not have extended incongruously into the wider open countryside beyond the town, the site is not prominently positioned on a higher, valley side location, and the scheme would be of similar scale to the surrounding residential development.
- 8.39. ZLA summarises the finding of this appraisal as follows:
- As demonstrated by Viewpoint 10 and 15, the effects of the proposed scheme on the walkers passing over Rodborough Hill and Rodborough Common would be imperceptible at Year 1 and Year 15. In these situations, there are no direct views of the proposed scheme due to the combined effect of landform and the well tree'd and wooded valley ridgeline.
 - As demonstrated by Viewpoint 16, PRow users passing to and from the town through the valley sides of the AONB would experience the change of the site from a disused car retail site to a new residential development. The scheme would be experienced against the wider urban backdrop leading an imperceptible effect.

Public Rights of Way passing within long to very long range of the Site (beyond 1km distance):

- 8.40. As demonstrated by the Site Context plan contained with Appendix ZLA 3, there is an extensive network of PRow across the wider open countryside. These route progress through the AONB within long to very long range of the site's location, and pass over the 'steep sided, concave narrow valley form steeper upper slopes' and 'interlocking valley/ridge forms' typical of the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area, and the 'relatively narrow, high-sided valleys with steep upper slopes' of the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5).
- 8.41. However, as demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix ZLA 5), direct views of the site are screened by intervening landform to the north to east, south to west of the site's location. Consequently, there would be no discernible effect from the proposed scheme on these PRow users, including those cross Rodborough Hill and the common land at Rodborough Common (see Appendix ZLA 2).
- 8.42. As demonstrated, the narrow valley landform which curves to the northwest (along the course of the River Frome) is the main constraint to seeing the application site across longer range distances; see Section 4, paragraph 4.17.
- 8.43. The application site is located within the valley floor, rather than at a prominent position on the valley side. The combined effect of intervening landform, the extensively tree'd and wooded valleys slopes frequently filters, if not screens direct views of the scheme. This is demonstrated by Viewpoint 8 and 9 (Appendix ZLA 7).

- 8.44. Viewpoint 5 and 6 (Appendix ZLA 7) are taken from a PRoW where users are situated on elevated landform above the valley side and afford views across the valley and along the course of the River Frome. However, in these situations, whilst there is a perception of the wider town, the effect of the trees and wooded valley tops filter views towards the site from this part of the AONB.
- 8.45. However, the site is not seen wholesale due to the effect of intervening built form and mature tree components around the southeastern edge of town. Given the intervening distance, there is barely any desirability of the site, which is seen as a very small component of the view, and perhaps one which might be not observed by then casual observing walking through the AONB.
- 8.46. The effect of noise, dust and vibration are unlikely to be experienced across the intervening distance. However, the demolition of the existing built form and sequential building of the proposed residential dwellings would make a small-scale discernible change to the baseline view. PRoW users passing to and from the AONB would have a very high visual sensitivity. The building out of the scheme would lead to a low magnitude of change, and result in a moderate, adverse level of effect.
- 8.47. From Year 1, might the implemented residential scheme be discernible, it would be experienced against the wider backdrop of residential built form and urban features situated around the southeastern area of Stroud. Consequently, the proposed scheme would not fundamentally alter the baseline view at Year 1, and through the maturation of the proposed landscaping, the scheme would integrate into this urban setting, and be experienced as part of this wider setting in the lower valley area of Stroud.
- 8.48. Given the intervening distance, the site's location (within the valley floor which is not prominent) and well within the urban area of Stroud, there is unlikely to be an imperceptible level of effect on PRoW users passing through the AONB around these locations. The likely residual effect would be imperceptible at Year 1 and Year 15.
- 8.49. ZLA summarises the finding of this appraisal as follows:
- The 'steep sided, concave narrow valley form steeper upper slopes' and 'interlocking valley/ridge forms' influences the discernibility of the site, and the likely effect of the proposed scheme residually.
 - The site is found within the shallow bottom of a valley landform. The narrow valley landform curves to the northwest (along the course of the River Frome), which further constrains the ability to see the site across longer range distances.
 - Given the intervening distance, the site's location (within the valley floor which is not prominent) and well within the urban area of Stroud, there is unlikely to be an imperceptible level of effect on PRoW users passing through the AONB around these locations.
 - The discernibility of the proposed scheme from the appraised PRoW crossing the elevated landform of then AONB would be limited. Effects of the proposed scheme are not appraised to be significant.

River Frome (including the Thames and Severn Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route)

- 8.50. The narrow valley landform curves to the northwest (along the course of the River Frome), which further constrains the ability to see the site across medium to longer range distances. As demonstrated by Viewpoints 12, 13 and 14 (Appendix ZLA 7), and as appraised above, ZLA considers that the proposed scheme would not lead to significant impacts to those passing through the river corridor nearest to the application site, and within close to medium range of the site.

Cotswolds Way National Trail Long Distance Walking Route

- 8.51. As appraised in Section 4, paragraph 4.27 to 4.30, and as demonstrated the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), there is limited scope whereby the proposed development might be seen, which has a limited geographical area beyond 3km distance of the site to the west and north northwest.
- 8.52. Given our field-based assessment (early February 2024), the effect of intervening built form across the wider townscape of Stroud is sufficient to generally screen the application site from view.
- 8.53. Given the foregoing, the likely effect on users of this National Trail Long Distance Walking Route is anticipated to be imperceptible, and ZLAS consequently, scoped this route out of this LVA.

National Cycle Routes

- 8.54. As detailed in Section 4, paragraph 4.31 to 4.32, it is anticipated, that the proposed development would have no discernible effect on the users of National Cycle Route 45.

Vehicle Routes

- 8.55. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (see Appendix ZLA 5), the potential to see the proposed development across the assessment area is limited; see analysis earlier in this section, paragraph 8.2 above.
- 8.56. The discernibility of the proposed scheme is influenced by the screening effect of intervening residential built form across the wider town of Stroud, and locally to the site's location. Further to this, the effect of the valley landform is an influence on the availability of views, especially, given the character of the sloped residential streets typical of the southeastern edge of Stroud.
- 8.57. Given our field-based assessment (early February 2024), we have scoped out a significant number of local roadways. Where the application site can be seen locally along the road network, the scheme would be seen as part of the wider urban setting, and so not experienced as out of context or unexpected.
- 8.58. Consequently, this appraisal considers the effects of the scheme on road users passing along the London Road nearest to the site i.e., passing the site ort within close range of the site.
- 8.59. Users of the London Roads would experience the greatest effect in the short section as it passes the site's location; see Viewpoint 1 and 2, Appendix ZLA 7. However, as demonstrated by these representative viewpoints, the proposed scheme would be experienced as part of the wider urban setting, within which the site is clear situated.

- 8.60. The site is not a greenfield site on the edge of the town, rather it is a previously developed site. The former car retail land use has ceased, and the application site has no current land use. The site is sandwiched between existing residential land uses both sides of the London Road, and consequently, its redevelopment to a new residential development would not be out of context or experienced as unexpected as travels along the London Road; see Viewpoint 1 and 2 (Appendix ZLA 7).
- 8.61. The building out of the scheme would lead to discernible noise, the movement of plant, labour and delivery of materials and the sequential building out of the residential dwellings. These activities would introduce new activities and features which would alter the character of the baseline views for road users. The magnitude of effect is predicted to be high, yielding a Moderate/-minor adverse level of effect at construction. This level of effect would cease on completion of the construction stage.
- 8.62. At Year 1, the character of the proposed development would remain that of a new residential scheme, with recently constructed residences, car parking areas. At this stage, the new landscape planting would be too juvenile to make any significance difference. Consequently, at Year 1, the scheme would still result in adverse impacts. However, this is not done to the type, scale and design of the scheme, but through the change being experienced locally to the site.
- 8.63. By Year 15, new landscaping would have become matured, and the scheme would have weathered and become an accepted part of the wider urban setting of Stroud. In this situation, the proposed scheme would result in a minor/-negligible, beneficial effect.

Residential Dwellings

- 8.64. It should be noted that while visual amenity of residents within their private dwellings/curtilage is not protected, their 'residential amenity' generally is. Residential receptors are generally considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view, but their rights to any particular view, or quality of view, is not protected in planning policy at any level.
- 8.65. The application site is situated within the shallow, valley bottom. The incised valley topography extends to the east and west of the London Road. As noted earlier, the site is found within the shallow bottom of a valley landform. The narrow valley landform curves to the northwest (along the course of the River Frome), which further constrains the ability to see the site across medium to longer range distances.
- 8.66. Additionally, the ridgeline along the valley tops is frequently tree'd with tree belts and wooded areas. Given this, the extent of residences and residential areas which would be influenced by the proposed scheme is very limited, and through our field-based assessment, ZLA did not identify any direct views of the site from outlying settlements.
- 8.67. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 3 and 4 (Appendix ZLA 7), which are situated on the settlement edge of Stroud (to the east and southeast), direct views are very limited, if not substantially filtered or screened by intervening mature tree groups or residential dwellings.
- 8.68. Additionally, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 7 and 12 (Appendix ZLA 7), there is very limited scope of seeing the application site to the west and southwest of the River Frome (see paragraph 8.2 above for ZLA's summary of field-based analysis). In these situations, residences are likely to experience a low magnitude of change. This is down to the potential for some noise effects, vibration and construction lighting. However, these effects are experienced against the background noise from the movement of cars along the London Road and rail use along the main railway line nearby.

- 8.69. This level of effect would cease on completion of the construction stage. The Year 1, and the residual effect at Year 15, would be imperceptible i.e., not a discernible change to the key component of the view, and if discernible, the change would not be out of character or context within the setting.
- 8.70. Those dwellings directly adjacent to the site would experience, and within its immediate location on London Road, would have an elevated magnitude of change. This would lead to worst case effects of Major, adverse, although this level of effect must be considered in the light of the existing context of these dwellings (which is residential) and in respect of the previously developed site (disused car retail site).
- 8.71. On balance, and given the brownfield, discussed land use within the urban character of the site, the extent of dwellings affected to an elevated degree is proportionally small, with only a small handful experiencing a prominent change to outlooks from their properties. In all instances, the design of the proposals has sought to ensure the change is within acceptable parameters when considering residential amenity, and is considered by ZLA, to lead a beneficial effect locally.

9. SUMMARY

- 9.1. Zebra Landscape Architects Limited were commissioned by Altus Homes to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for the redevelopment of the former car dealership and mechanics, situated off the London Road, Stroud, Gloucestershire.
- 9.2. The Applicant is seeking detailed planning permission for the redevelopment of a former car retail site for residential dwellings plus site access, parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure; see the Proposed Site Layout (ref: 01266-002-Rev.P01) contained in Appendix ZLA 3 of this LVA.

The Site

- 9.3. In planning designation terms, the site is not situated within a National or local landscape designation. Furthermore, the application site is a brown field site situated within the settlement boundary of Stroud and is not within or adjoining the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 9.4. Previously, the application site was used for car retail sales, but is currently disused and un-managed. Given this former land use, the site is predominantly either built form or all-weather surfacing.
- 9.5. Consequently, the site contains no notable intact landscape features or historic landscape character. In its simplest sense, this is a disused employment/commercial site which has been managed for its utility as part of those operations and is set within the urban area of Stroud town.
- 9.6. The application site is private and has no public access. There are no Public Rights of Way passing through the site, or along its boundaries.

The Site and its context

- 9.7. The Application Site is located along the southeastern area of Stroud town. In landscape and visual terms, the site is found within an urban setting and is neighbouring by multiple residential land uses and built form.
- 9.8. The London Road is situated within the lower valley landform, and dwellings range from two storey and up to three storeys, with some four storey dwellings. A number of these dwellings take advantage of the slope change to facilitate lower floors, and where there are apartments there are extensive car parking courts which service these properties.
- 9.9. Beyond the River Frome, there has been modern housing development (along Bowbridge Wharf) which is a mixture of two and a half storey and three storey residential dwellings, with further homes found along the inclined roadways.
- 9.10. The application site has been managed for car sales as a dealership, rather than landscape amenity. Consequently, the site contains no notable intact landscape features or historic landscape character. In its simplest sense, this is a disused employment/commercial site which has been managed for its utility as part of those operations and is set within the urban area of Stroud town.

The Site and its Location

- 9.11. The southeastern edge of Stroud is situated within a sharp, incised valley landform. Typically, the landform local to the site is noted as 'steep sided, concave narrow valley form steeper upper slopes' and 'interlocking valley/ridge forms. These features are typical of the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area, and the 'relatively narrow, high-sided valleys with steep upper slopes' of the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5).
- 9.12. The application site is found within the lower, valley floor, and is not prominent in views from the higher ridgelines above the valley. Furthermore, the narrow valley landform curves to the northwest (along the course of the River Frome) is the main constraint to seeing the application site across longer range distances.
- 9.13. As one passes to and from the town through the valley sides of the AONB, one would experience the change of the site from a disused car retail site to a new residential development. The scheme would be experienced against the wider urban backdrop, which is both extensive in its built form, and geographical area.
- 9.14. Typically, residential development is found across the rising landform of the valley up to the higher ground around Stroud Hill (east of the London Road) and to the west rising up towards Rodborough Hill. The application site is situated in the lower valley floor and is not prominent in views to, from or across the town.

Landscape Character

- 9.15. Natural England has described and classified landscape character areas across large, broad regional areas. Stroud is found on the periphery of National Character Area 107: Cotswolds; at a local level, the Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment was adopted in November 2000, and identifies the types of landscape within the administrative areas, as well as the key priorities and actions for managing the landscape for the future. This landscape character assessment washes over the built-up areas of the district. Consequently, whilst the site is found within an urban built-up setting, this study finds the site located within the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area, situated within a broad zone along the southeastern edge of Stroud town.
- 9.16. Many of the key characteristics of the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area are intact within the wider open countryside outside of the town. However, given the brownfield, previously developed nature of the application site, there are no intact key landscape features within the site area.
- 9.17. The southern edge of the town is situated within the setting of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the AONB wraps around the southeastern edge of the town. The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016) divides the Cotswolds into 19 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) which are subdivided into 68 Landscape Character Areas. The nearest landscape character is the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5), which is characterised by 'significant areas of development dominate the valley floors and extend up the valley sides in terraces, lending these areas a particularly urban character. Evidence of a strong industrial past, including communications, infrastructure and mill development, is confined to the valley floors.'
- 9.18. The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016) provides a number of written guidelines for integrating new development:
 - 'Avoid development that will intrude negatively into the landscape and cannot be successfully mitigated, for example, extensions to settlements onto the valley sides.'

- New development should be concentrated within existing built-up areas, and be of a density reflecting the characteristic linear settlement forms; and
- Ensure new development is proportionate and does not overwhelm the existing settlement.'

Effects upon Landscape Fabric at the Site

- 9.19. The application site is defined by a mixture of existing buildings and all-weather hardstand surfaces. The character of the site is therefore primarily employment/commercial. As a result, landscape features on site are relatively sparse due to the commercially developed nature of the site.
- 9.20. The development proposal has retained and integrated existing tree canopies and would reduce the overall are of all-weather surfacing/hardstanding with the new homes and apartment block affording either private gardens or communal amenity space, as well as landscape planting along London Road. New planting would be of locally important species to enhance the streetscape of the urban setting, as well as afford ecological betterment locally.
- 9.21. In the first year, the prevailing characteristic would be the new development, car parking courtyards and lighting, whilst the proposed trees, ground cover and hedgerow would still be in relative infancy within a wider mature landscape setting through retained landscape fabric within the site. This would yield a minor/-negligible, adverse level of effect when combined with very low sensitivity of the site.
- 9.22. The residual and long-term effect of the proposed scheme would lead to an overall beneficial effect through an overall magnitude of change resulting in a minor/-negligible beneficial level of effect. The maturation of the landscape features, with tree, hedgerow and native structure planting would make an obvious contribution to the character of the site.

The wider urban setting within the southeastern area of Stroud

- 9.23. The scale and type of the proposed development is such that changes to the site would be limited to an area of what is currently an existing former car retail site. The redevelopment of this site to an active land use would result in a minor/-negligible beneficial level of effect locally to the site area.

Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area

- 9.24. Typically, the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area is defined by 'relatively narrow, high-sided valleys with steep upper slopes', as well as pastoral land with 'scattered areas of arable, mainly enclosed by a network of hedgerow boundaries' with 'stone walls are confined mainly to the valley bottoms, particularly surrounding settlements'.
- 9.25. The site is a dis-used, previously development car retail facility which bears little to no resemblance to this wider character. Rather, the site is located with a 'significant area of development dominates the valley floors and extend up the valley sides in terraces, lending these areas a particularly urban character.'
- 9.26. The construction stage would result in the demolition of the existing built form, with noise, scaffolding and the general activity of the construction workforce and the movement of plant and delivery vehicles. This would result in a moderate/-minor, adverse effect to the Scheduled Valleys Landscape Character Area.

- 9.27. However, this level of effect would diminish rapidly with distance across the landscape character are due to the influence of the valley landform and the 'extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims' and 'tall hedges forming enclosure within the valleys with many hedgerow trees.'

The Cotswolds AONB - Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5)

- 9.28. The site is located well within the settlement boundary of Stroud, and is situated outside of the Cotswolds AONB, at the periphery of the designation's setting. Consequently, the proposed scheme would have no direct effects on the Cotswolds AONB.
- 9.29. Due to the site's location within the lower valley floor and not within a prominent valley side location, the implementation of the proposed scheme would not create any disturbance to the 'open, undeveloped slopes of the valleys'. Additionally, as the scheme would redevelop an existing brownfield site well within the urban area of Stroud the 'dark stretches of the valleys and valley slopes forming the backdrop to settlements' would remain unchanged.
- 9.30. Existing development within the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5) is typically noted to 'dominate the valley floors and extend up the valley sides in terraces, lending these areas a particularly urban character.' The proposed scheme would redevelop an existing brownfield site that is situated within the lower level of the valley, and which is not prominent in its position.
- 9.31. The type of land use and scale of built form proposed is similar to that within the context of the site (and which can be seen from within the site looking outwards to the east and west of the London Road, and also the River Frome).
- 9.32. The scheme would continue the characteristic pattern of development within this area of Stroud town rather than an 'outward expansion of existing urban areas onto the steep, highly visible valley sides', which is noted through the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016) as a particular landscape sensitivity within this landscape type.
- 9.33. The proposed scheme would lead to a very low, if not indiscernible effect across this landscape type of the Cotswolds AONB. When combined with the very high landscape sensitivity, the resulting residual effect would be less than significant, if not leading to an imperceptible change within the AONB nearest to this area of Stroud.

Visual Amenity

- 9.34. In siting the proposed development, the physical constraints of the site and the surrounding pattern of development have been taken into consideration in order to minimise the potential for the proposed development to break skylines and represent a series of prominent new structures in views towards the site.
- 9.35. Generally, there is scope to see the application site as one pass along London Road within close range of the site. The site is overlooked and seen from a number of residential dwellings along the London Road.
- 9.36. Beyond this, the application site is situated within the lower landform along the London Road, the effect of intervening landform, or the combination of landform and built form is sufficient to screen the site from many situations, including the neighbouring open countryside.
- 9.37. Where landform rises further with the hilly surroundings of Stroud, the effect of field hedgerows and hedgerows trees, small tree groups as well as woodland is sufficient to substantially filter if not screen direct views.

The Potential Effects on Visual Amenity

9.38. ZLA undertook a field-based assessment in February 2024, and found the following:

- Within close range of the application site, there are a number of PRoW passing through the urban area. The effect of intervening residential built form and/or intervening landform often screens the site from direct view.
- The application site is situated within an urban setting, and where there are views towards the site from the open countryside beyond the built-up environment, direct views of the site are often screened.
- The construction of the scheme might be discernible from along these routes through the effects of noise, lighting, vibration or the movement of plant, deliveries and workforce on the local road network. These effects would be experienced against the wider impacts of traffic movement along the London Road and the main railway line west of the River Frome.
- Might the completed scheme be discernible, the new residential dwellings would be seen as a part of the wider urban setting, and within its context of two and three storey dwellings with some dwellings being up to four storeys around this location.
- The site is situated within the lower landform of the valley, with rising valley site extensively developed to the east, with some further development to the west. The built-out scheme would not be prominent in views due to its location. The proposed scheme would have a similar scale and mass as residential development seen with these views.
- The 'steep sided, concave narrow valley form steeper upper slopes' and 'interlocking valley/ridge forms' influences the discernibility of the site, and the likely effect of the proposed scheme residually.
- The site is found within the shallow bottom of a valley landform. The narrow valley landform curves to the northwest (along the course of the River Frome), which further constrains the ability to see the site across longer range distances.
- Given the intervening distance, the site's location (within the valley floor which is not prominent) and well within the urban area of Stroud, there is unlikely to be an imperceptible level of effect on PRoW users passing through the AONB around these locations.
- Additionally, in terms of visual amenity within the AONB, there is unlikely to be an imperceptible level of effect on PRoW users and road users passing through the AONB surrounding Stroud town.

Landscape Mitigation and Enhancement

9.39. Measures include the following:

- Retain existing trees within the site area, and protect those neighbouring the site for green infrastructure;
- Tree planting within the development to break up the perception of development mass, and maturation, to filter views of the built form;

- To provide landscape buffer planting to offset and reduce any potential visual impact to neighbouring residential dwellings; and
 - To establish and manage new tree and hedgerow planting to integrate the proposed development into the local street scene, as well as planting and a mosaic of landscape fabric and habitat creation to create ecologically diverse buffers to the site for bio-diversity benefit.
- 9.40. Through an analysis of local landscape character and visual amenity, ZLA has demonstrated that the proposals would not cause harm to the intrinsic character of the open countryside and rural character surrounding the town, and across the wider Cotswolds AONB area within the local valley and ridgeline landform.
- 9.41. The anticipated level of effects from the proposed scheme, must be considered in the light of the existing context of the site, which has an urban setting, and is set well within the built-up area of Stroud town. The predicted effects are therefore a function of change and sensitivity, and in instances, lead to beneficial effect on localised views, as well as the general townscape experience along the southeastern edge of Stroud.
- 9.42. The application has been accompanied by a suite of detailed environmental reports and a landscape mitigation and enhancement strategy; see Appendix ZLA 6. Read as a whole, this work demonstrates that the proposal would not harm the environment of the townscape, or directly impact the open countryside or harm the setting of the wider Cotswolds AONB.
- 9.43. The strategy for landscaping draws together mitigation measures, green and blue infrastructure initiatives, as well as ecological betterment and habitat certification. The strategy seeks to afford mitigation measures, as well as conserving and enhancing existing landscape fabric and new landscape features to promote local identity through the landscape.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1. Zebra Landscape Architects Limited were commissioned by Altus Homes to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for the redevelopment of the former car dealership and mechanics, situated off the London Road, Stroud, Gloucestershire.
- 10.2. The Applicant is seeking detailed planning permission for the redevelopment of a former car retail site for residential dwellings plus site access, parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure; see the Proposed Site Layout (ref: 01266-002-Rev.P01) contained in Appendix ZLA 3 of this LVA.
- 10.3. Given the foregoing appraisal, ZLA reports the following relative to National and local planning policy:
- National Planning Policy*
- 10.4. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development; this being the golden thread running throughout the document.
- 10.5. For landscape, this means recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (para. 180 (b)) and balancing any 'harm' to the landscape resource with the benefits of the scheme in other respects (para 180 (b)).
- 10.6. The layout and proposed landscape enhancement and mitigation proposals respond to the local landscape character, afford the opportunity for planting native species, and where practicable to do so, advocates new planting of local provenance to ensure that the proposal optimises the opportunity to conserve and enhance the landscape.
- 10.7. Through the undertaking of this LVA, ZLA considers that the development proposal is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, which is sympathetic to its setting.
- 10.8. Additionally, paragraph 182 states:
- 'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.'
- 10.9. This paragraph continues and states:
- 'The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.'
- 10.10. Whilst the application site is situated within the southeastern townscape of Stroud, and outside of the Cotswolds AONB, its location is within the setting of the AONB, albeit as part of the existing developed area of the town.

- 10.11. Through the undertaking of this appraisal, ZLA finds the scheme would not be harmful to the setting of the Cotswolds AONB (and the local Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5)), for the following reasons:
- The proposed scheme would develop an existing brownfield site within the lower valley landform and would not lead to an 'upward pressure' of developing a greenfield site within the higher landform.
 - The site is not situated within a 'highly visible valley side' where new development could be potentially incongruous within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB, or across the wider town of Stroud.
 - Given the location of the site, the type of land use and scale of development proposed, the scheme would not detract from, or harm the 'characteristic wooded, rural backdrop of valley towns and their typical linear form'.
 - The proposed scheme would develop a brownfield site situated within the built-up limits of the Stroud, and well within the Settlement Boundary recognised within the adopted Local Plan. The scheme would not constitute coalescence along the valley floor, which could detract from the character of the settlement.
- 10.12. The foregoing is reflective of the landscape sensitivities which have been highlighted by the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016); see Section 6, paragraph 6.23 onwards.
- 10.13. Furthermore, given the foregoing, it is considered that the proposal to redevelopment this brownfield site would not be contrary to Policy CE1 (Landscape) of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan (2018-2023), which states: 'proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views - including those into and out of the AONB.'
- 10.14. As demonstrated through the undertaking of this appraisal, the proposed scheme would lead to a very low, if not indiscernible effect across this landscape type of the Cotswolds AONB.
- 10.15. Additionally, in terms of visual amenity within the AONB, there is unlikely to be an imperceptible level of effect on PRoW users and road users passing through the AONB surrounding Stroud town.
- 10.16. Furthermore, the site is found within a narrow valley landform which curves to the northwest (along the course of the River Frome), whilst valley sides are sharp and incised, frequently lined with tree groups and woodland blocks. These features are frequently experienced across this area of the Cotswolds AONB, and typical of the Settled Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT5).
- 10.17. Consequently, the proposed scheme can be integrated within its location without incongruously impacting the visual amenity across this area of the AONB, of the wider setting of the Cotswolds AONB beyond the urban built-up limits of the town.

Local Planning Policy

- 10.18. ZLA considers that the proposed scheme is not contrary to Delivery Policy ES7 (Landscape Character). This appraisal demonstrates throughout field-based assessment, that the scheme would not be to the detriment of the landscape character and visual amenity of the Cotswolds AONB, and the redevelopment of this dis-used brownfield site would conserve and enhance the setting of the AONB, and the local landscape character.
- 10.19. The type of development proposed, its density and scale is considered to be appropriate to its location, and the scheme would facilitate new landscaping which would promote local identity through the planting of species of local importance. If possible, local provenance too, conserving and enhancing local character through an appropriate layout and design creating a well-designed, high quality successful small scale development.

Neighbourhood Planning Policy

- 10.20. Given the foregoing, which I am not going to report, ZLA considers that the proposed scheme would be compliant with Policy CE1 (Landscape) and Policy CE3 (Local Distinctiveness) by conserving and enhancing visual amenity within the AONB and with its setting through the appropriate redevelopment of a disused brownfield site with a sensitively designed new residential scheme.


Overall Conclusion

- 10.21. In conclusion, the proposed residential development represents an appropriately scaled feature, which is designed to be in keeping with the local landscape character and landscape setting. It would result in a very limited number of material landscape or visual effects, and it is considered, by ZLA, that the redevelopment of this dis-used brownfield site, would not be to the detriment of the setting to the Cotswolds AONB.

APPENDIX ZLA 1

NOTES:
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KEY

 SITE BOUNDARY



REVISION HISTORY

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKD
P01	13.03.24	FIRST ISSUE	MJK	MD



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PROJECT
 PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT


ADDRESS
 FORMER FORD STROUD MOTORS,
 LONDON ROAD,
 STROUD,
 GL5 2AX

DRAWING TITLE
 SITE LOCATION PLAN

PROJECT REF.	ISTG.	DRWG.	REVISION
01266	-03	-001	P01

SCALE 1:1250 SHEET SIZE A4 DATE 16.11.23 DRAWING STATUS **DRAFT**



DRAWING NORTH 

SITE LOCATION PLAN

1:1250

APPENDIX ZLA 2