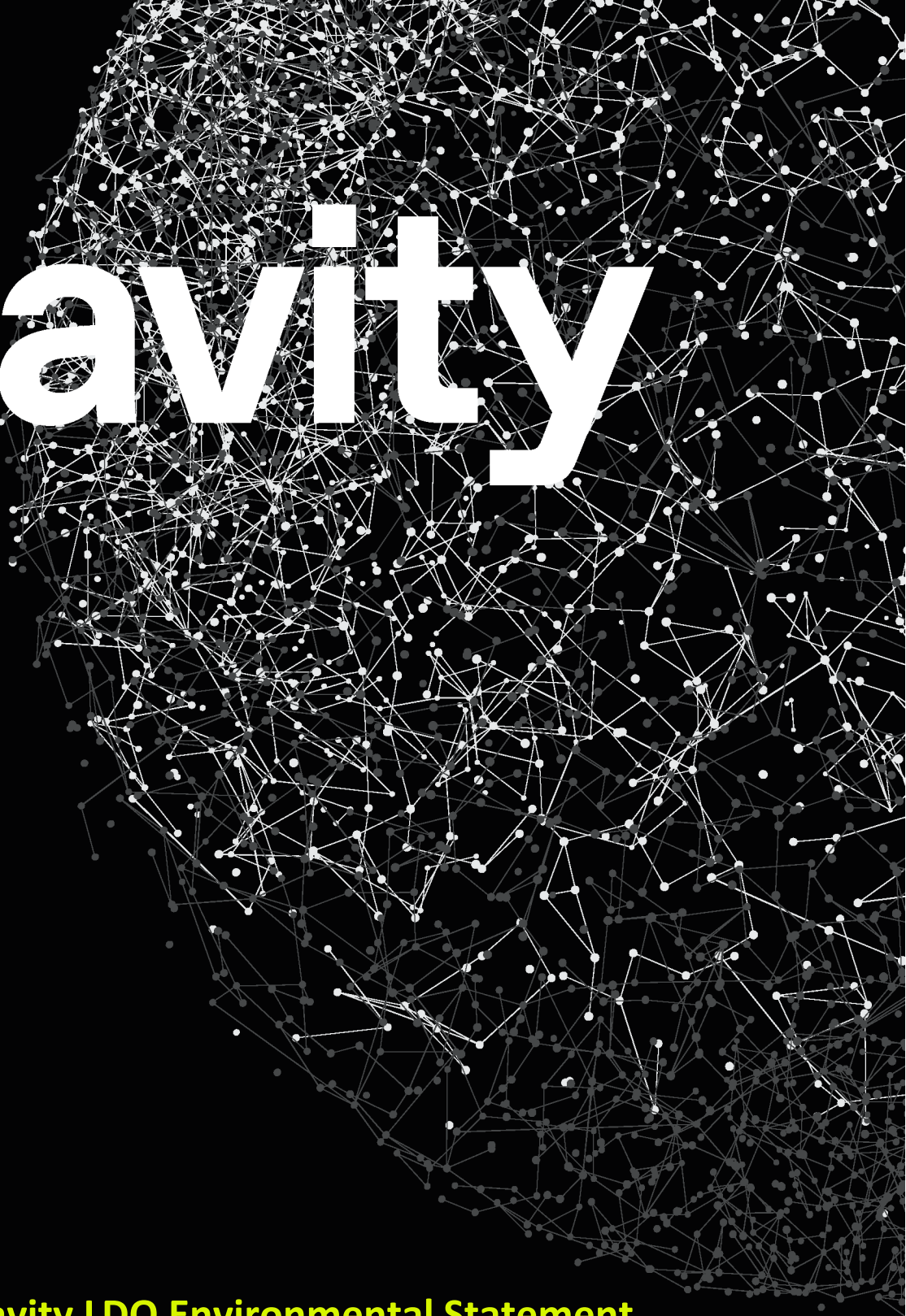
Gravity

Smart Campus



Gravity LDO Environmental Statement

Volume 1 – Chapter 14: Landscape and Visual

14 Landscape and Visual

14.1.1 This Chapter has been prepared by The Richards Partnership. In accordance with Regulation 18(5) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as amended, a statement outlining the relevant expertise and qualifications of competent experts appointed to prepare this ES is provided in **Appendix 1.6**.

14.2 Introduction

14.2.1 This chapter considers the likely significant landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development and is referred to as the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

14.2.2 It should be noted that 'impacts' in the context of the EIA Regulations refer to beneficial as well as adverse effects.

14.2.3 The landscape and visual impacts referred to in this chapter are assessed separately in accordance with good practice[1]. They may be defined as follows:

- Landscape character; impacts on the landscape or townscape may arise where the character of areas with a particular scenic quality or merit are modified by the development.
- Landscape features; impacts on landscape features such as hedgerows, trees or landform may arise where features are lost or substantially modified as a result of the development.
- Visual amenity; impacts on visual amenity may arise where features intrude into or obstruct the views of people, or where there is some other qualitative change to the view seen as a result of the Proposed Development.

14.2.4 The landscape and visual assessment was carried out through a desk study of relevant documents and by field study work undertaken from February to April 2021. The purpose of the site visits were to establish:

- The content and quality of the Site's existing landscape features;
- The character of the Site and its immediate environs;
- The Site's visual relationship with its surroundings;
- The contribution of the Site to the wider landscape; and
- The people most likely to be affected by development on all or part of the Site.

14.2.5 The following is a list of the appendices that accompany this chapter:

- **Appendix 14.1** Figures
- **Appendix 14.2** Photomontage Methodology
- **Appendix 14.3** Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Tables

[1] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) 2013 – Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment – October 2014, Christine Tudor, Natural England

- **Appendix 14.4** Arboricultural Survey/Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA)
- **Appendix 14.5** Lighting Assessment

14.2.6 The central part of the Site was formerly occupied by the ROF, and in 2017 Planning Consent was granted for Huntspill Energy Park which covers much of the Site extents. It should be noted that whilst the 2017 Planning Consent was granted, the safeguarded land uses were also considered and assessed cumulatively in the Environmental Statement. The safeguarded land uses included some very large scale industrial elements and stacks up to 105 metres high, and although these elements did not obtain planning permission at that time, they illustrate the intention that some large scale high elements could be considered.

14.3 Policy, Legislation, Guidance and Standards

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021

14.3.1 At the time of writing the NPPF has recently been updated. The revised framework places emphasis on the fostering of "*well designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs*" as part of the overarching social objective (section 2. para 8). The following paragraphs consider other extracts of pertinence to this chapter.

14.3.2 The NPPF (section 2. para 9) states:

"Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area."

And goes on to state (section 3. para 20):

"Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for […]

d) Conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation."

14.3.3 The NPPF Section 12: Achieving Well Designed Places (para 130) states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

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

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

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

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

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

f) Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience."

14.3.4 The NPPF section 14: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change (para 154) states that:

"New development should be planned for in ways that:

a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure;"

14.3.5 The NPPF section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment states that:

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

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

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

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

d) Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; " (para 174)

14.3.6 In relation to AONBs, paragraph 176 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."

Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011-2032 (adopted 2019)

14.3.7 The Site lies within the administrative area of Sedgemoor District Council (SDC). At the time of writing the development plan consists of Sedgemoor Local Plan adopted in February 2019.

14.3.8 The Sedgemoor Local Plan does not accord any specific landscape designations to the Site. However, there are areas of the Site designated as 'Local Wildlife Sites'.

14.3.9 Policy D19 Landscape includes the following extracts:

" Development within the setting of an AONB that has the potential to harm the character and visual amenity of the protected landscape will only be supported if that potential harm can be negated through appropriate and acceptable mitigation measures.

Elsewhere in the district proposals should ensure that they enhance the landscape quality wherever possible or that there is no significant adverse impact on local landscape character, historic landscape, scenic quality and distinctive landscape features as identified

in the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary. In particular through:

- *Siting and landscaping that takes account of visibility from publicly accessible vantage points;*
- *The form, bulk and design of buildings having proper regard to their context in respect* of both the immediate setting and the defining characteristics of the wider local area;
- *Protecting and enhancing natural and historic features which contribute to the distinctive character of the district's landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, soils, rivers/river corridors, ditches, open space, archaeological remains and rural buildings; and*
- *Taking account of the predicted long-term impacts of climate change on landscape.*

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) should accompany planning applications where it is judged that the landscape and visual amenity may be adversely affected by the proposed development and it is considered necessary to understand the likely effects as part of the appraisal of the development. This is to understand both the significance of and the effects of change on the landscape (as an environmental resource) and/or on visual amenity. In undertaking LVIAs reference should be made to information in relevant National Character Area profiles and the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary.

Where development is necessary and could result in significant adverse effects on the landscape and on visual amenity, appropriate mitigation measures should be provided. Where a significant adverse effect cannot be avoided or markedly reduced through mitigation, then opportunities to offset, remedy or compensate for unavoidable effects will be a requirement."

14.3.10 Policy D22 Trees and Woodland states:

"Where possible development should seek in the first instance to avoid or minimise the loss of or damage to trees, woodland and hedgerow. Development that would result in the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, or threaten the continued well-being of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland and veteran trees will only be supported if the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss or damage. In these circumstances, if the loss or damage is deemed to constitute significant harm to biodiversity, then the developer will need to provide adequate mitigation and/or compensation in accordance with Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Adequate tree and/or ecological information (proportionate to the nature and scale of the potential impact) will be required where it is judged that development proposals may affect trees, woodland or hedgerow. Development proposals that include a planting scheme should be accompanied by a Landscape Masterplan (proportionate to the scale of development) that incorporate the planting of native tree and hedgerow species that are characteristic of the local landscape and provide benefits to local wildlife.

Development that seeks to enhance and expand the district's tree and woodland resource will be encouraged and supported where it accords with the policies in the Local Plan as a whole. Conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to secure the commensurate replacement of trees, woodland and hedgerows or their protection during the course of development."

14.3.11 Policy D29 Protection and Enhancement of Existing Green Infrastructure Resources states:

"Green Infrastructure (GI) will be safeguarded, maintained, improved, enhanced and added to, as appropriate. Development proposals which compromise the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network will be resisted.

The impact of new development on existing Green Infrastructure should be properly considered. Any new development which is likely to increase usage of existing green infrastructure should recognise that increased usage may result in degradation of the existing standard of provision. In addition, maintenance costs for those who own and maintain the infrastructure may increase, and any such costs or improvements necessary should be borne by the development.

Master-planning of Strategic Site Allocations on greenfield Sites should make provision for a network of green spaces linking the Site to the wider Green Infrastructure network."

14.3.12 Policy D30 Green Infrastructure Requirements in New Development states:

"Where appropriate the creation of Green Infrastructure in new developments should meet the following criteria:

- *be of an appropriate type, size and standard and make appropriate provision for future maintenance including where appropriate a management plan agreed with the LPA;*
- *S106 contributions will be sought for appropriate off-Site provision if on-Site provision is not possible;*
- *the provision of green spaces (wherever possible) within new developments should have particular regard to extending the connectivity of the existing Green Infrastructure network;*
- *the provision of green spaces (wherever possible) within new developments should have particular regard to contributing to the enhancement and improved coherence of identified ecological networks;*
- *in the interest of reducing recreational pressure on sensitive Natura 2000 Sites all residential development should be ANGst* (Accessible Natural Green Space Standard) *compliant or otherwise appropriately contribute to improving access to natural greenspace;*
- *make appropriate use of natural resources, encourage the use of sustainable materials and minimise the production of waste;*
- *should have regard for the protection of trees, woodland and hedgerow; the planting of trees and hedgerow; and woodland creation for public amenity and climate change mitigation;*
- *should have regard to the multi-functional benefits and roles of green infrastructure;*
- *if loss of existing Green Infrastructure assets is unavoidable in order to accommodate necessary development, appropriate mitigation of the loss will be required; and*
- *in all cases, including proposals for increased access to rural areas, development will need to demonstrate that there are no significant adverse impacts on biodiversity interests as set in Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.*

Opportunities for the development to be an exemplar of best practice and innovation in the design and management of new Green Infrastructure will be encouraged."

Puriton Energy Park Supplementary Planning Document 2012

14.3.13 SDC have produced the 'Puriton Energy Park Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD) which was adopted by the Council in March 2012. This document has been prepared to *'guide and inform development of the brownfield Site of the former Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF)'*.

2009 Bridgwater Vision

14.3.14 The Bridgwater Vision includes the Huntspill Energy Park (the 2017 Planning Consent) noted under 'Local Projects' and states:

"This site to the North of Bridgwater has been allocated as an 'Energy Park', and has been identified for the delivery of about 90 hectares of employment land."

14.3.15 Overall, much of the document is concerned with urban areas, and therefore other extracts are not considered pertinent to the Proposed Development. However, it is notable within The Vision, that emphasis is placed on the following key headings:

- *"Inviting + identifiable;*
- *Sustainable + vibrant;*
- *Innovative + dynamic;*
- *Cultural + authentic;*
- *Accessible + connected;*
- *Social + diverse; and*
- *Viable + deliverable."*

The Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment (SLA) 2003

14.3.16 This document is also adopted as supplementary planning guidance and identifies two areas of visual sensitivity; 'Visually prominent areas of high quality landscape' and 'Areas of high sensitivity in relation to road corridors' both of which will be considered in this assessment.

14.3.17 The SLA identifies the former ROF as being within the (c) 'Levels' sub category of "4. Levels and Moors". The SLA identifies the nearby Polden Hills area, through which the Gravity Link Road passes, as being within the "Polden Hills" a sub-category of "6. Lowland Hills" (**Figure 14.4, Appendix 14.1**). The Polden Hills elevated nature results in the two landscape character areas being inextricably linked in both landscape and visual terms. In view of this any development proposals need to be mindful of the different landscape type characteristics and their sensitivities.

14.3.18 Under a section entitled "Sensitivity to visual impact and the capacity for new development/key principles for new development" (pg 47, para 4.63) the SLA states:

"The opportunity for screening of new low level development as viewed from other areas at low elevation means that capacity for development in the Levels is often higher than in many other areas of the District. This is, however, dependent on the extent of existing tree cover or potential for this to be reinforced by new planting. Sites which lie close to the higher ground and view corridors such as the ridge of the Polden Hills will also need to take account of views from these vantage points."

14.3.19 Given the Site's relationship with the adjacent Polden Hills these points are particularly relevant to any development strategy for the Site.

The Sedgemoor District Council Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)

14.3.20 The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy states the following objectives:

- *GI1: To maximise opportunities to deliver a multi-functional GI network;*
- *GI2: to protect and enhance the District's distinct landscapes, including mitigating the impact of major infrastructure and development; and*
- *GI3: To protect and enhance the natural environment, including biodiversity, greenspace and water."* (page 5)

14.3.21 It recognises the 'Puriton Energy Centre' as a 'proposed/potential project' (which is later reflected in the 2017 Planning Consent as a safeguarded use) and recognises the '*scope for additional activities on Site including leisure and open spaces for recreation'* (page 24)

14.4 Consultation

14.4.1 Consultation with SDC's landscape officer on the assessment methodology has been on going from project inception in 2020. These discussions focused initially around agreeing the Photographic Viewpoints for the assessment, which were approved in writing in June 2021 (email dated 28 June 2021), along with the viewpoints selected for photomontage. The Local Landscape Character Areas which were identified following both desktop and field studies to facilitate a detailed assessment of likely changes to landscape character were later agreed with the Landscape Officer/Service Manager subject to some minor adjustments requested through email and telephone conversations on 21 September 2021.

14.4.2 Officers from the Quantocks and the Mendips Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) were also consulted during July 2021. The outcome of these discussions, agreed the photographic locations and attracted no further comments from the Quantocks officer in an email dated 20 July 2021 which confirms they have "*no specific comments to make on the proposal as it is considered that the site is too far from the Hills to have any significant impact on the AONB*". In an email dated 3 August 2021, the Mendips AONB officer agreed that Representative Viewpoint Q: Walkers on Cross Plain within the Mendip Hills AONB was acceptable and suggested consideration of two other viewpoint locations within the AONB (along the PRoW that traverses Draycott Sleights, or on the West Mendip Way). These were considered during a visit in August 2021 to the locations, however, it was decided that the Viewpoint Q remained the most appropriate location from which to consider overall effects on receptors within the AONB.

14.4.3 The Scoping Opinion notes that Heritage Landscapes (which qualify for conditional exemption from capital taxes on the grounds of outstanding scenic, scientific or historic interest and are listed on the HMRC website) should be considered within the LVIA. There are only two of those listed for Somerset within the study area of the Site, which are located as follows:

- East Quantoxhead Estate (site 22) – this lies at the foot of Quantocks on the edge of study area at more than 15 km distant from the Site but outside of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, and therefore no changes to views are anticipated;
- Fairfield Estate (site 25) – this lies at Stogursey approximately 15 km distant from the Site on the edge of the study area but outside of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility and therefore no changes to views are anticipated.

As a consequence, effects on Heritage Landscapes have been scoped out of this LVIA.

14.4.4 In addition, the Scoping Opinion notes that measures should be taken to '*ensure the building design will be of a high standard, as well as detail of layout alternatives together with justification of the selected option in terms of landscape impact and benefit*'. Details of layout alternatives are included in section 3.5, **chapter 3** of the ES. The Parameter plans and Design Guide provide the structure to inform and commit the developer to high quality building design at detailed design stage.

14.4.5 The Scoping Opinion notes that there are a number of PRoW in the vicinity of the Site, and one of these passes within the Site, across the Gravity Link Road. However, since the LVIA considers a baseline of 2032, and the Gravity Link Road is considered as part of the baseline, PRoW have been scoped out of this LVIA.

14.4.6 There has been ongoing consultation throughout the iterative design process undertaken through the LDO Delivery Group and Environment Sub Group which has focussed on landscape and visual issues, leading to the development of the Strategic landscape parameter plan and providing input to the Design Guide. Refer to Section 3.5 Consideration of Alternatives.

14.5 Methodology

14.5.1 The methodology for undertaking the LVIA follows the guidelines set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA 3) (2013).

14.5.2 Additional guidance is taken from the following publications:

- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment – October 2014. Christine Tudor;
- Landscape Institute Technical Advice Note 01/2017 (Revised): Tranquillity – An Overview, March 2017; and
- Landscape Institute TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals.

14.5.3 The aim of these guidelines is to set high standards for the scope and content of landscape and visual assessments and to establish certain principles that would help to achieve consistency, credibility and effectiveness in landscape and visual impact assessment. Guidance is contained in these publications on some approaches and techniques which have been found to be effective and useful in practice by landscape professionals. However, the guidelines are not intended as a prescriptive set of rules or as an exhaustive manual of techniques.

Study Area

14.5.4 The LVIA will examine the following as separate, although linked, considerations:

- Landscape effects; derived from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may, in turn, affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.
- Visual effects; related to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and to the overall effects on visual amenity value of the views from surrounding uses.

14.5.5 The study area for visual effects is based on a combination of the extents of the desktop study; the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, and fieldwork to establish the actual extent of views on the ground. In this case, views of the Site are available, albeit distantly, from the Mendips and Quantocks AONBs, located approximately 15 km and 17 km away respectively. Refer to **Figure 14.9 and 14.10, Appendix 14.1**.

14.5.6 The study area for landscape effects is 5 km, with a more detailed study of local landscape character concentrated within 2 km of the Site. Refer to **Figure 14.4 and 14.5, Appendix 14.1**.

Baseline Data Collection

14.5.7 The landscape and visual receptors have been selected based on those identified for the 2017 ES. They have been locally adjusted in places, in order to record changes in the state of the environment since that time, and anticipated changes in baseline conditions up to 2032 (refer to **Chapter 5** for a full explanation of the 2032 baseline).

14.5.8 A 'bare earth' Zone of Theoretical Visibility Study (ZTV)[2] was used to check whether the predicted visual envelope of the Proposed Development had changed since 2017, and although, as anticipated, some changes were evident, generally, additional viewpoints were not considered necessary, with the exception of a single view at East Huntspill. One view was omitted within Puriton due to the baseline presence of the Gravity Link Road, and one at Glastonbury Tor in consultation with SDC due to its considerable distance from the Site.

14.5.9 Desktop studies provided the broad scale landscape character baseline that is set out in the SLA. However, in order to facilitate the consideration of potential changes to landscape character at a detailed scale, a number of local landscape character areas were identified during field study work. These have been largely based on the Local Landscape Character Areas identified for the 2017 ES, with adjustments to record localised changes in the state of the environment since that time.

14.5.10 A 2032 baseline will be used as a basis for the assessment. This baseline has been compiled with reference to:

- The current landscape and visual conditions of the study area;
- The 2017 Planning Consent, including planting proposals with 11 years of growth (planting has been assumed to be completed in winter 2021);
- The 2021 Arboricultural Survey (**Appendix 14.4**); and
- The Approved Developments (**Appendices 1.3 & 1.4**).

14.5.11 It should be noted that whilst the 2017 Planning Consent was granted for the Huntspill Energy Park, the safeguarded land uses were also considered and assessed cumulatively in the Environmental Statement. The safeguarded land uses included some very large scale industrial elements and stacks up to 105 metres high, and although these elements did not obtain planning permission at that time, they illustrate the intention that some large scale elements could be considered.

Sensitive Receptors

14.5.12 The LVIA methodology including the scales used for assessing value and susceptibility to change to identify the likely sensitivity of receptors is derived from GLVIA3 and is largely the same as that used in the 2017 assessment, with some small adjustments to reflect the changes in published guidance and updated to current best practice.

14.5.13 The methodology follows the approach stated in relation to the assessment of the significance of landscape and visual effects, which is defined in paragraph 3.23 in GLVIA 3 *"… an evidence-based process combined with professional judgement. It is important that the basis of such judgements is transparent and understandable, so that the underlying assumptions and reasoning can be understood by others*" (LI and IEMA, 2013). Levels of

[2] A more detailed methodology explaining the mechanics of the ZTV is included within **Appendix 14.2**

landscape and visual effects are determined by consideration of the 'sensitivity' of each receptor or group of receptors and the nature or 'magnitude' of the effect that would result from the Proposed Development.

14.5.14 The assessments reported in the LVIA represent the culmination of an iterative design and assessment process and therefore relate to the remaining residual effects that could not otherwise be mitigated or 'designed out'.

Defining Receptor Sensitivity

14.5.15 The sensitivity of receptors is derived from a combination of their susceptibility to the specific change brought forward by the Proposed Development and their value.

14.5.16 The value of landscape receptors or viewpoints will be considered in line with the criteria identified in **Tables 14.1 and 14.2** below:

Value		Explanation
Very High	Elements	Landscape with highly valued physical attributes/elements (eg mature trees and woodlands), possibly rare, in good condition, which makes a strong positive contribution to the landscape character and sense of place and which would not be replaceable.
	Character	Highly valued landscape in good condition which makes a strong positive contribution to the landscape character over a wide area and which would not be replaceable. Highly valued landscape which makes a very important contribution to/plays a strong role in the approach to and/or setting of a designated and/or recognised historic settlement or heritage asset.
	Designation	Landscapes with characteristics and attributes that have been identified as of national significance. Landscapes which may be recognised through formal designation e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) or containing attributes of these recognised landscapes. Areas of recognised high cultural and/or historic value.
High	Elements	Landscape with highly valued physical attributes/elements (e.g. mature woodlands and/or trees) in fair condition or moderately valued elements (e.g. trees that contribute less positively to the local landscape) in good condition that make a positive contribution to local character and sense of place and that would take some considerable time to replace.
	Character	Highly valued landscape in fair condition or moderately valued landscape in good condition which makes strong positive contribution to landscape character and could be replaced and/or mitigated within medium to long term. Landscape which makes some positive contribution to landscape character and would take considerable time to replace and/or would be likely to be adversely affected, by the type of change being proposed.

		Highly valued landscape which makes an important contribution to/plays a strong role in the approach to and/or setting of a recognised historic settlement or heritage asset.
	Designation	Landscapes with characteristics of national, or regional significance, not in the highest condition. Areas of recognised cultural and/or historic value.
Medium	Elements	Commonplace, moderately valued landscape elements and features in fair condition which make some positive contribution to the landscape character and sense of place. Elements are replaceable but maturity would take some time e.g. trees that contribute less positively to the local landscape or hedgerows that contribute to the area but could be replaced over time.
	Character	Moderately valued landscape in fair condition which makes some positive contribution to the local landscape character. Elements are replaceable but their replacement would take some time. Valued landscape which makes a moderately important contribution to/plays a moderate role in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.
	Designation	Landscapes with characteristics and attributes which have been identified to be of regional or local significance and are in good condition. These landscapes may be recognised through formal local authority designation or contain attributes of similar locally designated landscapes. Areas with some features of cultural and/or historic value.
Low	Elements	Commonplace landscape elements of limited/low value which are in poor condition but still make a moderate contribution to the site but not the wider landscape. Elements that would be easily replaceable eg. a gapped hedgerow or a hedge that would easily be replaceable.
	Character	Landscape elements of moderate local value which make a limited/focused contribution to a relatively small landscape/area or landscape elements of limited/low value in a poor condition but which nevertheless could be treated such that they would make a positive contribution to the surrounding landscape e.g. broken or gapped hedgerows in larger networks of fields and hedgerows but would be filled and integrity retrieved. Landscape which makes a minor contribution to/plays some role in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.

	Designation	Landscape/features valued at a community level, perhaps through their contribution to setting or their recreational value, but not necessarily recognised through any formal designation. Areas with few features of cultural and/or historic value.
Very Low	Elements	Landscape elements of low value and in a poor condition that make little contribution to the site and the surrounding landscape. Features and elements that are incongruous, derelict or in decline, resulting in indistinct character with little or no sense of place.
	Character	Landscape elements of limited/low value which may be in poor condition and do not contribute notably to the surrounding landscape. Elements would be easily replaceable. Landscape does not make a contribution to/play a part in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.
	Designation	Landscapes not covered by a local or national designation for landscape with very few locally valued features present Areas with few, if any, features of cultural and/or historic value.

Table 14.1 Landscape Receptor Value Criteria

Value	Explanation
Very High	Views of landscape recognised for its intrinsic qualities and scenic beauty, likely to be internationally or nationally designated, or heritage assets where visual setting is key. Views from popular viewpoints, e.g hillforts, look-out points. Views may be recognised or referred to in guide books, maps or references to the view/landscape in literature and art. Views with few overt or intrusive or detracting elements in the view.
High	May include views of landscapes which are nationally or locally designated for their various qualities and scenic beauty but the view may include some manmade detracting elements. View may include heritage assets where visual setting is a consideration. May include views from designated/national trails or named recreational paths. Views may be recognised or referred to in local guide books and local literature.
Medium	Views valued at regional or local level, which may be recognised in local guide books/tourist maps or referred in local literature. A view with some scenic quality (this may include views across or within a locally designated landscape) There are some overt intrusive manmade elements in the view.

Low	A view with low scenic quality. There may be a number of overt or intrusive human elements already in the view. Unlikely to be recognised through local designation or appear in local guidebooks/ tourist maps & guides.
Very Low	A view with low scenic quality. Likely to be views which are transient or within a degraded landscape and there are existing degraded elements in the landscape. Not situated with or alongside an area designated for its landscape character or visual amenity and with no recognition in local guidebooks/tourist maps & guides.

Table 14.2 Viewpoint Value Criteria

14.5.17 The susceptibility of a landscape receptor is defined as its susceptibility to accommodate the proposed type of development. Any 'inherent' or 'intrinsic' sensitivities ascribed to a particular landscape through designation or characterisation will not have accounted for a specific type of development. The professional judgement about the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific change will be recorded in the text.

14.5.18 The susceptibility of a visual receptor to the change in a view is a result of their occupation or activity combined with the extent to which their attention is focussed on the view. The table below sets out the considerations which may be taken into account when assessing susceptibility. The professional judgement applied will be clearly outlined in the text. The susceptibility to change of landscape receptors or viewpoints will be considered in line with the criteria identified in **Tables 14.3 and 14.4** below:

Susceptibility	Explanation
Very High	The receptor is unable to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer very limited opportunities for accommodating the change without those key characteristics being detrimentally altered. Key landscape elements and/or characteristics that would be adversely affected by the type of development that is proposed and would not be able to be replaced or would take a considerable time to replace (e.g. Mature trees/woodland).
High	The receptor would have difficulty in accommodating the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer limited opportunities for accommodating the change without those key characteristics being detrimentally altered. Key landscape elements and/or characteristics that would be adversely affected by the type of development that is proposed and would take a considerable time to replace (e.g. Mature/semi mature trees/woodland).
Medium	The receptor is partly able to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer some opportunities for accommodating the change without those key characteristics being detrimentally altered. Key landscape elements and/or characteristics that would be adversely affected by the type of development that is proposed but could be replaced over time. (e.g. young trees/woodland).

Low	The receptor is more able to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape are resilient to being changed whilst other elements in the landscape may benefit from change where these are at contrast to the existing general landscape character. Key landscape elements and/or characteristics that would be adversely affected by the type of development that is proposed but would be replaceable in the short to medium term. (e.g. Recently planted trees/hedgerows).
Very Low	The receptor is able to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape are resilient to being changed whilst other elements in the landscape may benefit from change where these are at contrast to the existing general landscape character. Key landscape elements and/or characteristics that would be adversely affected by the type of development that is proposed and would be easily replaceable (e.g. Features in very poor condition).

Table 14.3 Landscape Susceptibility Criteria

Susceptibility	Explanation
Very High	Viewers whose occupation or activity is such that the view being experienced is likely to be the focus of their attention or interest: and Viewers with prolonged viewing opportunities. Examples may include residents whose outlook forms a key component of their day to day lives, or visitors to attractions known for their particular views or visual setting.
High	Viewers whose occupation or activity is such that the view being experienced is likely form a point of interest: and Viewers whose viewing opportunity may be 'broken' or interrupted. Examples may include local residents, visitors to recognised attractions or those using recognised scenic routes.
Medium	Viewers with a moderate awareness of their surroundings and whose occupation is such that while they may appreciate the view, it would not be fundamental to the satisfaction of the viewers' activity. Examples may include those using local footpaths, transport routes, residents with views from rooms not normally occupied during waking hours.
Low	Viewers with a passing awareness of and limited interest in their surroundings, and for whom the view is likely to play a minimal role to the satisfaction of their occupation or activity; and Views which are incidental to the activities of the visual receptors. Examples may include people at their place of work, those engaged in outdoor recreation that does not depend on appreciation of the view or those travelling at speed.

Very Low	Viewers with a minimal awareness of or interest in their surroundings, and for whom the view is unlikely to play any meaningful role in their occupation or activity. Such views are likely to only be incidental to those activities taking place. Examples may include people at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity and not on their surroundings.

Table 14.4 Susceptibility of Visual Receptors Criteria

14.5.19 Landscape and visual sensitivity are assessed through *'combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape'* (GLVIA 3 para 5.39). **Table 14.5 and 14.6** below sets out typical examples. The application of professional judgement regarding the sensitivity of the landscape receptors will be clearly outlined within the assessment.

Sensitivity	Typical Examples
Very High	Highly valued landscapes, which by their nature would be unable to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be: • Landscapes of national significance, likely to be recognised through formal designation e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) or containing attributes of these recognised landscapes; • Landscapes with highly valued physical attributes/elements and/or characteristics possibly rare, in good condition which make a strong positive contribution to the landscape character and sense of place and could not be replaced or would take some considerable time to replace e.g. Mature woodlands or trees; • Areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and • Highly valued landscapes which make a very important contribution to/play a strong role in the approach to and/or setting of a designated and/or recognised historic settlement or heritage asset.
High	Highly valued landscapes, which by their nature would be less able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be: • Landscapes of national or regional significance, not in the highest condition, which may to be recognised through formal designation e.g. National Parks, AONBs Local Landscape Designation or containing attributes of these recognised landscapes; • Highly valued landscape with some demonstrable physical attributes/elements and/or characteristics (mature woodlands and/or trees) in fair condition or moderately valued elements (eg trees that contribute less positively to the local landscape) in good condition that make a positive contribution to local character and sense of place and that would take some considerable time to replace; • Areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and • Highly valued landscapes which makes an important contribution to/plays a strong role in the approach to and/or setting of a recognised historic settlement or heritage asset.

Medium	Landscapes, which by their nature would be partly able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be: • Landscapes which are unlikely to be nationally designated, but may be locally designated; • Moderately valued landscape with relatively few physical attributes/elements and/or characteristics which lift the landscape above the ordinary. The elements/ characteristics are in in fair condition, which are replaceable but this may take some time; • Areas containing some features of value thorough use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and • Valued landscapes which make a moderately important contribution to/plays a moderate role in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.
Low	Landscapes, which by their nature would be more able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be: • Landscapes which are unlikely to be designated; • Landscape with commonplace elements/characteristics in poor condition, which may be easily replaceable or repaired; • Areas containing few, if any, features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and • Landscapes which make a minor contribution to/plays some role in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.
Very Low	Landscapes, which by their nature would be able to accommodate the type of change proposed. Typical examples may be: • Landscapes which are not designated; • Landscapes with elements/characteristics in poor condition and may be discordant, derelict or in decline and which may be easily replaced; • Areas containing few, if any, features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and • Landscapes which do not make a contribution to/play a part in the approach to and/or setting of a settlement or heritage asset.

Table 14.5 Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity	Explanation
Very High	Viewers who are very sensitive/highly attuned to their surroundings with a prolonged intact viewing opportunity of the landscape. Views are likely to be of internationally or nationally designated landscapes or heritage assets. Views may be recognised in art or literature and noted in guide books: Examples may include: • Visitors to recognised viewpoints/look-out points such as hillforts; • Visitors to heritage assets of which visual setting is a key component; • Walkers/Riders using national trails through nationally designated landscapes; • Motorists using recognised 'scenic' routes; and • Residents whose properties have been orientated to take advantage of a view, and/ or for whom the view comprises a key component of their daily lives.
High	Viewers who are highly attuned to their surroundings but their interest and viewing opportunity may not be prolonged but broken or interrupted. Views may be of nationally or locally designated landscape or of heritage assets and may be noted in local guide books and recognised in art and literature. Examples may include: • Walkers/Riders using national trails or popular footpaths/Bridleways; • Visitors to some heritage assets; • Motorists travelling through high quality landscapes; and • Local residents who may be able to see the view from rooms normally occupied during waking hours.
Medium	Viewers with a moderate awareness of their surroundings and whose occupation is such that while they may appreciate the view, it would not be fundamental to the satisfaction of the viewers' activity. Views may be of a locally designated landscape or a heritage asset, but it is unlikely to figure in guidebooks, art or literature. Examples may include: • Less well used public footpaths/bridleways; • Travellers on local roads through a moderate quality landscape; and • Local residents with views from rooms not normally occupied during waking hours.
Low	Viewers with a passing awareness and limited interest in their surroundings. Views unlikely to be of designated landscape or noted in guidebooks, art or literature. Views may have a number of overt or intrusive elements. Examples may include: • People engaged in outdoor recreation/sport which does not depend upon the appreciation of the view; • People at their place of work; and • Travellers on fast moving roads.

Very Low	Viewers with a passing awareness and limited interest/focus in their surroundings. Views not designated or noted in guidebooks, art or literature. Views of a degraded landscape with a number of overt or intrusive elements: Examples may include: • People at their place of work; and • Travellers on fast moving roads with only transient views.

Table 14.6 Visual Sensitivity Criteria

14.5.20 The experience of visual receptors at the viewpoints shown on accompanying **Figures 14.9-14.28, Appendix 14.1** will form the basis of the visual assessment, listed below as follows:

- Representative Viewpoints A & B: Motorists on M5 and motorists and pedestrians on Batch Road to the west of the Site;
- Representative Viewpoint C: Motorists on the new Gravity Link Road/motorists on Woolavington Road;
- Representative Viewpoint D: Motorists on Woolavington Road;
- Representative Viewpoints E & F: Motorists on the Causeway and walkers at the Causeway Car Park;
- Representative Viewpoint G: Residents in and around East Huntspill
- Representative Viewpoint H: Walkers on Footpath BW 28/2 and residents at the eastern edge of Puriton;
- Representative Viewpoint I: Walkers and horse riders on Bitham Lane bridleway (no. BW 28/1) along the Polden Hills Ridge;
- Representative Viewpoint J: Motorists and pedestrians on Hillside;
- Representative Viewpoint K: Motorists, walkers and residents of Woolavington;
- Representative Viewpoint L: Residents and motorists on the A39 and the Gravity Link Road;
- Representative Viewpoints M: Motorists on Bristol Road and residents of Pawlett;
- Representative Viewpoint N: Walkers/Bird Watchers in Steart (England Coast Path/River Parret Trail Long Distance Trail No BW25/3);
- Representative Viewpoint O: Walkers on Lydeard Hill within the Quantock Hills AONB;
- Illustrative Viewpoint P: People to the south of the Polden Hills (including residents, motorists, walkers);
- Representative Viewpoint Q: Walkers on Cross Plain within the Mendip Hills AONB; and
- Specific Viewpoint R: Walkers on Brent Knoll.

14.5.21 A Lighting Impact Assessment has been provided in **Appendix 14.5** in order to consider the baseline night time context of the Site and effects on night time views.

Assessment of Significance

14.5.22 The approach adopted to defining significance is noted in this section. Although based on the generic significance criteria for the ES, the thresholds noted in the generic significance criteria have been adapted for this chapter as a result of:

- Reference to discipline specific criteria such as protected landscapes;
- Consultation with consultees;
- Comparison with experience on similar projects elsewhere; and
- Experience and professional judgement of the specialist assessor.
- This corresponds with the approach set out and agreed through EIA Scoping.

Magnitude of Effect

14.5.23 Effects may be beneficial, neutral (no change), or adverse, direct, indirect or secondary, cumulative, permanent or temporary, or extending over different time frames (short, medium or long term). They can also arise at different scales, (local, district, county, regional or national) and have different levels of significance (Substantial through to Negligible/No Effect).

14.5.24 The assessment of effects aims to:

- Identify logically and clearly the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development;
- Identify the value related to the receptor, its susceptibility to change and the resulting nature/sensitivity of the receptor;
- Identify the scale/size, duration and 'reversibility' of the effect and the resulting 'magnitude of effect';
- Provide an assessment of the nature and significance of these effects in a logical and well-reasoned fashion; and
- Indicate the measures proposed to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for these effects (mitigation measures).

14.5.25 While tables and matrices may be used to support and summarise the assessment, the emphasis in this assessment will be on descriptive text describing the predicted landscape and visual effects with logical, well-reasoned judgements about their significance. Consideration is given to the effects during the short, medium and long term.

14.5.26 Year 1 is taken to be when the entire development is completed (i.e. 2032). Each of the photographic viewpoints chosen for photomontages have two images. The first at Year 1, when the entire development is completed, the second at Year 15 (i.e. 2047).

14.5.27 The approach taken in defining the magnitude of effect brought about by introducing a development on the landscape character is presented in the table below. Landscape characteristics may include landform, scale, field patterns, vegetation, buildings and other features of the landscape which combine to give an area its overall character.

Sensitivity	Explanation
Very High	The proposed development would lead to an extensive or widespread, irreversible complete alteration of existing landscape character/elements with large scale new features and elements; The addition of new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing highly conspicuous and uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
High	The proposed development would lead to a notable but not extensive change to existing landscape character/elements over a wide area or an intensive change over a more limited area; The addition of new but uncharacteristic prominent features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing highly uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
Medium	The proposed development would lead to a partial change to existing landscape character/elements which may be partially reversible; The addition of new but uncharacteristic noticeable features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing moderately uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
Low	The proposed development would lead to a small or relatively localised change in the existing landscape character/elements; The addition of new but uncharacteristic perceptible features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing perceptibly uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
Very Low	A negligible, potentially reversible change in existing landscape character or landscape elements.
None	No Change.

Table 14.7: Magnitude of Effect - Landscape Criteria

14.5.28 The magnitude of effect likely to be brought about by the Proposed Development on visual amenity will be assessed using the following magnitude of effect criteria:

Sensitivity	Explanation
Very High	The proposed development would result in a complete alteration to the characteristics of the view such that post development the existing view would be completely changed; The addition of new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/or replacement of existing highly conspicuous and uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
High	The proposed development would result in a change in the view such that it becomes the key influence and focus in the view; The addition of new and obvious uncharacteristic features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/ or replacement of existing uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
Medium	The proposed development is clearly visible in the view and forms an important but not defining element of the view. The feature may integrate partially; The addition of new and noticeable uncharacteristic features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/or replacement of existing moderately uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
Low	The proposed development is visible, but forms a small element and minor alteration in the view and integrates well with existing landscape/features; Slight change to the existing character or features and elements; The addition of new but perceptible uncharacteristic features and elements (adverse change); The removal, restoration and/or replacement of existing perceptibly uncharacteristic features and elements (beneficial change).
Very Low	The proposed development may go unnoticed as a small element in the view, or is not readily visible.
None	No change.

Table 14.8 Magnitude of Effect - Visual Criteria

Significance of Effect

14.5.29 The landscape and visual sensitivity of receptors is identified using a five point scale from 'Very High' to 'Very Low' and this is then combined with magnitude of effect to arrive at a predicted level of effect.

14.5.30 The following chart for predicting levels of effect on landscape and visual receptors is provided, based on industry best practice:

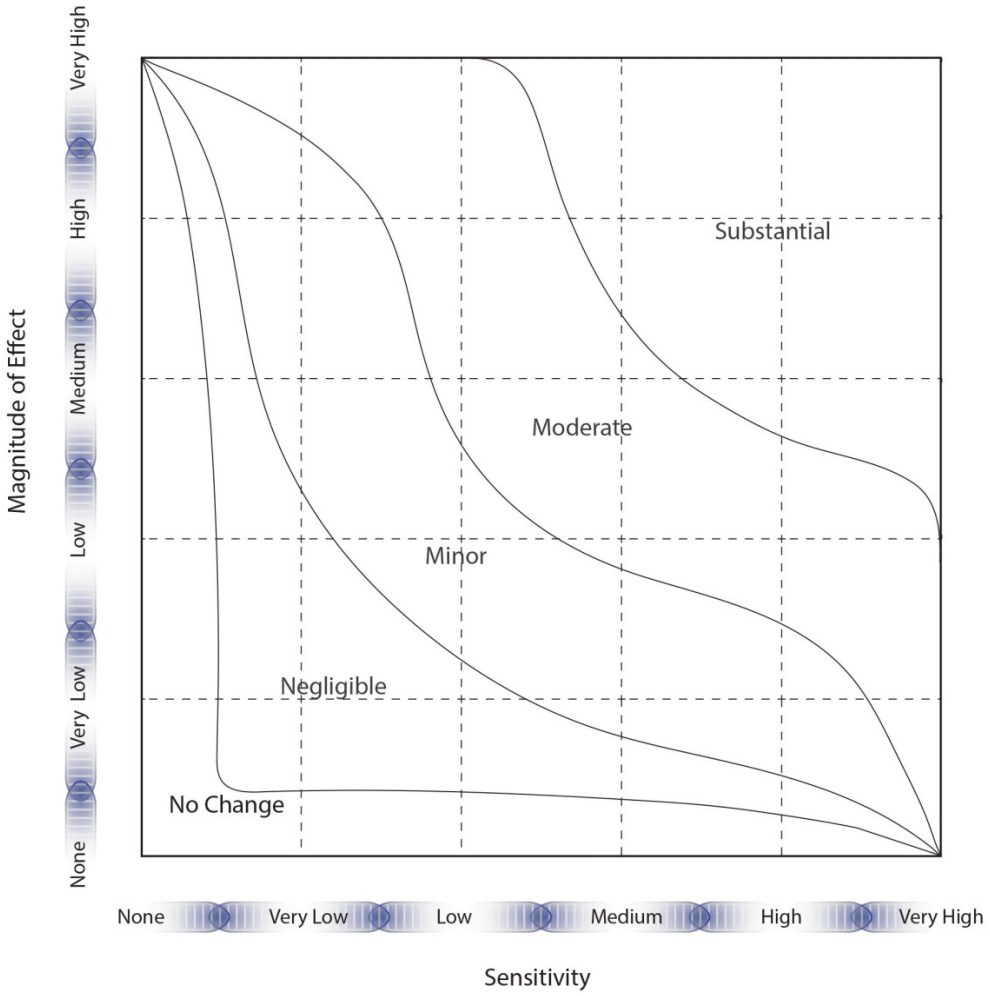


Table 14.9 Significance of Effects Table

Definition of Effects

14.5.31 The following tables identify the criteria for levels of effect on landscape and visual receptors:

Table 14.10: Description of Levels of Effect on Landscape Receptors	
Substantial Adverse	The development would: • Cause a major deterioration to the quality and character of the existing landscape resource; • Be at considerable variance with the character of the existing landscape; • Degrade or lose the integrity of characteristic features or elements; • Damage or lose the sense of place or local distinctiveness of the area;
Moderate Adverse	The development would: • Cause a noticeable deterioration to the quality and character of the existing landscape resource; • Conflict with the character of the existing landscape; • Have a negative impact on some characteristic features or elements; • Diminish the sense of place or local distinctiveness of the area;
Minor Adverse	The development would: • Cause some deterioration to the quality and character of the existing landscape resource; • Not wholly fit with the character of the landscape; • Be at slight variance with the existing characteristic features or elements; • Slightly detract from the sense of place or local distinctiveness of the area;
Negligible	The development would: • Give rise to no discernible change to the quality and character of the identified landscape resource; • Maintain the character of the landscape/ townscape; • Complement/ blend in with the existing characteristic features or elements; • Retain the sense of place or local distinctiveness of the area.
No Change	
Minor Beneficial	The development would: • Complement and give rise to a perceptible improvement in the quality and character of the identified landscape resource. • Maintain and/or enhance the existing characteristic features or elements; • Enable some of the sense of place or local distinctiveness of the area to be restored.
Moderate Beneficial	The development would: • Give rise to a noticeable improvement in the quality and character of the identified landscape resource; • Enable the creation, repair, conservation and/or restoration of characteristic features or elements partially lost or diminished as a result of inappropriate management or prior development;

	• Enable the sense of place or local distinctiveness of the area to be restored.
Substantial Beneficial	The development would: • Greatly enhance and give rise to a major improvement to the quality and character of the identified landscape resource; • Enable the creation, repair, conservation and/or restoration of characteristic features or elements lost or harmed as a result of inappropriate management or prior development; • Greatly enhance/reinstate the sense of place or local distinctiveness of the area.

Table 14.11: Description of Levels of Effect on Visual Receptors	
Substantial Adverse	The development would: • Cause a large deterioration in the existing view and visual amenity of the receptor.
Moderate Adverse	The development would: • Cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view and visual amenity of the receptor.
Minor Adverse	The development would: • Cause a barely perceptible deterioration in the existing view and visual amenity of the receptor.
Negligible	The development would: • Cause no discernible deterioration or improvement to the existing view or visual amenity of the receptor.
No Change	
Minor Beneficial	The development would: • Cause a barely perceptible improvement in the existing view or visual amenity of the receptor.
Moderate Beneficial	The development would: • Cause a noticeable improvement in the existing view and visual amenity of the receptor.
Substantial Beneficial	The development would: • Cause a large improvement in the existing view and visual amenity of the receptor.

14.5.32 Significance is strongly linked to context and scale. For example, whilst a development may be 'significant' to a visual receptor in a nearby single secluded house, the effect may not be 'significant' when considering a larger series of residential receptors further away. Similarly the loss of trees which are a local feature may be considered 'significant' locally, but of little or no significance to larger character areas within which the trees sit. In addition, whilst an effect may be 'significant', it does not necessarily follow that it would be unacceptable or regarded as an 'undue consequence' (GLVIA3 para 5.40). Whether or not an effect is 'significant' will be assessed for each receptor. In this case, levels of effect of Moderate to Substantial will be considered 'Significant' in EIA terms, and those of Minor to No Change considered 'Not Significant'.

Limitations

14.5.33 Whilst a useful tool in understanding the Site, assuming a 2032 baseline presents some limitations for landscape and visual studies, since both are dynamic concepts, subject to vegetation growth, and with it, corresponding changes to appearance and character. In this case, the viewpoint photography was carried out in 2021, with 2032 wireline images produced for those views selected for photomontage based on information from the 2017 Planning Consent and the Approved Developments (**Appendix 1.3 & 1.4** in Volume 2 of this ES).

14.5.34 It is recognised that a project of this scale may come forward in a number of phases and over many years, and in addition to this, the assessment is to be based on a 2032 baseline. This presents a limitation when assessing effects at Construction and Operation (Year 1 and Year 15), given that it is anticipated that construction will be ongoing on some phases while others may have been completed for some time, due to the market-led nature of the Proposed Development. Phasing will be addressed in the assessment to the extent that this is possible in the context of information available at the time, with regard to effects resulting from the construction programme. Given this uncertainty we assess the Operational Effects at Year 1 and Year 15, as would normally be expected in an LVIA, to allow for the maturing of newly planted vegetation, and enable the Proposed Development to achieve its design aspirations but recognise that this is potentially a simplification of the reality.

Assumptions in the Preparation of the 2032 Baseline

14.5.35 For the baseline 2032, in agreement with the arboricultural consultant's advice, it is assumed that tree growth for the planting proposals as part of the 2017 Planning Consent would be approximately 6-10m in the 11 years from 2021 to 2032. For existing vegetation present on the Site in 2021, tree growth would be assumed to be approximately 7.5-8m in 11 years, to a maximum height of 21 m, although in reality some species could be taller.

Assumptions for the Proposed Development

14.5.36 For stacks and flues, given that the final details of stacks and flues is unconfirmed at this stage, our working assumption is that they would be located on the large commercial unit(s) and the EON site. There are two scenarios within the assessment; stack heights of up to 10 m above the height of the commercial unit(s) are normally required in such facilities, however, in some, exceptional circumstances, stacks of up to 25 m are required, plus or minus 2 m from existing ground level. Therefore, it is assumed that 10 m stack heights are the most likely but 25 m are also assessed, plus or minus 2 m from existing ground level. (as shown on the building heights plan). The number of stacks cannot be fixed at this stage. It is assumed that stacks would include a medium intensity red aviation light located as close as possible to the top of the structure.

14.5.37 In agreement with the arboricultural consultant's advice, tree growth within structure planting is assumed to be between 8-11.5m in 15 years.

14.6 Baseline Conditions

Current State of the Environment

14.6.1 The following descriptions consider the Site in its current form at the time of writing in 2021, which includes the new Gravity Link Road, Site remediation and ecological enhancements. Refer to **Figures 14.1 – 14.29, Appendix 14.1**.

Landscape Context

14.6.2 The Site lies approximately 2 km to the east of Junction 23 of the M5 motorway, approximately 0.5 km to the north of the village of Puriton, 6 km to the north east of the town of Bridgwater, Somerset (See **Figure 14.1 and 14.2, Appendix 14.1**). The majority of the Site sits at a level of between approximately 4.5 to 7.3 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the foot of the Polden Hills in the low lying landscape of Somerset, although the southernmost part rises up towards the Woolavington Road. The corridor for the Gravity Link Road lies on rising ground to the south of Puriton connecting with the A39 at a level of approximately 37 m AOD. Despite the influence of the nearby motorway, the landscape setting of the Site is largely rural, however the villages of Puriton and Woolavington are urban in nature and as such may better be described as 'townscape'. For simplicity, this assessment uses the term 'landscape' throughout in order to describe the setting of the Proposed Development. **Figure 14.3, Appendix 14.1** illustrates the landscape planning context of the Site.

LDO Site Description

14.6.3 The Site is made up of a number of elements relating to the former Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) whose limits are defined by a 2.4 m high security fence, a number of agricultural fields, a reed bed, a 'borrow pit' fishing lake, the Site entrance area, and spurs from the main body of the Site which include a section of disused railway line to the north, and the Gravity Link Road running from the A39 to the south of Puriton to meet the Woolavington Road. Refer to **Figure 14.2, Appendix 14.1**.

14.6.4 The current state of the environment on the Site is in a transitional stage, with the majority of demolition and remediation works completed in November 2020 within the former ROF, and the Gravity Link Road corridor works largely complete, although without planting at the time of writing in Summer 2021. In addition, the route of the T-pylons on the Hinkley Connection Project runs through the Site's south eastern corner, and temporary works associated with this construction project are present both on the Site and in the surrounding landscape at the time of writing. The current state of the environment on the Site and its immediate vicinity in 2021 is considered to include the Gravity Link Road corridor (minus planting proposals), the majority of the remediation on the Site completed, the removal of the existing north-south pylon run, and its replacement with the new Hinkley T-pylons.

Description of Former ROF within the ROF fence

14.6.5 The main body of the central part of the Site consists of the former ROF, which ceased to be operational in 2008. Since its closure the Site has been subject to an ongoing decommissioning and decontamination process which started in 2010. This has included the lifting of defunct railway track, the removal of a number of industrial buildings and plant, the removal of buildings within the blast mounds and the mounds themselves and removal of some vegetation. This decommissioning and demolition work has been undertaken in accordance with the 2011 planning permission for the remediation works, and the majority is now complete.

14.6.6 In 2021, this area is generally flat at between approximately 5-6 m AOD following recent levelling as part of remediation works, with the exception of a landscape feature on the western boundary, which is comprised of a bund which has been colonised by self seeded

vegetation. Although historically this area was relatively flat, and crossed by a network of ditches, the ROF topographical features consisted of numerous 4-6 m high, grass covered munitions storage/blast mounds, varying in height between 4.5 and 7.3 m AOD. However, these have largely been levelled at the time of writing, with only one remaining.

14.6.7 The ROF came into existence in the late 1930's to manufacture armaments. The internal road system was broadly laid out in a manner which retained and respected the existing network of ditches that typify the low lying landscape of Somerset. These ditches remain largely in existence and have been cleared as part of the remediation process. The main industrial plant buildings and acid processing apparatus were situated in the central portion of the Site astride a north south spine road (Main Road). They comprised of a series of large sheds, tanks, chimneys and external pipes, several rising to three or more storeys in height. These buildings have now been removed leaving the area with a derelict character.

14.6.8 There are currently three access points to the Site; the new roundabout junction with Woolavington Road connecting to the Gravity Link Road, the old southern entrance gate from the Woolavington Road which leads directly towards Main Road, and a single lane gravel track to the east of the Site, with an asphalt bellmouth junction onto the Causeway. There is a gravel perimeter track adjacent to the ROF security fence, and there are two other gates in the fence to access the railway corridor, and the reed beds.

14.6.9 There is a considerable amount of mature vegetation on Site as illustrated in **Appendix 14.1, Figure 14.2: Existing Landscape Site Features and Conditions**, including several blocks of woodland which appear prominent in the wider landscape. The trees on Site have been subject to arboricultural survey (**Appendix 14.4**).

14.6.10 The most significant block of planting is a tall, mature stand of Hybrid Black Poplar in the north-western part of the Site which is clearly visible in the wider landscape (See **Figure 14.2, Appendix 14.1**). During the early 1990's areas of nature conservation orientated woodland planting were introduced in a number of locations around the perimeter of the former ROF, and these young woodlands now form attractive features within the Site.

14.6.11 Within the Site there are somewhat gappy avenues of horse chestnuts found along several of the ROF arterial roads. There are also a large number of trees along the southern ROF boundary, including a number of mature conifers which form an incongruous feature amongst the mainly deciduous trees and hedgerows found across the surrounding low lying, agricultural landscape.

14.6.12 Historically the ROF had a rail link, albeit, this was decommissioned in the 1970's. The defunct rail loading yard was situated along the western side of the Site, although the rail lines have now been removed. A 'landscape feature' which includes earth mounding now occupies this area close to the western Site boundary, constructed as part of the remediation process and is now covered in recently self-seeded vegetation.

14.6.13 The ROF has a number of features which might be considered of historical interest, including the one remaining blast mound which has been retained as part of the remediation process, the remaining ditch system and the series of defence posts/pill boxes that were constructed around the perimeter to protect the Site during the Second World War.

Description of Land outside the ROF fence and Gravity Link Road corridor connecting with the A39

14.6.14 The land outside the ROF fence is predominantly pastoral. The small fields between the ROF fence and Woolavington Road lie on gently sloping ground at a level of approximately 8-18 m AOD and are divided by maintained hedgerows with a number of larger trees. To the south of Woolavington Road the ground begins to rise up more steeply to form the Polden Hills. Similarly this area of land comprises broadly square pastoral fields divided by managed hedgerows with a number of larger trees, although fields are much larger. The Gravity Link Road corridor cuts through the fields to the south and east of Puriton before connecting with

the A39 at a level of approximately 37m AOD, and the Hinkley Point T-pylons pass through this landscape, crossing the south eastern corner of the Site.

14.6.15 An area around the former ROF entrance to Main Road comprises two links off the Woolavington Road, an east and west approach which join together to form a 'horseshoe'. These access roads are lined by avenues of mature horse chestnut trees which, along with other Site trees, have been subject to an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (**Appendix 14.4**).

14.6.16 The area of land contained by these roads is largely pasture, with the exception of an area to the east of the eastern approach road which is a playing field. At the entrance itself, there are large areas of hardstanding with old bicycle shelters, a bus stop and a social club.

14.6.17 Approximately halfway along the Site's eastern boundary is a 5.2Ha fishing lake known originally as the 'borrow pit'. This lake was formed by the excavation of material required to form the 'blast mounds' within the ROF. It has been used as a fishing lake for a number of years and is surrounded by swathes of self-seeded vegetation.

14.6.18 Extending from the main body of the Site are two notable spurs; one being the reed bed extension towards the Huntspill River, and the other the disused and overgrown railway line connection.

14.6.19 There are also two existing tracks that lie within the Site; one leading to Crockers Hill in Woolavington and a second leading from Rookery Close in Puriton. These are both rural tracks with managed hedgerows on either side. Neither is designated as a Public Right of Way (PRoW).

Historic Context

14.6.20 Refer to **Figure 14.6 and 14.7, Appendix 14.1**.

14.6.21 The large proportion of the former ROF sits within the drained landscape, with a network of rhynes and is highlighted as being 'Probably late 18th Century enclosure' within the SLA, which states:

*"By 1770 nearly two thirds of all the floodable land on the Levels and Moors was still unreclaimed but by 1840 almost the entire area has a system of drainage channels and was enclosed by rhynes" (*para 2.20).

14.6.22 The 1931 OS map shows a typical network of rhynes forming predominantly rectilinear shapes. Running across the north eastern corner of the Site and along the northern boundary is Black Ditch which is identified in the SLA as an '*Early pre-enclosure feature created or influenced culturally*', for a stretch of its length it forms the parish boundary.

14.6.23 The track linking Puriton to the former ROF is shown on the 1931 map, data is not available for the land immediately to the west of Woolavington, albeit it seems likely that the track linking to Woolavington from the former ROF would have also been in existence at the time.

14.6.24 With the advent of the former ROF the landscape changed from agricultural to industrial in nature. However, a significant number of the original ditches were retained. To the north of the ROF, the Huntspill River was constructed to serve as a reservoir to the factory. This wide, man-made drainage channel, which links to the Bristol Channel some 5 km to the west, is controlled by sluice gates to prevent tidal inflow. It is linked to the drainage system of the ROF by a series of reed beds, constructed at the same time. The 'borrow pit' on the Site's eastern boundary would also have been formed during this period.

14.6.25 The south eastern corner of the former ROF and the land rising up over the Polden Hills is considered by the SLA to be 'Probably Medieval or earlier'. This higher, and consequently

drier, land is quite different in nature with smaller and more irregular field shapes, more trees and number of blocks of woodland.

14.6.26 As well as the growth of the villages of Puriton and Woolavington, there are a number of obvious Twentieth and Twenty-first Century additions to the landscape in the immediate vicinity. The most prominent of these is the M5, which runs to the west of the Site but also the network of pylons which is prominent in the low lying landscape, and, although less visually intrusive, the solar park on the Site's western boundary.

2032 Baseline

14.6.27 The description within the 'Current State of the Environment' relates to current conditions on the Site in 2021 and enables a full understanding of the Site's recent, and more distant, history. However, with reference to current conditions, this LVIA will consider the effects of the Proposed Development compared to a 2032 baseline to reflect the changes that are due to take place on the Site and within its immediate vicinity in the years up to 2032. In 2032, it is assumed that:

- The extant 2017 Planning Consent for Huntspill Energy Park would have been constructed, along with the maturing planting proposals (in place for 11 years);
- The approved Village Enhancement Scheme would be completed, providing an off-road permissive path between the villages of Puriton and Woolavington for walkers and cyclists;
- Two emerging residential Approved Developments (one on the edge of Puriton and one at Woolavington) would be completed (maximum heights assumed at 11.5m for 2-2.5 storey houses which are referenced in the applications for both sites); and
- The Hinkley connection project pylon run would be complete.

Landscape Character – National Level

14.6.28 It is assumed that the National and District Level landscape character area background will not change between 2021 and 2032.

14.6.29 The Site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 142 – 'Somerset Levels and Moors'. This vast area encompasses; "*flat open landscape of wet pasture, arable and wetland divided by ditches and rhynes, often forming a chequer-board pattern, that clearly illustrate the reclaimed, planned nature of the landscape*", and also notes; "*The M5 motorway and railway lines run north–south, linking several of the larger towns, including Weston-super-Mare and Bridgwater. Incremental development and industrialisation from the towns is evident*". The Site occupies a very small part of this extensive area, and in 2032 much of the Site would already be occupied by the 2017 Planning Consent, therefore, this NCA will not be considered further within the LVIA.

14.6.30 The area immediately to the south covering the Polden Hills, lies within National Character Area 143 'Mid Somerset Hills'.

Landscape Character – District Level

14.6.31 Refer to **Figure 14.4, Appendix 14.1**.

14.6.32 Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary 2003 (SLA) identifies the Site as being within the **(c) 'Levels'** a sub category of '**4. Levels and Moors**' described as:

"A vast area of drained wetland which lies at or below the level of high tide in the adjacent Bristol channel." (para 4.1)

14.6.33 The SLA identifies the nearby Polden Hills area, within which the Gravity Link Road is located, as being within the "**Polden Hills**" a sub-category of "**6. Lowland Hills**", which are described as follows:

"Rising out of the low and wetland landscape of the Levels and Moors, are a series of hills and isolated knolls which have a close association with the wetlands both visually and historically" (para 6.1)

14.6.34 The SLA describes the Levels as being a:

"largely flat landscape with a pattern of fields defined by a combination of drainage channels and hedges". (para 4.50)

14.6.35 The pattern of drainage ditches is considered:

"much less regular (than the Moors) and it is noticeable that many of the major local drainage channels or rhynes take a sinuous course. This is thought to be a consequence of the gradual process of reclamation which began in prehistoric times and which took the driest ground first and worked with an area's natural edges and drainage channels" (para 4.50)

14.6.36 This drainage ditch observation appears particularly pertinent/applicable to the landscape to the north of Puriton and the west of the Site where the principal drains meander northwards.

14.6.37 The SLA notes:

"Hedgerows are widespread throughout the Levels, except in the open coastal areas and contain a wider range of species than the Moors, with willows still common but many other hedgerow trees. A number of more ornamental tree species, especially the coniferous, stand out in the landscape and contribute towards the creation of a more inhabited and civilised character than on the Moors". (para 4.53)

14.6.38 Contrary to the SLA, the site survey undertaken as part of this LVIA found the network of hedgerows, within and around the Site to be weak and gappy. This field survey observation is reinforced by an examination of the aerial photographs of the Site and its environs which shows little or no hedgerow network to the west and north-west of the Site and to a slightly lesser degree to the north and north-east. The hedgerow system was found to be more robust to the south of the Site and on the rising ground of the Polden Hills (Polden Hills Landscape Character type).

14.6.39 The SLA notes under the heading of 'Sensitivity to visual impact and capacity for new development' (pg 46) that the flat nature of the levels strongly influences both the perception of it from higher viewpoints e.g. the Lowland Hills, and views and vistas within it. It notes:

"in the traditional Levels landscape church towers were the only significant landmark buildings and other buildings, which were generally no more than two storeys high, were normally not visible at any great distance". (para 4.60)

14.6.40 Of the Site and its former use, the LCA notes:

"The issue of scale is particularly relevant in this flat landscape and structures such as electricity pylons, the armaments factory at Puriton and the former milk-processing factory at Bason Ridge demonstrates the more intrusive impact of tall buildings. The larger modern agricultural buildings and industrial units can also tend to be locally prominent due not only to scale but also colour of materials." (para 4.60).

14.6.41 As defined in the methodology in terms of landscape value, The SLA 'Levels and Moors' Landscape Character Area would constitute a *'Moderately valued landscape in fair condition which makes some positive contribution to the local landscape character. Elements are replaceable but their replacement would take some time',* and would therefore be ascribed a medium value. In terms of susceptibility it would be considered medium as, '*The receptor is partly able to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer some opportunities for accommodating the change without those key characteristics being detrimentally altered.'* SLA 'Levels and Moors' LCA is therefore considered to have a **'Medium'** level of Sensitivity.

14.6.42 The northernmost part of the reedbed spur of the Site linking to the Huntspill River extends into the SLA sub category 'Clay Moors', however, due to the very small area affected and the limited changes proposed for this area (which would relate only to maintenance of the reed beds), this sub category is not considered further in this LVIA.

14.6.43 As the Gravity Link Road to the A39 runs through the '**Polden Hills**' **Lowland Hills** Landscape Character Area, and the southernmost part of the Site is located within it, this assessment will consider the potential landscape and visual impacts on this character area. The Gravity Link Road forms part of the 2032 baseline and therefore will not need to be assessed. The 'Polden Hills' are designated in the SLA as 'Visually prominent areas of high quality landscape', stating:

"The visual prominence of the Polden Hills and the variety and richness of its landscape promotes it as a high priority for conservation. In particular, the western end of the hills and the south hillocks have a high value in terms of views from lowland areas." (para 6.47)

14.6.44 It is worth noting, that at the time the SLA was written, the Gravity Link Road was not in existence, and there have been some changes to the characteristics of this area as a result which are evident in the descriptions. The SLA describes the Polden Hills as:

"a long, low ridge which cuts across the Somerset Levels and Moors. Within Sedgemoor the ridge reaches a maximum height of 98m AOD. The topography is variable, with steeper slopes and hillocks to the southern side of the ridge, and shallower gradients on the northern side leading gently down to the moors." as (para 6.37)

"Clay soils and gentler gradients have allowed a variety of agricultural usage, including arable and permanent pasture or grass leys in a pattern of either large fields within flailed Hedgerows and few mature trees or smaller fields with nature hedgerows which are predominantly pasture. A patchwork of small but visually dominant blocks is an important feature of the southern side of the hills in particular, with one area of commercial forestry. Deciduous woodland is a key feature of the ridge along the A39." as (para 6.38)

14.6.45 The SLA summarises the Polden Hills appraisal with:

"The area is a rich tapestry of landscape with frequent long views, over the Levels and Moors to the other hill areas, creating a very high quality landscape character area." (para 6.40)

14.6.46 In addition to the Polden Hills a number of other 'hills and isolated knolls' are identified within the SLA, and while these would not be directly impacted by the proposed development some have an inter-visibility with it and are thus included in this assessment. They are described as:

"typically rolling, board profiles, with some steeper slopes…A pattern of small field with mature hedgerows is typical in the steeper hill areas, with larger fields on the gentler slopes." (para 6.3)

14.6.47 As defined in the methodology in terms of landscape value, the Polden Hills would be considered a '*Landscape with highly valued physical attributes/elements (e.g. mature woodlands and/or trees) in fair condition or moderately valued elements (e.g. trees that contribute less positively to the local landscape) in good condition that make a positive contribution to local character and sense of place'* and would therefore be ascribed a high value. In terms of susceptibility, the Gravity Link Road is considered part of the baseline and therefore, '*the receptor is partly able to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer some opportunities for accommodating the change without those key characteristics being detrimentally altered, resulting in a medium susceptibility. '* SLA 'Polden Hills' within LCA Lowland Hills is therefore considered to have a **'High'** level of Sensitivity.

Within the wider area, beyond the Polden Hills, a number of small hills and knolls rise from the Levels landscape, including Pawlett Hill and Brent Knoll which are referred to in this LVIA as LCA **Lowland Hills (wider area)** as a means of distinguishing between the Polden Hills and those hills further afield. These are described in the SLA as follows:

"Rising out of the low and wetland landscape of the Levels and Moors, are a series of hills and isolated knolls which have a close association with the wetlands both visually and historically" (para 6.1)

14.6.48 As defined in the methodology in terms of landscape value, The 'Lowland Hills' (wider area) including Pawlett Hill and Brent Knoll would be considered '*Landscape with highly valued physical attributes/elements (e.g. mature woodlands and/or trees) in fair condition or* moderately *valued elements (e.g. trees that contribute less positively to the local landscape) in good condition that make a positive contribution to local character and sense of place'* and would therefore be ascribed a high value. In terms of susceptibility, '*the receptor is partly able to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue negative consequences to the baseline situation. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer some opportunities for accommodating the change without those key characteristics being detrimentally altered, resulting in a medium susceptibility'.* SLA 'Lowland Hills' (wider area) LCA is therefore considered to have a **'High'** level of Sensitivity.

14.6.49 There are two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within a 17 km radius of the Site, **The Mendips and the Quantocks AONB**. The SLA describes Mendips as:

"a dramatic landscape, rising from the low and flat landscape of the Levels, through a narrow bank of fertile farmland and settlement, to the steep scarp face with deciduous woodland, enclosed pastures, open heath and downland and a relatively bare plateau skyline." (Para 5.1)

14.6.50 It goes on to describe the Quantocks AONB as a ridge that:

"creates a dominant landform at the southwestern edge of the District, creating a spectacular backdrop to the Levels and Moors landscape" (para 7.4)

14.6.51 As a result of a very high value as AONBs are noted in the methodology to be '*Landscapes with characteristics and attributes that have been identified as of national significance*' and a medium susceptibility, both these areas are considered to have a '**Very High'** level of sensitivity

Local Landscape Character Areas

14.6.52 Refer to **Figure 14.5, Appendix 14.1**.

14.6.53 The Local Landscape Character Areas have been defined for this assessment by The Richards Partnership in accordance with good practice as stated in paragraph **14.5.9**.

CA 1 – Former ROF Site (Within the ROF fence)

14.6.54 This area lies within 'Area 4.c The Levels' of the SLA. However, given its history and use, and its distinctive appearance, it is appropriate to describe this area as having an individual landscape character different to that of its surroundings.

14.6.55 At the time of writing in 2021, the majority of the demolition and remediation works have been completed (in November 2020), subsequent to receiving planning permission in March 2012, and whereas the character of this area was previously dominated by a series of disused, industrial buildings around the entrance area (with a limited number of buildings reaching 36.26m AOD and chimneys reaching 43.74m AOD), these are now predominantly demolished and levelled. There remain a number of ditches which have survived from its earlier use as reclaimed farmland but these have been severed in places to make way for its later industrial use. The tall processing plant which gave part of this area an industrial character has now gone, although the impression of a derelict industrial Site remains. Moving out from the centre of the Site beyond the managed areas to the north and east, the character changes to an agricultural landscape.

14.6.56 In 2021, the former ROF's influence over its adjacent landscapes is in a transitional stage. However, the trees, scrub and hedgerows within and around it play a strong role in how the Site and the landscape is viewed and perceived, with many playing a clear role in screening the Site. The most significant blocks of planting are outlined in **Figure 14.2: Existing Landscape Site Features and Conditions, Appendix 14.1**.

14.6.57 Following the 2017 Planning Consent, by 2032 this CA would be again populated by large scale industrial buildings up to 20.85 m AOD (15 m high) with stacks and yard areas, and some parts towards the north retained and managed for nature conservation. The Hinkley Connection Project T-pylons would be visible from the CA, running just to the east, and the Gravity Link Road corridor leading southwards to link to the A39. The structure planting would have 11 years growth, and would be starting to soften and filter views towards and within the CA.

14.6.58 In 2032, following the completion of the 2017 Planning Consent, the overall character of the area would be that of a busy industrial site, quite different to its immediate surroundings of agricultural land and villages. Whilst there are a number of trees/woodland blocks of note, and the new planting and ecological area management would be beginning to mature, the area overall would be considered of low value, and low susceptibility and is therefore ascribed a level of '**Low'** sensitivity.

CA 2 – Moors and Levels North of Woolavington

14.6.59 This area is typical of the flat agricultural landscape described in both National Character Area 142 and the 'Clay Moors' character area described in the SLA which occupies much of this area. The area is dominated by medium sized rectilinear fields divided by rhynes and hedgerows. The fields are predominantly pasture, and at the time of writing in 2021 were either given over to grazing or a hay crop. The hedgerows have a strong component of willow, many of which have been allowed to mature and form attractive features in the wider landscape.

14.6.60 The network of lanes follows the rectilinear pattern created by the ditches, with verges often edged by ditches vegetated by reeds. The straight nature of the roads means that, vehicular traffic is often travelling at speed, although the traffic flow is not heavy.

14.6.61 While this could be described as an expansive and open landscape, the flat nature of the land means that the hedgerows and trees often preclude long views across the wider area. There is, however, a visual relationship with the higher ground on the Polden Hills to the south.

14.6.62 The north of this character area is dominated by the Huntspill River National Nature Reserve (NNR). It runs in a straight line, in an east-west direction and has man made berms on either side. While this is physically a large feature in the landscape it is surprising well hidden from view, with the exception of the long vistas from the flat road bridges that cross it.

14.6.63 The other dominating man-made feature of this landscape is the network of electricity pylons that cross the area. In these flat landscapes they stand out on the skyline and are visible from some considerable distance, albeit the north-south pylon run is due for removal. At the time of writing in 2021 the new T-pylons for the Hinkley Connection Project are under construction, with a network of temporary haul routes alongside running from access points on the Causeway.

14.6.64 Some parts of the Site extend within this CA; the reed beds to the north, and a small area to the east of the Site which includes the fishing lake. By 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent would be constructed and there would be views towards its industrial buildings from the northern, southern and western parts of this CA, along with some limited noise and activity perceptible which would influence character, slightly reducing its tranquillity. The new T-pylons would run through the landscape (the other north-south pylons would be removed) and structure planting along the Site's northern and eastern edges would be maturing, beginning to soften and filter views of the buildings.

14.6.65 Despite the strong influence of Twentieth Century man-made features in this landscape and the noise from the motorway, it remains an attractive landscape, and parts of the area further east are relatively tranquil. While there can be no doubt that the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent and the pylons detract from the overall intrinsic quality so that this area is considered to be of medium value, some small parts of the Site extend within this CA, and some areas have an intervisibility with it, and it would therefore be considered of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, resulting in a **'Medium'** level of sensitivity.

CA 3 – Levels and Moors Adjacent to the M5

14.6.66 This area lies within 'Area 4.c The Levels' in the SLA. It has many of the same characteristics as CA2, it is flat in nature and given over to pastoral farmland within a similar network of rhynes and hedgerows as previously described and a similar predominance of pylons and masts. The over-riding feature in this character area is the M5 Motorway which runs through the middle of the area in a north-south direction. As the main artery linking the south west with the rest of the country, this carries a constant stream of traffic throughout the day and night, which, given the flat nature of the landscape, is both aurally and visually intrusive. The visual relationship with the M5 has been highlighted in the SLA which has identified a swathe of land approximately 1 km either side of the motorway as being an area of 'High Sensitivity in relation to road corridors', although this is due to the volume of people who are exposed to the wider landscape from this area, rather than the quality of the landscape along the M5 corridor. The assessment states:

"The M5 Motorway and the main line railway from Taunton to Bristol run through the Levels, and constitute important view corridors in terms of perceptions of the landscape". (para 4.61)

14.6.67 The mainline railway runs immediately to the west of, and parallel to, the motorway. Beyond the railway line is the Walpole landfill site.

14.6.68 Human activity, typical of an urban edge, is also in evident in the form of boarded up gateways and areas of fly tipping along Batch Road which lies to the west of the Site, and alongside the M5 Motorway.

14.6.69 Immediately to the west of the Site there is a solar park. While the photo-voltaic cells sit low in the landscape and are not visually intrusive, they contribute to the 'man-made' character of the area as a whole.

14.6.70 The Huntspill River NNR runs across the northern part of the CA, however, compared to the neighbouring CA2 this feature appears less dominant, given the context of motorway and railway lines running north-south.

14.6.71 The railway line spur and a small area close to the western boundary of the Site lie within this CA. By 2032, the industrial buildings and yards of the 2017 Planning Consent would be in place, along with the maturing structure planting and the managed ecological areas on the north western corner of the Site which lie within this CA. There would be views towards the buildings from some parts of this CA.

14.6.72 The overall character of the area is dominated by its function as an infrastructure corridor, and despite the pastoral fields and the river, the motorway remains the dominant influence, with its associated urban edge characteristics, and the area overall would be considered of low value. Some limited parts of the Site extend within this CA, and some areas have an intervisibility with it, however, despite this, given the context, it is considered of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Low'** sensitivity.

CA 4 – Land to the South of the Former ROF

14.6.73 This area lies largely within the 'Polden Hills' character area of the SLA, forming an area of transition alongside the SLA 'Levels' character area to the north. In 2021, this relatively thin strip of land at the foot of the Polden Hills between the former ROF and the Woolavington Road, whilst in use as pasture, has many of the human influences often associated with the urban fringe. The fields at the eastern edge of the character area are smaller than those in the surrounding landscape and several appear unmanaged or are given over to paddocks. The remnants of old orchards are also present in several of these fields. At the entrance area to the former ROF there are large areas of hardstanding with old bicycle shelters, a bus stop, the social club and sports fields. There is also a small area of land to the west of the former ROF entrance which has been paved over and is occupied by a number of small buildings and caravans. The entrance is lined by mature avenues of horse chestnut trees and a small number of residential properties and farms also front onto, and are accessed from this stretch of road, while the remainder of the area is given over to pastoral fields with the Hinkley Point T-pylons passing through the eastern part of the CA.

14.6.74 By 2032, the Gravity Link Road and roundabout would be in place, along with considerable blocks of structure planting which would be maturing 11 years after planting. Much of the rest of this CA would remain quite similar, since it lies predominantly outside of the 2017 Planning Consent boundary, and proposals for the area within it are largely limited to planting, and the Village Enhancement Scheme. Therefore, changes to character would be limited to the addition of the establishing planting proposals, and a slight increase in urban character as a result of the gateways, fencing and pathway associated with the VES, with views in some places towards the large scale industrial buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent.

14.6.75 Woolavington Road, while not excessively busy, is a fast moving road without any pedestrian footway. Given that the wider landscape is of an open and expansive nature, this small section of land is relatively introverted and lacks the same level of inter-visibility that is found in the wider landscape.

14.6.76 The Site covers the majority of this CA, and while predominantly rural in nature, it has a number of urbanising influences, in the form of the villages of Puriton and Woolavington, the Gravity Link Road corridor and roundabout junction to the A39, and the 2017 Planning Consent buildings. Therefore, overall the area would be considered of medium value, and of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium'** sensitivity.

CA 5 – Puriton

14.6.77 The village of Puriton sits at the foot of the Polden Hills immediately to the east of the M5 Motorway. The historic core lies on the lower ground around the church of St Michael and All Angels, and of relevance to the consideration of the Site, Manor Farmhouse (Grade II Listed building) lies on the northern edge of the village (for detailed information refer to **Cultural Heritage Chapter 16**). However, the greater part of the village is late Twentieth Century in a variety of styles, and has gradually grown up over the rising ground towards the junction with the motorway. Traffic is currently focused on the Woolavington Road travelling through the village up onto the A39, although this is likely to change as the Gravity Link Road becomes operational.

14.6.78 Subject to prevailing weather conditions, large parts of the village are influenced by the noise of the traffic on the M5 which is a detracting factor in the village. When entering the village from the south, along Hillside, the village is seen within the context of the remediated former ROF in the background.

14.6.79 In 2032, once the Gravity Link Road is in full use, there will be some noise and movement perceptible to the south and east of the village from this new route, although this will be largely mitigated by the bund and structure planting along the route, which would be maturing after 11 years of growth. There would be a new residential development located on fields at the eastern edge of the village along the road corridor (refer to **Figure 14.5, Appendix 14.1**). In addition, there would be views across the 2017 Planning Consent buildings from some eastern parts of the village.

14.6.80 The overall character of the CA, which lies to the south west of the Site, is that of an attractive, well maintained village. This character area is urban in nature, and this is further reinforced by the influence of noise and views towards the M5, the roundabout junction with the Woolavington Road, and views towards the 2017 Planning Consent buildings. Therefore, overall the area would be considered of medium value, and of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium'** sensitivity.

CA 6 – Woolavington

14.6.81 The village of Woolavington is geographically close and similar in nature to Puriton. The historic core also lies on the lower ground within which there is a cluster of Listed Buildings, although these are set within the built up area of the village (for detailed information refer to **Cultural Heritage Chapter 16**). The more modern, late Twentieth Century/Twenty First Century housing has expanded up the hillside onto the higher ground to the south, thus giving it a greater inter-visibility with the flat, agricultural landscape below. As with Puriton, overall the village is attractive with mature, and generally well-maintained gardens. Woolavington has a slighter quieter and more peaceful character, however, due to its distance from the M5 and the A39 road corridor.

14.6.82 In the past, the western edge of the village had an intervisibility with the former ROF and by 2032, would have an intervisibility with the 2017 Planning Consent buildings. These views would have an influence on character, introducing large scale buildings into the otherwise rural setting of the village. Associated structure planting would also be beginning to become apparent after 11 years growth. Three new housing developments would be located on fields at the edge of the village extending its boundaries; the most pertinent to the landscape and visual consideration of the Site located on the western village edge, as shown on **Figure 14.5, Appendix 14.1**.

14.6.83 The overall character of Woolavington is that of an attractive, well maintained village. This character area is urban in nature, and views towards the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would further reinforce the urban characteristics of the village. Therefore, overall the area would be considered of medium value, and of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

CA 7 – The Polden Hills

14.6.84 The Polden Hills are identified as a character area in their own right in the SLA. They form a prominent and attractive low ridge of land running in an east west direction overlooking the low lying landscape and have a strong visual relationship with the surrounding countryside. The hills are also identified in the SLA as being included within '*Visually prominent areas of high quality landscape.*' The change in character between the hills and the surrounding low lying landscape is also recognised in the National Character Areas, the hills falling within NCA 143 – Mid Somerset Hills.

14.6.85 This local character area considers a smaller area of land including the hills' northern face between the villages of Puriton and Woolavington which has the strongest relationship to the Site. The attractive pastoral character of this hillside to the north of the ridge is influenced by views across the Site and the electricity pylons that transverse the area west of Woolavington.

14.6.86 In terms of context, the southern side of the hills are steep in nature with a number of blocks of deciduous woodland, and the busy, and fast moving A39 forming a dominant and detracting feature. The northern hillside has a shallower incline, and comprises an attractive mixture of deciduous woodland and managed farmland, dissected by a network of well-used public footpaths. The rectilinear blocks of woodland tend towards the ridge and the steeper ground, while the shallower slopes are mainly given over to pastoral use. The fields are divided by mature, managed hedgerows with a number of mature individual trees.

14.6.87 Whilst there is a good deal of human activity and modern influence on the low lying landscape below, all of which is evident from the hills, the character area of the hills themselves is relatively quiet and tranquil. The exception to this is the noise from the M5 and A39, which is apparent particularly from the western end of the ridge.

14.6.88 In 2032, the Gravity Link Road would be fully functioning, resulting in some further loss of tranquillity at the western end of the ridge, and the structure planting associated with it would be maturing after 11 years of growth, softening and filtering views. The buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible from many locations on the hills, however, they would sit well below the skyline, in the context of the flat, agricultural landscape, from these elevated viewpoints. Structure planting to the south of the 2017 Planning Consent would be maturing, although, from these elevations would be unlikely to screen views towards the buildings. There would be views towards the Hinkley Point T-pylons, which pass across the ridge and down across the flat, agricultural landscape to the north. The new residential developments at Puriton and Woolavington would also be visible from some locations, further increasing the proportion of the view occupied by built form, and therefore influencing landscape character, particularly in 2032 before planting proposals have had time to mature.

14.6.89 This ridge has many attractive and high quality characteristics and has a strong inter-visibility with the flat, agricultural landscape landscapes below, so that despite some detracting influences in views from the hillside to the north in the form of the 2017 Planning Consent, and numerous pylons, this is considered a high quality landscape, as identified in the SLA. Therefore, overall, the area would be considered of high value, and of high susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**High'** sensitivity.

Visual Context

14.6.90 The landscape of the Site and the surrounding area is predominantly flat, sitting at a level of between 5m and 10m AOD, although the Site starts to rise gently to the south, towards the Woolavington Road and Polden Hills beyond. The Polden Hills rise to a level of approximately 70m AOD at the ridge to the south of the Site. As a result of this elevation, these hills are visually prominent in the wider landscape and there are wide, panoramic views from the hills across the flat, agricultural landscape, contained to the north by the Mendip Hills and the south west by the Quantock Hills. The landscape is predominantly rural but there are a number of visually prominent human influences, namely the M5 motorway, a

number of towns and villages, various large scale industrial sheds and the network of electricity pylons that cross the countryside.

14.6.91 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Study (**Figure 14.8, Appendix 14.1**) was undertaken to help inform the visual assessment. The computer-generated model does not take into account intervening vegetation or built form, and in this instance, the intervening vegetation, and built form in places, greatly limits the number of publicly available viewpoints. However, this desk-based study was used as a starting point from which roads, footpaths and publicly accessible places around the Site were visited to establish from where the Proposed Development would be either partially or wholly visible. From this, a selection of representative viewpoints, both close up and distant, were selected for inclusion within this assessment in order to demonstrate the visual role the Site plays within its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape.

14.6.92 Visual impact relates to the changes that the Proposed Development would have upon views as experienced by the public. The people within the study area who may be may be affected by a change in view or in visual amenity are referred to as 'visual receptors'. Where possible the relative number of people who experience a view or series of views are noted in the text. It is not practical to assess every viewpoint and therefore the views selected for inclusion as part of this assessment are representative of those available to the public looking towards the Site from the surrounding area. These range in distance from within the Site to 17 km from the Site, albeit in some of the more distant views, it is difficult to 'pick out' the Site with the naked eye.

14.6.93 The selected viewpoints have been agreed with SDC's landscape officer as being representative of the views of the Site from the surrounding area and the photomontage locations were also discussed. The photographs were taken during winter months when the trees were not in leaf, in order to consider the worst-case scenario. However, it should be noted that screening from vegetation would be much increased from many locations during the summer months, when the trees are in leaf. The location of the viewpoints is shown on **Figures 14.9 and 14.10**, with the photoviewpoint sheets on **Figures 14.11-14.28. Figure 14.29, Appendix 14.1** illustrates the local landscape features, viewpoints and vistas experienced by visual receptors and the photomontages are shown on **Figures 14.30-14.49 Appendix 14.1**. For ease of reference, the term 'Main Site' has been used to refer to the main body of the Site, excluding the spurs for the rail link and the Gravity Road Link.

Viewpoint A – View looking south east from the M5 adjacent to the Huntspill River (1.2 km from main Site boundary, 400 m from rail facilities extension Site boundary) Photomontage Viewpoint

Visual Receptors: Motorists on M5

14.6.94 This view is taken immediately adjacent to the M5 as it crosses the Huntspill River some 1.2 km to the north west of the main Site area (excluding the rail spur). It is of a flat, open, rural landscape eventually giving way to the Polden Hills some 3.5 km to the south. The Site is visible in the middle distance, with the block of poplar woodland in the Site's north west corner clearly visible. To the east of this, the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would also be discernible, below the skyline. The villages of both Puriton and Woolavington are visible at the foot of the Polden Hills, with the Gravity Link Road corridor just visible rising up the ridge.

14.6.95 This is an attractive, open, agricultural landscape seen, albeit briefly, by many people each day. However, the motorway itself is a dominant feature and the pylons and communications masts that run across the landscape are also highly visible. It should be noted, that for motorists travelling south along the M5, most views of the Site are screened by intervening vegetation and this view is representative of a short stretch of road between the Huntspill River and Junction 23.

14.6.96 Ordinarily visual receptors such as a motorists or passengers travelling at speed are considered to have a 'Low' level of sensitivity (Refer to **Table 14.6: Visual Sensitivity Criteria**). However, in this instance the SLA and Countryside Design Summary identifies a number of principal road corridors throughout the district as "Areas of high sensitivity in relation to road corridors." These corridors are seen as important, in that they afford high numbers of people views of the district's attractive landscape. Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, and in consideration of the SLA, overall, for visual receptors the view would be considered of medium value, and receptors of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint B – View looking east towards the Site from Batch Road (500 m from main area Site boundary)

Visual Receptors: Motorists, pedestrians/cyclists

14.6.97 This view is available to motorists and pedestrians using Batch Road which runs in a north-south direction approximately 450 m from the main Site's north western boundary. While Batch Road carries a relatively small amount of traffic, similar views would be available to the many travellers using the M5 which sits on slightly raised ground some 30 m to the west (considered in Viewpoint A).

14.6.98 This viewpoint has clear, open views to the Site across the flat farmland in the foreground and solar park in the middle distance. The large stand of woodland in the north western corner of the Site is clearly visible and appears prominent in the wider landscape. However, much of the Site is screened from view by the lower level hedgerows and smaller blocks of trees along the western edge of the Site.

14.6.99 The flat nature of the landscape means that there are clear open views over the wider landscape, however, to the south the view is enclosed by the ridge of the Polden Hills, while to the north most views are precluded by intervening trees and hedgerows. A prominent network of electricity pylons is visible from this point.

14.6.100 The solar park immediately to the west of the Site is partially obscured by intervening vegetation, although it is possible to pick out some of the solar panels above the hedge line.

14.6.101 This view is available to the users of Batch Road, including motorists, walkers and cyclists on the narrow lane. It is a relatively attractive rural landscape, albeit there are a number of detracting influences in the form of the network of electricity pylons, the solar park and glimpses of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings.

14.6.102 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given the relatively small number of people travelling along this road and the detractive influence of the pylons, large scale built form and the solar park, overall, for visual receptors the view would be considered of low value, and of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Low**' sensitivity for motorists, and '**Medium**' for pedestrians.

Viewpoint C – View looking north towards the Site from Woolavington Road (within the Site boundary)

Visual Receptors: Motorists

14.6.103 This view is taken from the Woolavington Road as it leaves/approaches Puriton (approximately 350 m from the edge of the village) at the Gravity Link Road corridor roundabout, and would be experienced by motorists. It is largely comprised of the Gravity Link Road features in the immediate foreground, but beyond this, comprises the main part of the Site itself. There are a few derelict buildings still visible at the time of writing in 2021, and there is a large proportion of non-native conifers around the edge of the Site, that add to the slightly incongruous feel in this otherwise agricultural landscape.

14.6.104 In 2021, the skyline is mostly formed by vegetation in the foreground and middle distance, now that the large buildings and chimneys of the former ROF have been demolished. Beyond this, the skyline is formed by the Mendip Hills some 15 km to the north. A number of electricity pylons in the distance also break the skyline.

14.6.105 By 2032, vegetation in the foreground on the roundabout would be maturing, as would structure planting in the middle distance with 11 years of growth which would soften and filter views towards the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent in the background, although these would be visible on the skyline in places, particularly during winter months.

14.6.106 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given the detracting influence of the urban features present in this view, overall, for visual receptors the view would be considered of medium value, with motorists of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint D - View looking north-east across the Site from the Woolavington Road adjacent to Martlands Farm (Adjacent to the Site boundary)

Visual Receptors: Motorists

14.6.107 This view is taken from the Woolavington Road adjacent to Martlands Farm as it approaches the village of Woolavington. From this viewpoint the open, expansive views so typical of the area are not available as they are screened by intervening mature hedgerows and belts of trees and the edge of the village. Views into this south eastern corner of the Site are largely agricultural in character, with glimpses of the village edge. At the time of writing in 2021 the Hinkley Connection Project was underway, with temporary works to facilitate the construction of T-pylons across this corner of the Site.

14.6.108 By 2032, the T-pylons would be in place and the edge of the large scale buildings within the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible, filtered by intervening existing mature vegetation, and, in addition, maturing structure planting delivered as part of the 2017 Planning Consent.

14.6.109 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given the relatively attractive rural and village edge character of the view, and despite the presence of the pylons, overall, the view would be considered of medium value, and motorists would be considered of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium'** sensitivity.

Viewpoint E – View looking south west from the car park adjacent to The Causeway immediately to the south of the Huntspill River (800 m from Site boundary) – Photomontage Viewpoint

Visual Receptors: Motorists, anglers and walkers

14.6.110 This view is taken from a small car park immediately to the south of the Huntspill River which is predominantly used by walkers and anglers; a similar view is available to motorists travelling south along the Causeway. The view is of an open, flat agricultural landscape with the Polden Hills forming the skyline some 3 km to the south, and beyond this, to the south west, on clear days, the ridge of the Quantock Hills is also visible some 19 km away. In 2021 the Site is visible in the middle distance although the removal of large scale built form from the former ROF makes it more difficult to pick out, with the exception of the woodland in the north west corner.

14.6.111 In 2032, the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible but would not break the skyline, and would be partially screened and filtered by intervening existing mature vegetation, and in addition, the now maturing structure planting delivered as part of the 2017 Planning Consent. The other dominant features visible from this viewpoint are the large number of electricity pylons and communications masts which break the skyline,

including the T-pylons which would be clearly visible in the foreground, middle distance and background of the view.

14.6.112 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given the relatively attractive rural character of the view, and despite the pylons and glimpses of the large scale buildings, overall, the view would be considered of medium value, and walkers would be considered of high susceptibility, whilst motorists and anglers would be considered of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed as they would be more intent on their activity, it is therefore ascribed a level of '**High**' sensitivity for walkers and '**Medium**' sensitivity for motorists and anglers.

Viewpoint F – View looking west from the Causeway towards the Site (560 m from main Site boundary, 20 m to access point)

Visual Receptors: Motorists

14.6.113 This view is taken from The Causeway some 200 m to the north of the village of Woolavington. This is a flat, open rural landscape as previously described, and due to the flat nature of the land much of the wider landscape is obscured from view by intervening mature hedgerows and trees. As a consequence of this, the numerous electricity pylons sit proud in the landscape and form the skyline, detracting from what is otherwise an attractive rural scene. In 2021, the T-pylons are currently under construction in this area, and the works are clearly visible in the foreground view, along with the construction site cabins which are currently visible on the temporary haul road which follows the route of the pylons. The access visible immediately to the south is part of the Site.

14.6.114 In 2032, the T-pylons and other numerous pylons would remain dominant features on the skyline, however, some parts of the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would also be visible in the middle distance, set within existing mature vegetation, and the maturing structure planting delivered as part of the consent.

14.6.115 The Causeway is a flat, relatively straight road and, while it is not especially busy, motorists tend to move at speed meaning this view would be both transient and also oblique.

14.6.116 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given the fairly attractive rural character of the view, and despite the numerous pylons, overall, the view would be considered of medium value, and motorists would be considered of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed. It is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint G – View looking south from Withy Road approaching East Huntspill. (1.9 km to the main Site boundary) - Photomontage Viewpoint

Visual Receptors: Motorists and residents

14.6.117 This view is taken from Withy Road and is intended to be representative of the views available to local residents within and around East Huntspill. This rural landscape is more well-vegetated than the land further south, and due to the flat nature of the land, much of the wider landscape is obscured from view by intervening mature hedgerows and trees. The numerous electricity pylons in the area are much less dominant in the view but are still apparent on the skyline, detracting slightly from what is otherwise an attractive rural scene.

14.6.118 In 2032, although the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would be in place, there would be no change to this view, given the numerous layers of intervening vegetation.

14.6.119 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given the attractive rural character of the view, and despite the existing pylons, overall, the view would be considered of medium value, and residents would be considered of high susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**High**' sensitivity for residents and '**Medium**' for motorists.

Viewpoint H – View looking north from footpath BW28/2 to the east of Puriton (200 m from main Site)

Visual Receptors: Walkers and residents in the new residential development on the edge of the village occupying this location

14.6.120 This view is taken from the public footpath to the east of Puriton that runs from the Woolavington Road, crossing the Gravity Link Road corridor and connects with the bridleway that runs along the ridge of the Polden Hills. From this relatively low elevation (approximately 24 m AOD) many longer views are screened by intervening vegetation, albeit the Mendip Hills do form part of the skyline in the distance. In 2021, the lighting columns are visible along the Gravity Link Road corridor and there are glimpses of traffic on the roundabout, and beyond pylon runs extend across the lower ground. Vegetation can be seen on the southern parts of the Site, and the houses along the eastern edge of Puriton are partially visible to walkers as they travel north.

14.6.121 In 2032, the residential development proposed for the eastern edge of Puriton would be in place), and from this location would be likely to occupy the entire foreground view, screening any middle distance or background views. However, at this point, this view would be used as a representative viewpoint to consider the effects on the views of the residents that will occupy these homes. Residents, and local walkers further east on the footpath would experience some open views across the large scale buildings and yards on the 2017 Planning Consent. By this time planting associated with the Gravity Link Road corridor and structure planting around the 2017 Planning Consent would be starting to mature, and filter views, however, due to the elevated location, there would be partial views of built form on the Site in the background, as well as lighting columns along the Gravity Link Road corridor and glimpses of traffic on the roundabout, with pylon runs across the lower ground.

14.6.122 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given the combination of attractive rural character and urban edge features in the view, and despite the pylons and some large scale built form, overall, the view would be considered of medium value. The footpath appears to be well used by local walkers, who, along with local residents would experience some partial views across the 2017 Planning Consent and would be considered of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint I - View looking north from Bridleway adjacent to Home Covert (750 m from main Site boundary and approximately 250 m from Gravity Link Road) - Photomontage Viewpoint

Visual Receptors: Walkers and horse riders

14.6.123 This view is taken from the bridleway that runs along the spine of the Polden Hills. From this elevation (approximately 53 m AOD) there are wide expansive views over the flat, agricultural Somerset landscape to Brent Knoll and the Mendip Hills to the north and to the Bristol Channel in the west. The foreground comprises an attractive mixture of woodland and managed farmland, divided by mature hedgerows and trees.

14.6.124 The wider landscape is a hive of activity with the constant stream of traffic on the M5 clearly visible, the network of electricity pylons and communications masts and a number of large industrial sheds to the north west, all set in wider managed agricultural farmland. From this viewpoint the villages of Puriton and Woolavington are obscured by topography but in 2021 the central parts of the Site are clearly visible in the middle distance (although the Site now appears much less prominent in the landscape than when there were buildings on the ROF). Parts of the solar park are visible from this location adding to the general 'urbanisation' of the view.

14.6.125 By 2032, planting associated with the Gravity Link Road corridor would be maturing, and would start to increase the well vegetated appearance of the landscape, although much

would be hidden by topography. The large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would be partially visible on lower ground, set well below the skyline, although it is unlikely that the associated structure planting would be perceptible from the ridge.

14.6.126 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that the Polden Hills are recognised for their high quality landscape and visual prominence and are popular with local walkers and riders, and despite the existing pylons, and other detractive elements in the view, overall, for visual receptors the view would be considered of high value. The route appears well used by local walkers which would be considered of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**High**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint J – View looking north from Hillside as it enters Puriton from the south (750 m from main Site boundary, 90 m from the Gravity Link Road)

Visual Receptors: Motorists, and walkers

14.6.127 This view is taken from Hillside road as it drops down from the A39 into the village of Puriton. Given its slightly higher elevation (approximately 47 m AOD) than the land to the north, wide panoramic views over the flat, agricultural Somerset landscape to Brent Knoll and the Mendip Hills in the far distance are available, albeit these are considerably curtailed during the summer months when the hedgerows have been allowed to grow.

14.6.128 In 2021 the edge of the village of Puriton is clearly visible in the foreground behind the Gravity Link Road, with the Site partially visible in the background forming a slightly discordant element in the backdrop to the village, as there are glimpses of the cleared areas. This is compounded by further infrastructure in the form of the M5 and the many electricity pylons traversing the flat, agricultural landscape. The solar park is clearly visible to the west of the Site and forms a strong element in the view from this location. Nonetheless it remains a relatively attractive, village edge view.

14.6.129 In 2032, structure planting associated with the Gravity Link Road corridor in the middle distance would be maturing after 11 years of growth, and this would obscure much of the view towards the main area of the 2017 Planning Consent, with the large scale buildings likely to remain just visible from this location, particularly during winter months.

14.6.130 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that the village and the panoramic views beyond are relatively attractive, despite the pylons, solar park and glimpses of the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent in the view, overall, it would be considered of medium value. This access into Puriton affords pedestrians and motorists their first opportunity to view the wider panorama of the area. These receptors would be considered of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint K - View looking north west from Crancombe Lane as it passes/enters Woolavington (440 m from Site boundary) Photomontage Viewpoint

Visual Receptors: Motorists, residents and walkers

14.6.131 This view is taken from Crancombe Lane as it drops down from the Polden Hills and enters the village of Woolavington. Given its slightly lower elevation, the views available from this location are not quite as far reaching as those from the spine of the hills. Motorists and walkers travelling southwards along Crancombe Lane get a few glimpses towards the Site during summer but during winter months views may be much more open, depending upon the hedgerow management regime.

14.6.132 This view, or one similar, is available to the residents of the houses that back onto Crancombe Lane, albeit this would generally be from upper floors, given that the majority of ground floor windows and gardens are screened by planting and fences.

14.6.133 In 2021, the view is predominantly of open managed farmland with medium sized fields divided by a network of mature hedgerows and trees, with some large farmsteads and dwellings on the edge of the village. There are a number of detractors in the form of electricity pylons, telegraph poles and the clearance works across the Site. In addition, the Hinkley connection Project T-pylons currently under construction will be clearly visible across this view.

14.6.134 By 2032, however, the view would have changed considerably, with the field to the right of the view occupied by a residential development extending the western edge of the village, and the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent clearly visible across the view, although filtered by mature vegetation in some places. Structure planting associated with the 2017 Planning Consent would be maturing after 11 years growth, however, this would have a limited influence on views at this stage and distance.

14.6.135 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that the Polden Hills are recognised for their high quality landscape and visual prominence and are popular with local walkers, and despite the existing pylons, and other detractive elements in the view, overall, the view would be considered of high value. The lane appears well used by local walkers and the view is enjoyed by a number of Woolavington residents (including those within the new residential development) which, given the existing context, would be considered of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, (motorists would be considered of low susceptibility) and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint L - View looking east along the A39 to the south of Puriton (850 m from main Site, 0 m from the Gravity Link Road junction) Photomontage Viewpoint

Visual Receptors: Motorists, and a small number of residents

14.6.136 This view is taken from the southern edge of the A39 as it rises up from the motorway heading south eastwards and is typical of the view that would be available to motorists travelling along this fast moving stretch of road.

14.6.137 The main body of the Site is not visible from this location, being screened by the Gravity Link Road bund which is clearly visible in this view, and obscures all but a few tree tops beyond. A small group of houses are situated immediately to the south of the A39 at this point and residents would experience a similar view, although from upper floors there may be glimpses to Puriton village and the landscape beyond.

14.6.138 In 2032, the road corridor and roundabout would appear well vegetated and populated by young, maturing trees after 11 years growth, and in addition to the topography, this vegetation would be likely to obscure any views of the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent from the road and roundabout. However, from upper storeys of a small number of residential properties, some glimpses may be available of the flatter landscape to the north, set within the maturing structure planting.

14.6.139 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that the A39 and the receptor location are not an 'Area of high sensitivity in relation to road corridors' as described in the SLA, and whilst the Polden Hills is identified as a 'Visually prominent area of high quality landscape' the road corridor itself is not considered to be a high quality landscape or visually prominent. The foreground view would generally be considered of low value, however, the view towards the flat, agricultural landscape to the north would be considered of medium value. The road is busy, and is relatively high speed and motorists would be considered of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed. The small number of residents would be considered of medium susceptibility, however, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint M - View looking east from Pawlett (2.4 km from the Site)

Visual Receptors: Motorists, and residents

14.6.140 The view is taken from the A38, Bristol Road, at the edge of the village of Pawlett on slightly elevated land at the foot of Pawlett Hill. A similar view would be available from upper floors of some of the residential properties that back onto it and, obliquely, to motorists travelling along this fast stretch of road. From this location the skyline to the north is formed by the Mendips, while to the south east it is the Polden Hills, where it is possible to discern the rooftops of Puriton and Woolavington on the lower slopes. While the view is predominantly rural, the network of electricity pylons forms an obtrusive element in the wider landscape, as does the Walpole landfill site 1 km to the east. At this distance the Site forms a small part in a wide panorama, however, the larger Site tree groups are visible.

14.6.141 In 2032 it is not considered likely that any views of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be perceptible from this location.

Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, although close to an area of visually prominent landscape, the road corridor is not considered to be a high quality landscape or visually prominent, and given the presence of the landfill site and network of electricity pylons, despite some attractive farmland in the middle ground, the view would be considered of medium value. The road is relatively high speed and, motorists would be considered of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed, with the small number of residents considered of medium susceptibility, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Medium**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint N - View looking east from Steart Drove (Long distance trail BW25/3) (5.7 km from the main Site)

Visual Receptors: Walkers

14.6.142 The view is taken from Steart Drove, the single lane road that leads to Stert Point on the Bristol Channel. This flat and open landscape allows for expansive views across the lower lying land which are only constrained by the Mendips to the north and the Quantocks to the south. The Polden Hills form a low ridge in the middle distance, and, on a clear day, it is possible to discern Glastonbury Tor some 26 kms to the east.

14.6.143 From this slightly elevated stretch of road it is just possible to see the large block of trees in the north western corner of the Site, which form the skyline, and the pylons that run to the immediate north of the Site. However, these are all very small elements in a large panoramic. This was identified as the best available view in the locality, with that immediately to the west on the River Parrett Trail being obscured by Pawlett Hill. In 2032 it is not considered likely that any views of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be perceptible from this location.

14.6.144 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that this is a long distance trail and the area is popular with local walkers and bird watchers, despite the existing pylons and other detractive elements in the view, on balance, the view would be considered of medium value. The location appears well used by local walkers and joggers, who would be considered of high susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**High**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint O - View looking north east from Lydeard Hill within the Quantocks AONB (17 km from the Site)

Visual Receptors: Walkers

14.6.145 The view is taken from the top of Lydeard Hill, adjacent to the Macmillan Way West national trail within the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It shows

expansive views over the flat landscape of Somerset, Bristol Channel and up to the Mendips some 35 km to the north.

14.6.146 It is possible to see the Polden Hill ridge in the middle distance sitting to the north east of Bridgwater. However, while it is just possible to see the north western part of the Site from this location, in reality, it is extremely difficult to pick out with the naked eye, and in 2032 it is not considered likely that any views of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be perceptible from this location.

14.6.147 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that the AONB is recognised for its high quality landscape of national significance and this location is on a well-used national trail, despite the existing pylons and other detractive elements in the view, overall, the view would be considered of very high value. The hill appears very well used by walkers which would be considered of high susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Very High**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint P - View looking north from bridge above the M5 (5 km from the Site) Photomontage viewpoint

Visual Receptors: Motorists

14.6.148 The view is taken from the A372 as it crosses over the M5 to the south of the Site. The Polden Hills ridge forms an attractive skyline, albeit there are a number of detracting elements to the view in the form of traffic, pylons and polytunnels. It should be noted that this view was selected before information on the maximum stack heights was available, however, it has been retained within this LVIA in order to demonstrate the screening effect of the Polden ridge in views from the south.

14.6.149 While slightly elevated above the motorway, this view demonstrates that for motorists travelling north, the ridgeline precludes any views of the Site from the south. This remains the case until the motorway emerges from the cutting associated with Junction 23, and in 2032 no views of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be perceptible from this location.

14.6.150 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, the view would be considered of medium value, and motorists of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Low**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint Q - View looking south from Cross Plain on the Mendip Hills (15 km from the Site)

Visual Receptors: Walkers

14.6.151 There are any number of potential views from the Mendips Hills AONB looking south across the flat landscape below. The view from Cross Plain, immediately adjacent to the West Mendip Way national trail, was chosen as being representative, as it shows a vast panoramic view over the lower lying land and was considered representative of people's views across the hillsides. The Polden Hills are visible in the distance, albeit they do not break the skyline, which is formed by another ridge further to the south. From this point it is just possible to see the form of both Puriton and Woolavington as they rise up the lower slopes and as a consequence locate the main body of the Site, albeit to the naked eye it is not possible to discern individual features, and in 2032 it is not considered likely that any views of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be perceptible from this location.

14.6.152 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that the AONB is recognised for its high quality landscape of national significance and this location is on a well-used national trail, despite some detractive elements in the view, overall, the view would be considered of very high value. The route appears very well used by walkers which would be considered of

high susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Very High**' sensitivity.

Viewpoint R - View looking south east from Brent Knoll (8.5 km from the Site)

Visual Receptors: Walkers

14.6.153 The view is taken from the top of Brent Knoll, an isolated hill fort rising to an elevation of 139 m AOD above the low lying landscape to the north west of the Site. From this location there are expansive, 360 degree views over the low lying landscape of Somerset from Bridgwater Bay to the west to Glastonbury Tor to the east. While the landscape is predominantly rural there are a number of urban influences, the most prominent of these being the movement of traffic along the M5 which passes the knoll approximately 2 km to the south east, and, in terms of built form, the large, light coloured warehouses in Isleport Business Park to the east of Burnham on Sea and Highbridge, approximately 3.5 km to the south.

14.6.154 The Polden Hills ridge is clearly visible, albeit it does not form the skyline from this vantage point. It is also possible to see the villages of Woolavington and Puriton sitting on its lower slopes on a clear day. The Site, some 8.5 km to the south east, is just discernible from this location. However, given the distance, in 2032, it is considered likely that the 2017 Planning Consent buildings on the Site would only just be visible.

14.6.155 Therefore, in accordance with the methodology, given that Brent Knoll is an ancient hill fort of national significance and is visited by many tourists, specifically to enjoy the views over the surrounding landscape, and despite some detractive elements in the view, overall, for visual receptors the view would be considered of very high value. The route appears very well used by walkers which would be considered of high susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and it is therefore ascribed a level of '**Very High**' sensitivity.

14.7 Embedded Mitigation

14.7.1 In line with guidance from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), the assessment will take account of Embedded Mitigation which is inherent in the design for the Proposed Development; this is taken from the suite of **Parameter Plans in Appendix 3.1**. In addition, a **Framework Demolition and Construction and Environmental Management Plan** (**FDCEMP**) (**Appendix 4.1**) and a **Design Guide** will be submitted with the LDO. The FDCEMP is secured through the Compliance Form.

14.7.2 The **FDCEMP** provides the mechanism for the protection of vegetation, and other landscape and ecological features to be retained during the construction and demolition phase.

14.7.3 The **Design Guide** comprises both mandatory principles and guidance, and is structured to consider the whole Site, within which a set of principles are outlined to provide a placemaking framework, mitigation and design principles. These are set out in the following structure and secured within the Compliance Form:

- Block Principles (principles that relate to a group of buildings and streets);
- Plot Principles (principles that relate to individual plots that are serving one particular use, including the Large Scale Manufacturing Area);
- Building Principles;
- Parking/Servicing;
- Colour Strategy;

- Streets (Green Routes/Pedestrian Street, Mobility Route, Entrance Avenue, Long Drauve);
- Key Edges and Boundaries (Puriton Edge, Woolavington Edge, Security and Boundaries, Plot Boundaries);
- Sense of Place/Design Drivers (Set within Landscape, Facing the Street, Long Drauve, Accommodating larger scale users, Connecting/Linking with Infrastructure);
- Placemaking Nodes (Arrival and Wellbeing Area, Mobility Hub and Train Station Square, Central Park, Gravity Park, Gravity Green, Gravity Plaza;
- Design Opportunities.

14.7.4 The key elements of mitigation which fit within this structure, and embedded mitigation set out within the parameter plans can be summarised as follows for ease of reference:

- Disposition of the Proposed Development with the tallest built form located in the central part of the Site with the stepping down of building heights to the south, in reference to the scale of the Woolavington Road;
- The retention of existing vegetation around much of the periphery of the Proposed Development, and the structural tree and woodland planting proposed to help integrate built form into its surroundings;
- Making the most of existing landscape features. This could include rhynes, existing trees and hedgerows to create attractive environments. Design blocks to incorporate these features where possible to add interest and give a sense of maturity to the space from the start;
- A green edge to Woolavington Road; (considered within the Design Guide under Design Drivers, 'Set Within Landscape' this would ensure a minimum buffer with of 10m);
- Puriton Edge - A focus on landscape, sports and recreation along the western edge of the site as part of the Arrival and Wellbeing Area with key design principles:

  - Landscape buffer. There will be a landscape buffer along the western edge, with no built form within 15m of the edge of the LDO boundary.

  - Structural tree planting. Introduction of structural tree planting should also be considered to reinforce the landscape buffer and mitigate the visual impact.

  - Community open spaces. A focus on health and wellbeing and a place for the new and existing community to enjoy. Greenspaces could include allotments, tree nursery, sports pitches and recreational space.

  - Integrate existing features. Existing rhynes and vegetation will be retained where possible and new uses integrated into the existing landscape pattern.

- Woolavington Edge – Residential development in the eastern part of the Campus will form an extension to the village of Woolavington. The development will therefore need to appropriately respond to the existing properties that back or side onto the Site. Key design principles:

  - Complete the block. Use development to enclose the rear boundaries of properties adjacent to the Site, with a minimum setback of 20m from rear frontages.

- Respecting context. Use a similar scale and massing of development along the existing rear edge.

- Collectively, a green edge to Woolavington Road, Gravity Park, Central Park and the Arrival and Wellbeing Area would enhance the perception of a distinct edge to the separate villages, and break up the Proposed Development from elevated viewpoints;

- Greenspace provision to incorporate opportunities for biodiversity;

- East-west landscape corridor and micromobility connections including pedestrian and cycle routes;

- Positioning of residential accommodation at least one block away from the larger scale buildings. Accommodation should generally be positioned at least one block away from the large-scale manufacturing uses, with non-accommodation uses (office/etc) as a transition between the two. Where residential uses are positioned closer than one block use landscape, such as woodland planting, to create a buffer. Visual effects to the commercial areas will be managed as/when the more residential/smaller scale development comes forward and advanced buffer planting should be considered as part of the sequencing and phasing of larger scale commercial development in order to soften views towards it from later phases of development, in particular residential accommodation, and to ensure integration and assimilation into the wider landscape and overall objectives at Gravity. Site specific and site-wide landscape proposals will be required through the compliance application process, and controlled through a requirement within the Design Guide and set out in the Compliance Form.

- Plot boundaries – Perimeter Boundary Treatment and Use of Landscaping

  - The perimeter boundary treatment should be carefully considered in relation to thresholds, views and sitewide security requirements.

  - The use of dense native hedging and rhynes as natural barriers is preferred where possible.

  - Structural planting and woodland clusters should be used in key locations to provide a buffer between contrasting uses such as between larger scale employment uses and residential accommodation, and/or between large scale employment uses and important landscape areas.

  - Planting can also be useful to screen unattractive uses such as the water treatment works, or the energy storage areas.

- Landscape Character/Sense of Place within the Site;

  - Set within Landscape (Naturalistic landscape character, a varying width to the greenspace will help create a more natural feel to the space. Landscape features could include rhynes / SuDS, trees and hedgerows and walking and cycling routes. Opportunities for glades and pockets of grassland. Room-like spaces between buildings, creating social pockets and contemplative spaces with picnic tables, play elements, art, quiet reading spots. Careful use of landscape and lighting to harmoniously display built form in the landscape).

  - Facing the Street (Formal landscape character - Tree lined, wide planted verges, incorporating rhynes, a public open space (central park), woodland blocks set within commercial development parcels to provide a buffer to residential areas. Incorporate rhynes / sustainable drainage systems and public access routes where appropriate).

- Long Drauve (Important that landscape is used to positively enhance the route and reduce visual impact of built form or vehicular routes. Use of landscape to provide visual interest and variety along what otherwise could be a monotonous route. Screen planting is an important characteristic. Dense planting and wider landscape verges are encouraged. Potential to use rhyne features as delineation of plot boundaries).

- Accommodating Larger Scale users (The new large scale character of built form in this area would create a distinct new character in this area, and it will be important to integrate this within the whole development, with the stepping down of built form in adjacent areas, and the use of architectural details to create a more varied an attractive roofscape and materials in common across adjacent areas).

- - Connecting/Linking with Infrastructure (Landscape character is defined by the transition zone into the open, wilder landscape in the north. Ancillary uses will have a visually recessive colour as far as reasonably practicable. Darker colours will be used to ground the buildings and these should be developed in accordance with the colour strategy).

- Colour strategy - Environmental Colour Assessment (ECA) must be undertaken in consideration of the whole Site in accordance with Landscape Institute Guidance Note: Environmental Colour Assessment 04/18. The ECA is secured within the Compliance Form and will develop a palette of colours to integrate the Proposed Development into its local context, and ensure that built form and hard landscape appears recessive in more distant views. For example, white/very pale colours should not be used on upper building levels/rooftops as it is likely to appear in contrast with adjacent landscape from elevated viewpoints. The ECA should also develop a strategy informed by the baseline findings of the colour assessment which identifies and provides;

  - Accent colours. A sharper accent colour may be used to articulate the form of building(s), break up the massing of a large building, assist with placemaking and positively contribute to local identity.

  - Consistency within the different areas of the Proposed Development, and particularly along the same street. There should be some consistency in the palette of colours and how they are applied to buildings (i.e. the position) along the same street to create a harmonious character. It will also be important to consider how the different areas work collectively within the strategy.

- Lighting strategy (set out in the Lighting Assessment in **Appendix 14.5** under mitigation)

- Monitoring of the effectiveness of the mitigation - primarily the landscape strategy, which would be monitored and remedied if required (replacement planting), this would take place within the 5 years following completion of the works.

14.8 Assessment of Likely Effects

Effects associated with Demolition/Construction

14.8.1 This section of the assessment addresses the impact associated with the demolition/construction phase of the Proposed Development. The principle of demolition and construction on much of the Site has already been agreed in the 2017 Planning Consent, with the exception of the 37 Club which would be demolished as part of the LDO. The demolition of the 37 Club would be a relatively small scale undertaking and landscape and visual effects arising from this element would be minimal.

14.8.2 The implementation of the LDO will be market-led and therefore a construction programme is not available at this time. Construction is assumed to take place as one continuous phase,

and it is not possible to establish how areas might become occupied whilst the remainder of the Proposed Development is being built out. However, it is reasonable to assume that visual receptors on the Site (people living on the Site or using it for work or recreation) could experience some notable adverse visual effects due to the construction works. The precise nature of these, however, cannot be established at this stage given the way the likely is likely to be built out, however, as noted in section 14.7 measures to minimise adverse effects on those visual receptors have been incorporated into the **Design Guide**. It is likely that the construction stage would be long term, however, effects would be temporary and changing throughout the construction period. During this timeframe, the potential landscape and visual impacts arising from the construction process would vary in significance, however, the construction period effects will be assessed based on the 'worst case scenario', that is the point at which it is considered the effects on individual receptors would be at their greatest. As time progresses, the landscape and visual effects from the construction activities would begin to be concentrated in smaller areas, while the designed appearance of the completed development, plus associated mitigation planting, would become more prominent. In addition, construction activities associated with the later stages of development could, from certain receptors, be screened by those earlier phases already completed.

14.8.3 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, it is understood that there would be large plant, such as cranes, on Site during the demolition/construction phase.

14.8.4 Construction impacts are, by their nature, temporary. The duration of an impact may be considered to be a material consideration, for example a higher impact may be deemed more acceptable if it only endures for a short period of time. In this case, construction effects are considered to be long term since a construction programme is not available.

14.8.5 Direct effects are those which result directly from the Proposed Development itself. No indirect landscape and visual effects have been identified as part of this assessment.

14.8.6 During the construction period, effects are likely to be temporary and are generally adverse in nature for the limited period of the works. Given the nature of the Proposed Development, it is anticipated that construction effects could be long term albeit temporary, the following effects may be experienced;

- Demolition of buildings within the 37 Club;
- Removal of existing landscape features (including vegetation, fields, rhynes, etc.);
- Views of machinery and equipment including tall cranes and workforce accommodation;
- Noise (influencing landscape character) and views of construction equipment moving on Site;
- Views of materials storage areas/earthworks;
- Views of construction traffic entering and leaving the Site;
- Views of construction lighting (mobile units and flashing lights from construction vehicles);
- Temporary albeit potentially long term disruption to permissive pathways (but not PRoW); and
- Changes to the immediate local landscape character.

14.8.7 The **FDCEMP** includes embedded mitigation measures such as tree protection, and ecological protections along with lighting, working hours, noise and traffic movements during demolition and construction.

14.8.8 In terms of landscape and visual impact, the construction stage of the Proposed Development would potentially impact on the landscape elements set out below.

14.8.9 Vegetation work would include:

- Hedgerows and trees would be removed within the Site to facilitate the Proposed Development as recorded in the **AIA,** **Appendix 14.4**.
- Existing trees and hedgerows which are proposed for retention as part of the final scheme would be vulnerable to the construction processes. This vegetation would be protected in accordance with the requirements included in the **AIA** in **Appendix 14.4** and the **FDCEMP** in **Appendix 4.1**.

14.8.10 Landform/Topsoil work would include:

- Topsoil 'strip' of agricultural fields and storage of topsoil for reuse as required;
- Excavation for foundations for new buildings, roads, parking areas and the laying of underground services, including areas of 'cut and fill' as required; and
- Cut and fill as required to form the drainage strategy.

14.8.11 There would be no disruption to PRoW to facilitate the construction works, however, there may be some temporary disruption to two permissive paths linking to Puriton and Woolavington during the construction stage, and the permissive pathways associated with the approved village enhancement scheme.

Landscape Effects during Construction

14.8.12 The predicted impacts and effects are assessed based on the 'worst case scenario'. The point during the phasing programme which is considered to give rise to the highest landscape and visual effects experienced by each receptor is described in the assessment which follows.

14.8.13 Refer to **Appendix 14.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Tables** for a summary of the landscape and visual effects discussed in the following paragraphs.

Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment – Character Area – Moors and Levels (Medium Sensitivity)

As previously described this CA covers a vast area and includes the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent. The CA would receive a physical impact in the small area covered by the Site. Much of the Site has been in industrial use for some seventy years; albeit, the scale and massing of the construction works would be greater than that of the former ROF, and the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent which would occupy the Site in 2032. However, although the Proposed Development is of a very large scale, there are other large scale buildings within, and visible from the low lying landscape in this area and, on balance, it is therefore considered that the magnitude of effect would be 'Medium' resulting in a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect**'.

Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment – Character Area – Lowland Hills - Polden Hills (High Sensitivity)

14.8.14 The Polden Hills as described in the SLA covers the whole of this ridgeline, running from adjacent to Junction 23 of the M5 in the west to the east of the village of Ashcott some 13 km to the east. In 2032 views of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would influence character, however, construction works on the Site would introduce large scale construction equipment, noise and movement. This would result in a relatively small area of physical

change, as only the Gravity Link Road and southernmost part of the Site lies within this CA, other effects would be limited to those of setting due to intervisibility with the Site from the hills. As a consequence it is considered that the overall magnitude of effect would be 'Low' resulting in a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect'**.

Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment – Character Area – Lowland Hills – Wider Area (High Sensitivity)

14.8.15 A number of small hills and knolls rise from the low lying landscape, including Pawlett Hill and Brent Knoll and while these have an inter-visibility with the Site; effects would be limited to setting. It is unlikely that any glimpses towards the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be available in 2032. Given their distance and setting within this large landscape, it is considered that the magnitude of effect to landscape character during the construction stage is 'Very Low' resulting in a temporary **'Minor Adverse Effect'**.

Mendips AONB (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.16 The Mendips AONB sits some 15 km to the north of the Site and its ridgeline forms the visual envelope to the north of the low lying Somerset landscape. This ridgeline is visible from the Site and in several views forms the skyline, however, it is unlikely that the limited views available of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would influence character within the AONB in 2032 due to the distance involved. Effects on the AONB would be limited to the influence of views from the ridge towards the distant Proposed Development. Given the distance between the Site and the AONB, and the existing context of views towards the low lying landscape, it is considered that the magnitude of effect that construction of the Proposed Development would cause to its landscape character is 'Very Low' resulting in a temporary **'Negligible Adverse Effect'.** The Mendips AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2.**

Quantocks AONB (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.17 The Quantocks AONB lies approximately 17 km to the south west of the Site and its ridgeline forms the distant visual envelope to the south west of Bridgwater, however, it is unlikely that the limited views available of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would influence character within the AONB in 2032 due to the distance involved. Effects on the AONB would be limited to the influence of views from the ridge towards the distant Proposed Development. Given the distance between the Site and the AONB, and the existing context of views towards the low lying landscape, it is considered that the magnitude of effect the construction of the Proposed Development would cause to its landscape character is 'is 'Very Low' resulting in a temporary '**Negligible Adverse Effect'.** The Quantocks AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2**.

CA1 – Former ROF Site (Low Sensitivity)

14.8.18 This character area would be physically affected by the construction phase as it lies within the Site. Much of the Site has been in industrial use for the last seventy years and in 2032 parts would be occupied by large scale industrial buildings within the 2017 Planning Consent. During construction, vegetation within the Proposed Development areas would be removed, including some young structure planting associated with the 2017 Planning Consent, resulting in the loss of trees and hedgerows within much of this area. The remaining ditch system would be cleared within the development areas with the exception of key drainage channels. Topsoil would be stripped where available and stored. The large scale clearance, views of construction equipment, noise and movement on the Site is considered to constitute a 'Very High' magnitude of effect resulting in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

CA2 – Levels and Moors north of Woolavington (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.19 This character area would be physically affected due to an area of construction works on the eastern part of the Site (this area was not included in the 2017 Planning Consent – refer to **Appendix 1.2** for comparative Site boundaries), including loss of vegetation and ditches. In addition, there is intervisibility between this CA and the rest of the Site (including the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent), on which the construction works would be openly visible and would be likely to influence character. The clearance and construction works, including views of equipment, noise and movement across the Site would result in some reduction in tranquillity and a 'High' magnitude of effect and a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

CA3 – Levels and Moors adjacent to the M5 (Low Sensitivity)

14.8.20 This character area would have some intervisibility with the 2017 Planning Consent buildings in 2032, however, as a result of the Proposed Development it would undergo direct physical change within the railway corridor and the westernmost parts of the Site, including works associated with the railway link. There would be some loss of vegetation in this area, the precise details of which are not available at this time, and the influence of views towards the works within the main Proposed Development area which would comprise clearance, large scale equipment, noise and movement during construction would constitute a magnitude of effect of **'**Medium' and a temporary **'Moderate Adverse Effect'**.

CA4 – Land to the south of the former ROF (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.21 This character area would have some intervisibility with the 2017 Planning Consent buildings in 2032, however, as a result of the Proposed Development the majority of this character area would be physically affected by the construction works extending to the north of Woolavington Road between the villages, requiring considerable loss of vegetation and clearance and construction works. Combined with the influence of views of clearance, large scale equipment, noise and movement across the wider construction site, it is considered that the magnitude of effect would be 'Very High'. This would result in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

CA5 – Puriton (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.22 This character area would have some intervisibility with the 2017 Planning Consent buildings in 2032. The only physical change as a result of the Proposed Development within this character area would be the increased construction traffic accessing the Site. However, there would be effects on its setting due to views across the proposed construction works, and associated noise and movement. Overall, it is considered that the magnitude of effect on the character of the village would be 'Medium' resulting in a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect**'.

CA6 – Woolavington (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.23 This character area would have some intervisibility with the 2017 Planning Consent buildings in 2032. The village of Woolavington would not receive physical change due to the construction works. However, the south eastern corner of the Site boundary does extend to the village edge, and the western and northern edge of the village has an inter-visibility with the Site so that indirect effects on setting due to views of clearance, large scale equipment, storage areas, noise and movement from the works would result. The overall magnitude of effect on the character of the village would be 'Medium', resulting in a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect**'.

CA7 – The Polden Hills (High Sensitivity)

14.8.24 This local character area covers a short stretch of the Polden Hills' northern face between Puriton and Woolavington. This character area would have some intervisibility with the 2017 Planning Consent buildings in 2032. This CA would receive no physical change but impacts

as a result of construction works clearance, large scale equipment, noise and movement on the Site seen on lower lying land below, and reduction in tranquillity would influence its setting. The construction stage would result in a 'High' magnitude of effect resulting in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

Visual Effects during Construction

14.8.25 Effects on the views of visual receptors during construction would be adverse and temporary in nature, albeit long term, and are considered below as follows:

Viewpoint A – View looking south east from the M5 adjacent to the Huntspill River. (1200 m from main Site boundary) Photomontage Viewpoint (Motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.26 For motorists passing at speed along this stretch of the motorway, the existing 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be partially visible. The vegetation clearance required in the north west corner of the Site for the rail yards (the extent of which is uncertain at this time but a worst case is assumed of clearance of the whole woodland area within the rail corridor and potential replacement of the rail bridge over the M5) and the introduction of the large scale construction equipment and emerging large scale built form of the Proposed Development which would occupy parts of the skyline in places and be perceived as a prominent feature in the landscape, would be a considerable change. In 2032, lower level built form would be visible on the Site, and previously the industrial features of the former ROF were prominent in views from this location. Despite the existing context of the views, including the dominant pylon runs, the clearance and introduction of large scale construction equipment and some very large scale built form on the Site as works progress would constitute a 'High' magnitude of effect resulting in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint B – View looking east towards the Site from Batch Road (500 m from the Site boundary) (Motorists - Low Sensitivity, Pedestrians - Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.27 For motorists and pedestrians on the lane, built form within the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible, albeit it would be partially screened by existing vegetation, just as the previous industrial buildings on the former ROF in the centre of the Site were also visible on the skyline historically. Within the Proposed Development, there would be vegetation clearance required in the north west corner of the Site for the rail yards (the extent of which is uncertain at this time but a worst case is assumed of clearance of the whole woodland area within the rail corridor) and large scale construction equipment and emerging buildings would form parts of the skyline from this location, although, in some places the intervening trees would break up the elevation to a degree. As such the magnitude of effect would be 'High' resulting in a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect**' for pedestrians, and motorists.

Viewpoint C – View looking north towards the Site from the Woolavington Road (within the Site) (Motorists - Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.28 The relatively recent introduction of the Gravity Link Road and the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent would be fairly openly visible from this location, although starting to be slightly filtered by maturing vegetation. The construction phase would introduce extensive views of large scale construction equipment, clearance works, including the clearance of trees and vegetation across a large proportion of the Site, and storage areas, along with additional construction traffic accessing the Site. As the construction progresses, large scale built form would emerge, occupying much of the skyline, which would be openly visible across much of the view. The overall magnitude of effect is considered to be 'Very High' resulting in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint D – View looking north-east across the Site the Site from the Woolavington Road (adjacent to the Site boundary) (Motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.29 From this location, historically, views of chimneys and built form were visible on the former ROF, however, these have now been demolished, leaving views towards the T-pylon run, and the edge of the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent, with the village edge and rural landscape beyond. The introduction of the large scale equipment, clearance (including loss of trees and hedgerows), and storage areas within the construction phase, and the emerging large scale built form as works progress would be openly visible to passing motorists from this location. However, the land beneath the T-pylons would remain open so that in later stages of construction this area would appear as open space. Overall this would constitute a 'Very High' magnitude of effect resulting in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint E – View looking south west from the car park adjacent to The Causeway immediately to the south of the Huntspill River (800 m from Site boundary) Photomontage Viewpoint (Walkers – High Sensitivity, anglers and Motorists - Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.30 Historically, the buildings on the former ROF formed an incongruous element in this landscape, and subsequent views towards the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent would have occupied the central part of the view, although not breaking the skyline, and views would have been filtered by maturing structure planting, and some intervening existing vegetation. The T-pylons run would also be openly visible from this location. The large scale construction equipment, clearance works (including removal of trees and hedgerows on the northern part of the Site) and storage areas would be partially visible, and the emerging large scale commercial unit(s) would occupy a considerable part of the skyline as construction works progress. This would constitute a 'High' magnitude of effect resulting in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint F (previously VR17) – View looking west from the Causeway towards the Site (415 m from main Site) (Motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.31 Historically, the buildings on the former ROF formed an incongruous element in this landscape, and subsequent views towards the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent would have occupied the central part of the view, views would have been filtered by maturing structure planting, and some intervening existing vegetation. The T-pylons run would also be openly visible from this location. During the construction stage, large scale construction equipment, clearance works (including removal of trees and hedgerows on the northern and eastern parts of the Site) and storage would be visible to motorists along this stretch of the Causeway initially, with large scale built form emerging as construction progresses, breaking the skyline, and forming a dominant feature in views along the road. This would constitute a 'High' magnitude of effect resulting in a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint G – View looking south from Withy Road approaching East Huntspill (1.9 km to the main Site) Photomontage Viewpoint (Residents High Sensitivity, Motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.32 This view is intended to be representative of the views available to local residents within and around East Huntspill. This flat, rural landscape is more well vegetated than the land further south, and due to the flat nature of the land much of the wider landscape is obscured from view by intervening mature hedgerows and trees, resulting in a rural character to the view. In 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be unlikely to be visible, due to intervening vegetation. During the early phases of the construction stage it is unlikely there would be any views of the construction works, although it is possible that glimpses of the upper parts of cranes would be available to the skyline. As construction progresses within the Site, the upper parts of the large, commercial unit(s) and stacks would become just visible beyond intervening skyline vegetation, particularly during winter months when the trees are out of leaf. However, due to intervening vegetation they would not appear as a dominant feature in this view. Despite the numerous electricity pylons, this view appears

predominantly rural and the introduction of the large scale built form of the Proposed Development on the skyline, albeit much is obscured by vegetation, would result in a 'Medium' magnitude of effect and therefore, a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint H (previously VR18) – View looking north from the footpath BW28/2 to the east of Puriton (500 m from main Site boundary and 250 m from roundabout on Woolavington Road) (Walkers and residents on the edge of Puriton Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.33 From this location at present there are views across lower lying land to the north, including the Site, with lighting columns along the Gravity Link Road corridor to the east, and by 2032 it is assumed that the residential development proposed for the foreground of this view would be complete, therefore predominantly obscuring the 2017 Planning Consent buildings which would otherwise be visible. From the footpath, some channelled glimpses of construction works across the Site would be likely to be available in places, and also for some residents on the northern edge of the new residential development some partial views across large construction equipment, clearance and storage areas, and as works progress, emerging large scale built form and stacks within the Proposed Development could be available, depending on the final design layout for the residential development. This would constitute a 'Medium' magnitude of effect resulting in a temporary **'Moderate Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint I (previously VR19) – View looking north from Bridleway BW28/1 adjacent to Home Covert - Photomontage Viewpoint (750 m from main Site boundary, 250 m from Gravity Link Road) (Walkers/horse riders High Sensitivity)

14.8.34 From this elevated viewpoint along the ridge it is possible for walkers to see a large proportion of the Site. Historically built form has been present (the former ROF), just as in 2032 the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would be openly visible. The large scale construction works including equipment, clearance, and storage areas would be openly visible in the middle distance of this view, and as construction progresses the large scale built form of the Proposed Development would emerge, although the works would largely sit below the skyline. These changes are considered to cause a 'Very High' magnitude of effect and a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect'**.

Viewpoint J (previously VR20) – View looking north from Hillside as it enters Puriton from the south (750 m from main Site boundary 75 m from Gravity Link Road) (Motorists and walkers Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.35 The bund associated with the Gravity Link Road corridor screens many of the existing houses on the southern edge of the village, and by 2032 as vegetation on the bund matures, views towards the lower lying land to the north (and the Site within it) would be considerably reduced. In winter months, there may be small glimpses of parts of the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent in the middle distance. Although trees on the bund would form much of the skyline. During the construction stage, large scale construction equipment may be glimpsed on the skyline, and as construction progresses, large scale built form and stacks may be partially visible, particularly during winter months. This change would result in a 'Low' magnitude of effect and therefore a temporary **'Moderate Adverse Effect'.**

Viewpoint K (previously VR21) – View looking north west from Crancombe Lane as it passes/enters Woolavington (440 m from Site boundary) Photomontage Viewpoint (Motorists, Walkers and Residents Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.36 From this edge of the village, the Site is visible in the middle distance, and in 2032 large scale built form would be openly visible, although lower levels of buildings would be softened by maturing vegetation, and built form would not break the skyline. In addition, the new residential development on the edge of the village would be completed, extending the village towards the Site. Due to the slightly elevated nature of the lane, walkers and residents would have views across much of the Site, and during construction, the clearance works, large

scale construction equipment and storage areas would be openly visible resulting in a 'Very High' magnitude of effect and therefore a temporary '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint L (previously VR22) – View looking east along the A39 to the south of Puriton (850 m from main Site, 0 m from the Gravity Link Road junction) (Residents and motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.37 This view is experienced by drivers travelling along the A39 and the small number of residents living to the south of the A39. In 2032, the roadside vegetation and that planted in the centre of the roundabout would have matured to reduce views northwards towards the main Site, and the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would not be visible to motorists, since the road bund and associated planting would obscure much of the view northwards, however, it is likely that residents would have views towards them from upper storeys. Similarly, it is not anticipated that the construction works within the Proposed Development would be visible from this location from ground level, due to the bund and maturing vegetation. However, the construction traffic to and from the Site would be perceptible during working hours and residents would be likely to have some views from north facing windows in upper storeys towards large scale construction equipment, and clearance on the Site, and the emerging buildings and stacks as works progress. Due to the limited availability of these views, this would result in a 'Low' magnitude of effect, and therefore a temporary '**Minor Adverse Effect**' for residents and motorists.

Viewpoint M (previously VR24) – View looking east from Pawlett (2.4 km from the main Site) (Residents and motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.38 From this viewpoint, motorists and a small number of residents are able to discern the block of woodland in the Site's north western corner. In 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent would be barely visible, and the buildings would be largely screened by intervening vegetation. During the construction stage, there would be some loss of the block of woodland, although the precise extent of this is unknown at this stage, and large scale construction equipment would be partially visible on the Site, and as construction progresses, large scale built form, and the tops of stacks would begin to be visible on the skyline, although much of the lower parts of the buildings would be largely screened by intervening vegetation. This would be considered a 'Low' magnitude of effect, resulting in a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint N (previously VR25) – View looking east from Steart Drove BW25/3 Long distance trail (5.7 km from the main Site) (High Sensitivity)

14.8.39 Views from this area are very expansive and walkers can just discern the block of woodland in the Site's north western corner as part of a wide panorama but no detail with the naked eye from this location. In 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent would be unlikely to be visible, with the buildings largely screened by intervening vegetation. During construction of the Proposed Development, there may be glimpses of large scale construction equipment on the skyline, and due to clearance the block of woodland may appear reduced, depending on the extent of clearance required for the rail yard. The Proposed Development's large scale built form, would become visible on the skyline as construction works progress, along with the stacks, although these changes would be very distant. This would be considered a 'Very Low' magnitude of effect, resulting in a temporary '**Minor Adverse Effect**'.

Viewpoint O (previously VR26) – View looking north east from the Quantock Hills (17 km from the Site) (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.40 Given the distance between this location and the Site, and the difficulty in identifying the features of the Site, in 2032 it is considered unlikely that the buildings within the 2017 Planning Consent would be perceptible. During construction of the Proposed Development, depending on the weather conditions/visibility, on a clear day, it would just be possible for walkers to discern some construction works on the Site, and as the works progress, the larger elements of the Proposed Development. Although these changes would be set within the context of the low lying Somerset landscape which includes numerous examples of large

scale built form. This would result in a 'Very Low' magnitude of effect and therefore a temporary '**Minor Adverse Effect'**. The Quantocks AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2.**

Viewpoint P (previously VR27) – View looking north from the bridge above the M5 (5 km from the Site) (Low Sensitivity)

14.8.41 For motorists, residents and walkers south of the Polden Ridge, there would not be any views of the 2017 Planning Consent as it would be screened by the ridge itself. The construction works would not be visible, and as works progress neither the buildings nor the stacks of the Proposed Development would be visible from this location, resulting in a magnitude of effect of 'None', and therefore '**No Change**'.

Viewpoint Q (previously VR29) – View looking south from the Mendip Hills (15 km from the Site) (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.42 Given the distance between this location and the Site, and the difficulty in discerning the existing features on it, it would be unlikely that the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible. During construction within the Proposed Development much of the detail would not be perceptible from these hillsides, however, on clear days the construction works would be likely to be just visible, and as construction progresses the large commercial unit(s) and stacks would be likely to be distantly visible. As a result of the existing context of views towards the low lying Somerset landscape, which includes some existing large scale built form, and the distance involved, there would be a 'Very Low' magnitude of effect and therefore a temporary '**Minor Adverse Effect**'. The Mendips AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2.**

Viewpoint R (previously VR30) – View looking south east from the Brent Knoll (8.5 km from the Site) (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.43 Although this location is not as distant as the Mendip Hills, it is still a considerable distance from the Site, and given the distance, and the difficulty in discerning the existing features on the Site, it would be unlikely that the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible. During the construction stage, within the Proposed Development on clear days glimpses of cranes on the Site would potentially be available and as construction progresses, the large commercial unit(s) and stacks would be likely to be distantly visible, set within the context of the M5 motorway and large scale built form along its corridor. As a result of the existing context of views towards the low lying Somerset landscape, and the distance involved, there would be a 'Low' magnitude of effect and therefore a temporary '**Moderate Adverse Effect**'.

Landscape Effects associated with Operation

14.8.44 This section of the assessment addresses the impacts associated with the operation stage of the Proposed Development. Direct effects are those which result directly from the Proposed Development itself. No indirect landscape and visual effects have been identified as part of this assessment.

14.8.45 As previously noted in paragraph **14.6.27**, the assessment is based on an assumed 2032 baseline. It is usual practice to assess landscape and visual effects at Year 1 and Year 15, to allow for the maturing of newly planted vegetation (assumed to be 8-11.5m growth in this case), and enable the Proposed Development to achieve its design aspirations. Therefore, these terms remain through the assessment sections, however, it is accepted that this is a simplification of the reality.

14.8.46 Refer to **Appendix 14.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Tables** for a summary of the landscape effects discussed in the following paragraphs, including whether effects are considered significant in EIA terms.

Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment – Character Area – Levels and Moors (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.47 As previously described this CA covers a vast area and includes the 2017 Planning Consent within it. The CA would receive a physical change in the small area covered by the Site. Much of the Site has been in industrial use for some seventy years; although, the scale and massing of the Proposed Development would be much greater than that of the 2017 Planning Consent built form which would be present on the Site in 2032. There are some large scale buildings are already present on the Levels, albeit the Proposed Development would be of a very large scale and notably taller those existing, however, on balance, given the proportion of this broad landscape character area affected, it is considered that the magnitude of effect at Year 1 would be 'Medium' resulting in a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'**. This would remain the same at Year 15.

Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment – Character Area – Lowland Hills - Polden Hills (High Sensitivity)

14.8.48 The Polden Hills as described in the SLA covers the whole of this ridgeline, running from adjacent to Junction 23 of the M5 in the west to the east of the village of Ashcott some 13 km to the east, and in 2032 the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible from the north face of the ridge between Puriton and Woolavington. A small part of this large character area would receive a small, beneficial physical change in the form of the further maturation of planting associated with the Gravity Link Road corridor. However, impacts due to the Proposed Development on the main Site would be limited to physical change on the southernmost part of the Site which would include new buildings between 9 and 15 m high and green infrastructure, and otherwise limited to those of setting due to intervisibility with the Site from the hills, which is limited to the north face of the ridge. As a consequence it is considered that the overall magnitude of effect at Year 1 would be 'Low' resulting in a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'**. This would remain the same at Year 15.

Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment – Character Area – Lowland Hills – Wider Area (High Sensitivity)

14.8.49 A number of small hills and knolls rise from the low lying landscape, including Pawlett Hill and Brent Knoll and these have an intervisibility with the Site. Given their distance and setting within this large landscape, it is considered that the magnitude of effect on landscape character resulting from this intervisibility with the Proposed Development is 'Very Low' resulting in a **'Minor Adverse Effect'**. This would remain the same at Year 15.

Mendips AONB – (Very High Sensitivity)

The Mendips AONB sits some 15 km to the north of the Site and its ridgeline forms the visual envelope to the north of the low lying Somerset landscape. This ridgeline is visible from the Site and in several views forms the skyline. The Mendips AONB would not be physically affected by the Proposed Development, however, there is an intervisibility with the Site, although given the distance between the Site and the AONB, and the existing context of views towards the low lying landscape, it is considered that the magnitude of effect the Proposed Development would cause to its landscape character is 'Very Low' resulting in a **'Negligible Adverse Effect**' at Year 1 and 15. The Mendips AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2.**

Quantocks AONB – (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.50 The Quantocks AONB sits some 12 km to the south west of the Site and its ridgeline forms the visual envelope to the south west of Bridgwater. The Quantocks AONB would not be physically affected by the Proposed Development and therefore effects would be limited to the influence of views on setting. Given the distance between the Site and the AONB, and the existing context of views towards the low lying landscape, it is considered that the magnitude of effect the Proposed Development would cause to its landscape character is 'is

'Very Low' resulting in a **'Negligible Adverse Effect**' at Year 1 and 15. The Quantocks AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2.**

CA1 – Former ROF Site (Low Sensitivity)

14.8.51 All of this CA lies within the Site and would be physically affected by the Proposed Development. Much of the CA has been in industrial use for the last seventy years and in 2032 parts would be occupied by large scale buildings within the 2017 Planning Consent.

14.8.52 The taller parts of the Proposed Development would be concentrated within the central part of the Site, stepping down towards the Woolavington Road. Much of the vegetation around the Site's periphery would be retained, as would elements of the ditch system wherever possible, although there would have been clearance for the larger building footprints during construction. The removal of numerous trees and hedgerows would have been undertaken during construction to facilitate such a large scale re-development, along with some young structure planting associated with the 2017 Planning Consent, and within this area very little vegetation would be retained. However, the Proposed Development would bring forward a considerable amount of new planting.

14.8.53 Lighting previously existed on the former ROF, and within the 2017 Planning Consent, however, compared to the 2017 Planning Consent, the increased area of development would extend across this CA and beyond and the majority of the Site would be lit.

14.8.54 The replacement of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings with the very large scale built form proposed would increase the scale of man-made elements, influencing character, and would result in 'the addition of new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements' as set out in the methodology, and as a consequence is considered to constitute a 'Very High' magnitude of effect resulting in a '**Substantial Adverse Effect'** at Year 1. This would remain the case at Year 15.

CA2 – Moors and Levels north of Woolavington (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.55 This character area would be physically affected by an area of new large scale built form on the eastern part of the Site, and the introduction of the footpath links to Woolavington. There would have been a loss of vegetation along the eastern edge of the Site, and some of the ditch system in this area during construction. In addition, there is an intervisibility between this CA and the rest of the Site, on which the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would have been visible, along with maturing structure planting (much of which would be removed).

14.8.56 Character is influenced by views of lighting within the 2017 Planning Consent (lighting also previously existed on the former ROF), however, compared to the 2017 Planning Consent, a considerably increased area of development would be lit.

14.8.57 The replacement of the 2017 Planning Consent buildings with the very large scale built form proposed would increase the scale of man-made elements in views from the CA, influencing its character and as such is considered to be 'the addition of new but uncharacteristic noticeable features and elements' as set out in the methodology, constituting a 'Medium' magnitude of effect and a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'** at Year 1. This would remain the case at Year 15.

CA3 – Moors and Levels adjacent to the M5 (Low Sensitivity)

14.8.58 This character area would be physically affected within the railway corridor and the westernmost parts of the Site, due to the rail corridor and associated infrastructure and an area to the south of the western boundary which may include built form (up to 11 m ridge height), however, other areas within the Site are proposed for greenspace and include structural tree and woodland planting.

14.8.59 This CA has various light sources, including the motorway, and character is influenced by views of lighting within the 2017 Planning Consent (lighting also previously existed on the former ROF), however, compared to the 2017 Planning Consent, a considerably increased area of development would be lit.

14.8.60 There would be direct impacts as a result of a loss of existing vegetation within the rail corridor and building footprints during construction, however, the precise extent of this is uncertain at present. In relation to the influence on character of views towards the Site, there is already a large number of man-made, Twentieth Century influences evident in this area in the form of the motorway, railway, solar park, 2017 Planning Consent buildings, the landfill site and numerous pylons, and the influence of views towards the Proposed Development and the physical changes to the CA would constitute 'the addition of new but uncharacteristic perceptible features and elements' as set out in the methodology, and therefore a magnitude of effect of 'Low' and a **'Minor Adverse Effect'** at both Year 1 and 15 to the landscape character of this area.

CA4 – Land to the south of the former ROF (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.61 The scale and massing of the Proposed Development would be greater than that of the 2017 Planning Consent built form which would be present on the Site in 2032. In addition, there would be direct impacts on this CA and the majority of this character area would be physically affected as it lies within the Site, with built form proposed across most of the CA between the villages, and a considerable loss of vegetation during construction. In consideration of the setting, built form in this area is proposed to be lower than the large commercial unit(s) and the design 'steps up' in height from the Woolavington Road. To retain the more intimate feel of this character area, proposed development areas are smaller with some residential included, and it would be well vegetated, providing a green edge to the Woolavington Road, and allowing breaks between built form to provide open space and vegetation between the villages within the Arrival and Wellbeing Area and Gravity Park.

14.8.62 Lighting previously existed on the former ROF, and within the 2017 Planning Consent, however, compared to the 2017 Planning Consent, the increased area of development would extend across this CA and the area would be lit.

14.8.63 Due to its proximity to the large commercial unit(s), this CA would also receive some impacts due to the influence of views of the proposed very large scale built form on the central part of the Site.

14.8.64 In addition to the influence of views, and physical change within the CA, a corresponding decrease in the level of tranquillity would be anticipated. As a consequence it is considered that the magnitude of effect would be 'Very High', defined in the methodology as 'notable change in landscape characteristics over a wide area or an intensive change over a more limited area'. This would result in a '**Substantial Adverse Effect'** at Year 1. Over time, the structure planting and green space within the Proposed Development would help to soften and assimilate it into the wider landscape, however, an 'intensive change' would remain and, therefore, the effect would remain the same at Year 15.

CA5 – Puriton (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.65 There would be direct impacts on the setting of this character area resulting from the scale and massing of the Proposed Development which would be greater than that of the 2017 Planning Consent built form present on the Site in 2032, and in addition, a slight decrease in tranquillity due to increased traffic accessing the Site.

14.8.66 The built form proposed in the south western corner of the Site, close to Puriton, would have a maximum height of 11m ridge height, and only 50 percent of the zone would accommodate buildings. This built form would be separated physically and visually by existing, intervening vegetation and as such would have little effect on the character of the village. For details of

effects on Manor Farmhouse Grade II Listed building refer to the **Cultural Heritage Chapter 16** which records a minor adverse residual effect for this historic asset.

14.8.67 Lighting previously existed on the former ROF, and within the 2017 Planning Consent, however, compared to the 2017 Planning Consent, in views towards Woolavington Road, the increased area of development would be clearly perceptible from this CA, albeit it would be in the context of the village, and the Gravity Link Road corridor and roundabout which is already lit.

14.8.68 Viewed as a whole it is considered that, the overall magnitude of effect on the character of the village would be 'Medium', due to the 'the addition of new but uncharacteristic noticeable features and elements' as set out in the methodology, at Year 1, resulting in a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'**. This effect would remain at Year 15.

CA6 – Woolavington – (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.69 The village of Woolavington would not be physically affected by the Proposed Development, as the south eastern corner of the Site boundary extends only to the village edge. In 2032 the western and northern edge of the village would have an inter-visibility with the large scale built form of the 2017 Planning Consent, and previously had an inter-visibility with the industrial buildings of the former ROF. The new built form across the Proposed Development, particularly the large scale commercial unit(s) and built form towards the eastern boundary would give the wider area a much more developed character resulting in direct impacts on the setting of the village. In addition, smaller scale residential built form is proposed alongside the village edge which would in time extend this CA westwards, albeit the structure planting along the eastern boundary would have matured considerably by Year 15, helping to soften the development and assimilate it into its wider environment from some locations.

14.8.70 Lighting previously existed on the former ROF, and within the 2017 Planning Consent, however, compared to the 2017 Planning Consent, in views towards Woolavington Road, the increased area of development would be clearly perceptible from this CA, albeit it would be in the context of the village itself.

14.8.71 Viewed as a whole it is considered that, the overall magnitude of effect on the character of the village would be **'**Medium**'**, due to the 'the addition of new but uncharacteristic noticeable features and elements' at Year 1 as set out in the methodology, resulting in a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'**. This effect would remain at Year 15.

CA7 – The Polden Hills – (High Sensitivity)

14.8.72 This local character area covers a short stretch of the Polden Hills' northern face between Puriton and Woolavington (as outlined in **Figure 14.5, Appendix 14.1**). This CA would receive no physical change but there would be direct impacts as a result of the influence of views towards the Proposed Development on its setting.

14.8.73 While in 2032 there is aural intrusion into this CA in the form of the fast moving A39, the M5, and the Gravity Road Link, the wider area is relatively quiet and tranquil. While noise impact has been covered in detail in **Chapter 10**, it should be considered here in as much as the introduction of built form to the north of the Woolavington Road, and to some extent the proposed built form further north within the Site (both in terms of noise and movement) would be likely to decrease the tranquillity for walkers and riders using the footpaths in this area.

14.8.74 The Proposed Development would noticeably increase the volume of built form on the flat agricultural landscape to the north compared to the existing 2017 Planning Consent buildings. From elevated views on the Polden Hills this becomes more apparent than from those lower down and perhaps closer. This increase in urban form impacts on the character of this area.

14.8.75 This character area would receive an impact from the lighting introduced in association with the Proposed Development, although historically there was some intrusive lighting within the former ROF, and the 2017 Planning Consent would be lit along with the Gravity Link Road corridor which is well lit at night (**Appendix 14.5 Lighting Impact Assessment**).

14.8.76 The Gravity Link Road planting within the adjacent CA (Puriton) would be maturing by 2032 and would have a beneficial influence over time as it matures further, filters and screens the road.

14.8.77 The Proposed Development is considered to constitute a 'Notable change in landscape characteristics over a wider area or intensive change over a limited area' as set out in the methodology, and therefore a 'High' magnitude of effect at Year 1, resulting in a '**Substantial Adverse Effect**'. While the planting associated with the Proposed Development would continue to mature and soften the built form, this would remain at Year 15.

Visual Effects associated with Operation

14.8.78 In order to demonstrate the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development a ZTV model was run, based on the **Building Heights parameter plan** (**Appendix 3.1d**). As illustrated in **Figure 14.8, Appendix 14.1** this shows that the area from which, in theory, the Proposed Development could be seen extends over a wide area to the north, east and west of the Site. However, as previously noted this does not account for vegetation and built form which in reality considerably reduces the area from which the Proposed Development would be visible.

14.8.79 As previously noted in paragraph **14.6.27**, the assessment is based on an assumed 2032 baseline. It is usual practice to assess landscape and visual effects at Year 1 and Year 15, to allow for the maturing of newly planted vegetation (assumed to be in the region of 8-11.5m growth in this case), and enable the Proposed Development to achieve its design aspirations. Therefore, these terms would remain through the assessment sections, however, it is accepted that this is a simplification of the reality. All changes to the views of visual receptors are considered to be direct impacts, as they result from the changes associated with the Proposed Development itself.

14.8.80 Stack heights of up to 10 m above the height of the main building are normally required in the types of potential development that are considered may come forward at Gravity, however, in some, exceptional circumstances, stacks of up to 25 m could be required. Therefore, it is assumed that 10m stack heights are the most likely but 25 m are also assessed as an exception within the consideration of visual effects.

14.8.81 During operation, it is reasonable to assume that visual receptors on the Site (people living on the Site or using it for work or recreation) would experience some notable adverse visual effects due to construction works of later phases of the Proposed Development. The precise nature of these cannot be established at this stage given the way in which the site is likely to be built out, however, as noted in section 14.7 measures to minimise adverse effects on those visual receptors have been incorporated into the **Design Guide**. During this timeframe, the potential visual impacts arising from the construction works would vary in significance. As time progresses, the designed appearance of the completed development, plus associated mitigation planting, would become more prominent. In addition, construction activities associated with the later stages of development could, from certain receptors, be screened by those earlier phases already completed.

14.8.82 The photomontages are located on **Figures 14.30-14.49, Appendix 14.1,** and include 2032 baseline images to allow comparison with the Proposed Development, and Year 1 and 15 views. These have been based on the parameter blocks, and strategic landscape included in the parameter plans (**Appendix 3.1f**).

14.8.83 Refer to **Appendix 14.3** Visual Impact Assessment Tables for a summary of the visual effects discussed in the following paragraphs, including whether effects are considered significant in EIA terms, in accordance with the methodology.

Viewpoint A – View looking south east from the M5 adjacent to the Huntspill River - Photomontage Viewpoint (1200 m from main Site boundary) (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.84 For motorists passing at speed, the existing 2017 Planning Consent buildings would have been partially visible, albeit they would not have broken the skyline. The introduction of the Proposed Development would result in the much larger commercial building(s) appearing on the skyline, although lower parts would be partially screened by intervening vegetation. This, coupled with the use of the Design Guide colour strategy to clad the buildings, would help to assimilate them within the intervening and surrounding landscape. This is demonstrated in the photomontages, where **Figure 14.30, Appendix 14.1** shows how the baseline would look in 2032. Figure **14.31 and 14.32, Appendix 14.1** show the new rooflines and stacks which would occupy the skyline and be perceived as a prominent feature in the landscape at Year 1 and 15, illustrating that by this time the structure planting would have matured to screen and filter views towards the lower parts of the development.

14.8.85 The existing 2017 Planning Consent would have some lighting within yard areas, as did the former ROF historically, so that lighting is already present in views towards the Site. However, the Proposed Development would introduce some higher level lighting to the proposed rail terminus which would be visible from this location. The lighting assessment found that there would be negligible effects to road users on the M5 due to the Proposed Development (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.86 In 2032, lower level built form would be visible on the Site, and previously the industrial features of the former ROF were prominent in the views of motorists from this location. Despite the existing context of the views, including the dominant pylon runs, the introduction of very large scale built form on the Site would constitute 'the addition of new and noticeable uncharacteristic features and elements' as defined in the methodology, and therefore a 'High' magnitude of effect at Year 1 resulting in a '**Substantial Adverse Effect'**. Due to the height of the proposed buildings, this effect would be likely to remain at Year 15.

14.8.87 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint B – View looking east towards the Site from Batch Road (500 m from the Site boundary) (Motorists - Low Sensitivity, Pedestrians - Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.88 For motorists and pedestrians on the lane, built form within the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible in 2032, albeit it would be partially screened by existing vegetation, just as the previous industrial buildings on the former ROF in the centre of the Site were also visible on the skyline historically. Within the Proposed Development, the large scale buildings would form parts of the skyline from this location, although, in some places the intervening trees would break up the elevation to a degree. There would be some views of the rail terminus yards, and at night lighting within the rail terminus area would be particularly noticeable, along with lighting elsewhere within the western part of the Site. The lighting assessment does not consider Batch Road but does consider Withy Grove Road which lies slightly further north concerning which it records a '*moderate adverse effect to residents due to the change in night time views and a negligible effect due to obtrusive light from residual upward light leading to sky glow*'. (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.89 The Proposed Development is considered to constitute 'the addition of new and noticeable uncharacteristic features and elements' as defined in the methodology, and as such the magnitude of effect would be 'High' resulting in a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'** for pedestrians, and motorists at Year 1. This would remain the case at Year 15.

14.8.90 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint C – View looking north towards the Site from the Woolavington Road (within the Site) (Motorists - Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.91 The relatively recent introduction of the Gravity Link Road corridor and the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent would be fairly openly visible from this location, although starting to be slightly filtered by maturing vegetation. The Proposed Development would introduce considerable additional, large scale built form, occupying much of the skyline, which would be openly visible across much of the view. The design has stepped up development heights in reference to the Woolavington Road and includes a green edge as a buffer along the route. In addition, the Arrival and Wellbeing Area includes considerable green infrastructure which would help to assimilate the changes.

14.8.92 The existing Gravity Link Road corridor is lit, as would be the 2017 Planning Consent in 2032. There would be views of lighting across much of the Proposed Development, although the large scale commercial unit(s) would screen views of lighting within the Site to the north to a degree.

14.8.93 By Year 15, views of the lower levels of the buildings would be filtered by the existing planting on the roundabout and proposed planting along the Woolavington Road and within the Arrival and Wellbeing Area. However, views of the upper parts of the buildings would remain clearly visible including on the skyline.

14.8.94 For motorists, the overall magnitude of effect to this view is considered to be 'Very High' as 'the proposed development would result in a change in the view such that it becomes the key influence and focus in the view' (as defined in the methodology) resulting in a **'Substantial Adverse Effect'**. As the structure planting matures, the Proposed Development will become further assimilated into the landscape with views of the lower parts of the buildings increasingly filtered, particularly in the summer months, however, this assessment outcome would remain at Year 15.

14.8.95 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint D – View looking north-east across the Site from the Woolavington Road (adjacent to the Site boundary) (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.96 From this location, historically, views of chimneys and built form were visible on the former ROF, however, these have now been demolished, leaving views towards the T-pylon run, and the edge of the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent, with the village edge and rural landscape beyond.

14.8.97 The introduction of the Proposed Development would be openly visible to passing motorists from this location, with built form stepping up in height from the Woolavington Road towards the commercial unit(s). The land beneath the T-pylons would remain open, with a parkland area (Gravity Park) occupying much of this view. In addition, proposed residential development on the edge of Woolavington would be openly visible, although use of the Design Guide colour strategy would help larger scale built form to become absorbed into the surrounding landscape.

14.8.98 This road is currently not lit at night, although there would be glimpses of lighting within the village at present, and more noticeably in 2032, within the 2017 Planning Consent. Within the Proposed Development the introduction of built form up to the Woolavington Road would

introduce a considerably greater area which would be lit at night. However, the Lighting Assessment records a minor adverse effect to the night time view of residents on the Woolavington Road, and a negligible effect due to residual upward lighting leading to sky glow (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.99 Overall 'the proposed development would result in a change in the view such that it becomes the key influence and focus in the view' (as defined in the methodology) which would constitute a 'Very High' magnitude of effect at Year 1 resulting in a '**Substantial Adverse Effect'**. Due to the height and proximity of the proposed buildings, this effect would be likely to remain at Year 15.

14.8.100 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint E – View looking south west from the car park adjacent to The Causeway immediately to the south of the Huntspill River - Photomontage Viewpoint (800 m from Site boundary) (Walkers – High Sensitivity, Anglers and Motorists - Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.101 Historically, the buildings within the former ROF formed an incongruous element in this landscape, and subsequent views towards the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent occupy the central part of the view, although not breaking the skyline, and the views are filtered by maturing structure planting, and some intervening existing vegetation. (**Figure 14.33, Appendix 14.1**). The T-pylons run would also be openly visible from this location.

14.8.102 The Proposed Development is comprised of much larger buildings, and the commercial building(s) occupy a considerable part of the skyline, along with stacks above the roofline. There would also be likely to be views available towards the mobile gantry cranes operating within the rail terminus yards, albeit by Year 15 vegetation is maturing to break up views towards the lower parts of the building(s)/yard areas to a degree, as shown on the photomontages (**Figure 14.34 and 14.35, Appendix 14.1**). However, while the proposed buildings are of a large scale and mass, the use of the Design Guide colour strategy would help to assimilate them into the surrounding landscape.

14.8.103 Lighting would be visible within the 2017 Planning Consent from this location, and would be visible within parts of the Proposed Development, and although the large commercial building(s) would screen views of lighting within much of the southern part of the Site. It is likely that there would be views of lighting within the rail terminus yards from this location. The lighting assessment does not consider this location, however it does consider residents at Withy Grove Road just to the north and found that there would be a moderate adverse effect to residents due to a change in night time views and a negligible effect due to obtrusive light from residual upward light leading to sky glow. (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.104 For walkers, anglers and motorists, at Year 1 the Proposed Development would constitute a 'High' magnitude of effect as 'the proposed development would result in a change in the view such that it becomes the key influence and focus in the view' as defined in the methodology, resulting in a '**Substantial Adverse Effect'** which, given the height of the buildings would be likely to remain at Year 15.

14.8.105 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint F (previously VR17) – View looking west from the Causeway towards the Site (415 m from main Site) (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.106 Historically, the buildings on the former ROF formed an incongruous element in this landscape, and subsequent views towards the built form of the 2017 Planning Consent occupy the central part of the view, and the views are filtered by maturing structure planting, and some intervening existing vegetation. The T-pylons run would also be openly visible from this location.

14.8.107 The Proposed Development's large scale built form and stacks would be visible to motorists along this stretch of the Causeway, breaking the skyline, and forming a dominant feature in views along the road, along with glimpses of the rail terminus, although intervening existing vegetation would break up the elevations to a small degree.

14.8.108 Lighting would be visible within the 2017 Planning Consent from this location, and would be visible within the more extensive Proposed Development. It is likely that there would be views of lighting within the rail terminus yards from this location. The lighting assessment found that there would be negligible effects to road users on the Causeway (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.109 For motorists, although use of the Design Guide colour strategy would help built form to become absorbed into the surrounding landscape, due to the 'addition of new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements' (as defined in the methodology) this would constitute a 'High' magnitude of effect as 'the proposed development would result in a change in the view such that it becomes the key influence and focus in the view', resulting in a '**Substantial Adverse Effect'.** By Year 15 it is anticipated that the structure planting within the eastern part of the Site would have achieved a height in the region of 8-11.5m and would have further softened views for visual receptors, even during the winter months, however, given the scale of the changes, effects would not be likely to reduce further.

14.8.110 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint G – View looking south from Withy Road approaching East Huntspill - Photomontage Viewpoint (1.9 km to the main Site) (Residents High Sensitivity, Motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.111 This view is intended to be representative of the views available to local residents within and around East Huntspill. This flat, rural landscape is more well vegetated than the land further south, and due to the flat nature of the land much of the wider landscape is obscured from view by intervening mature hedgerows and trees, resulting in a rural character to the view, despite the numerous electricity pylons. In 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would be unlikely to be visible, due to intervening vegetation as shown on the photomontage (**Figure 14.36, Appendix 14.1**). Within the Proposed Development, the upper parts of the large, commercial unit(s) and stacks would be just visible beyond intervening skyline vegetation, particularly during winter months when the trees are out of leaf. However, due to intervening vegetation it would not appear as a dominant feature in this view, as shown on the photomontages (**Figure 14.37 and 14.38, Appendix 14.1**).

14.8.112 In 2032, lighting within northern parts of the 2017 Planning Consent would be just visible, glimpsed between intervening vegetation. Lighting within the northern parts of the Proposed Development would also be visible at night, including lights within the rail yards. The lighting assessment does not consider the exact location of this viewpoint, however, it records a moderate adverse effect to residents at Withy Grove nearby due to change in night-time views and a negligible effect to residual upward light leading to sky glow, and in addition there is considered to be a minor adverse effect to the night-time view of residents at East

Huntspill and a negligible effect to residents at East Huntspill due to residual upward light leading to sky glow (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.113 This view appears predominantly rural and the introduction of the large scale built of the Proposed Development on the skyline in this rural view, albeit much is obscured by vegetation, would constitute 'the addition of new and noticeable uncharacteristic features and elements' (as defined in the methodology) for residents and motorists, resulting in a 'Medium' magnitude of effect and therefore, a **'Moderate Adverse Effect'** at Year 1 and Year 15.

14.8.114 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint H (previously VR18) – View looking north from the footpath BW28/2 to the east of Puriton (500 m from main Site boundary and 250 m from roundabout on Woolavington Road) (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.115 From this location at present there are views across lower lying land to the north, including the Site, with lighting columns along the Gravity Link Road corridor to the east. However, by 2032 it is assumed that the approved residential development proposed for the foreground of this view would be complete, therefore predominantly obscuring the 2017 Planning Consent buildings which would otherwise be visible from much of the footpath. Once the Proposed Development is completed, some channelled glimpses of proposed large scale built form and stacks could be available, depending on the final design layout for the residential development. For residents on the northern edge of the residential development some partial views across the large scale built form and stacks within the Proposed Development would be available, although vegetation along the road corridor would soften and filter these views. Use of the Design Guide colour strategy would help built form to become absorbed into the surrounding landscape.

14.8.116 The foreground lighting of the village, the road and the new residential development, along with any glimpses of lighting that may be available within the 2017 Planning Consent would form the baseline context of this view. Changes as a result of the Proposed Development would include an increase in the lit area within the Site, although depending on the extent of the Site visible (according to the final design of the residential development) this is likely to be relatively modest. The lighting assessment found that there is considered to be a negligible effect to the night-time view of residents at Puriton, and a minor adverse effect due to residual upward light leading to sky glow (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.117 For walkers on the footpath, and residents within the adjacent residential development, the Proposed Development would constitute 'the addition of new and noticeable uncharacteristic features and elements' as defined in the methodology, and therefore a 'Medium' magnitude of effect resulting in a **'Moderate Adverse Effect'** at Year 1, this would reduce to a '**Minor Adverse Effect'** by Year 15 as vegetation continues to mature along the Gravity Link Road.

14.8.118 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint I (previously VR19) – View looking north from Bridleway BW28/1 adjacent to Home Covert – Photomontage Viewpoint (750 m from main Site boundary, 250 m from the Gravity Link Road) Photomontage Viewpoint (High Sensitivity)

14.8.119 From this elevated viewpoint along the ridge it is possible for walkers to see a large proportion of the Site. Historically built form has been present (the former ROF), just as in 2032 the buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent would be openly visible as shown on the

photomontage (**Figure 14.39, Appendix 14.1**). The large scale built form of the Proposed Development would be introduced into the middle distance of this view, just below the skyline in the case of the 10 m stack height but with some stacks breaking the skyline in the event of a requirement for 25m stacks, although the southernmost parts would be concealed by landform, as illustrated in the photomontages (**Figure 14.40 and 14.41, Appendix 14.1**).

14.8.120 Although lighting on the Proposed Development would be visible from this location, it is considered unlikely that there would be any walkers on this route after dark.

14.8.121 For walkers and riders on the bridleway, these changes would give rise to 'new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements' in the existing view (as defined in the methodology) and as such are considered to cause a 'Very High' magnitude of effect and a '**Substantial Adverse Effect'** at Year 1. By Year 15 the proposed structure planting would have matured and have begun to soften views towards the lower levels of the buildings, however, the Year 1 effects would remain.

14.8.122 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint J (previously VR20) – View looking north from Hillside as it enters Puriton from the south (750 m from main Site boundary 75 m from the Gravity Link Road) (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.123 The bund associated with the Gravity Link Road corridor screens many of the existing houses on the southern edge of the village, and by 2032 as vegetation on the bund matures, views towards the lower lying land to the north (and the Site within it) would reduce. In winter months, however, there may be small glimpses of parts of the large scale buildings of the 2017 Planning Consent in the middle distance. Although trees on the bund would form much of the skyline and filter the long views to the Mendips.

14.8.124 The Proposed Development, as it is considerably larger in extent and height, would be partially screened and filtered by the bund planting, with glimpses of the larger built form/stacks likely to be more available during winter months, although trees on the bund would still form much of the skyline.

14.8.125 There would be glimpses of lighting within the 2017 Planning Consent in 2032, and within the Proposed Development there is potential for lighting to be visible across a larger area. The lighting assessment found that there is considered to be a negligible effect to the night-time view of residents at Puriton and a minor adverse effect to residents at Puriton due to residual upward light leading to sky glow (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.126 Motorists and walkers would experience a changed view due to the introduction of very large scale built form proposed on the Site which would be just visible on the skyline in places and constitute 'the addition of new but perceptible uncharacteristic features and elements' as defined in the methodology, and therefore a 'Low' magnitude of effect and '**Moderate Adverse Effect**' at Year 1 which would remain at Year 15.

14.8.127 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint K (previously VR21) – View looking north west from Crancombe Lane as it passes/enters Woolavington - Photomontage Viewpoint (440 m from Site boundary) (Motorists, residents and walkers - Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.128 From this edge of the village, the Site is visible in the middle distance, and in 2032 large scale built form would be openly visible across the Site, although lower levels of buildings would be softened by maturing vegetation, and built form would not break the skyline. In addition, the new residential development on the edge of the village would be completed, extending the village towards the Site (**Figure 14.42, Appendix 14.1**) Due to the slightly elevated nature of the lane, walkers and residents would have views across the roof tops of the lower units across the Proposed Development, in addition to the large-scale commercial unit(s) which occupy a section of skyline along with the stacks, as shown in the photomontage (**Figure 14.43 and 14.44, Appendix 14.1**). The result is that built form would occupy the majority of this view, compared to the smaller proportion evident in 2032. Intervening existing vegetation and structure planting would help to further soften and assimilate views of the lower level of the buildings but upper parts and the stacks would remain on the skyline. The Design Guide colour strategy would help to assimilate the development into its surroundings.

14.8.129 In 2032 lighting would be visible across the Site and within the new residential approved development on the edge of the village. The Proposed Development is larger in extent and lighting would therefore be visible across a more extensive area. However, the Lighting Assessment found a negligible effect to the night time view of residents at Woolavington, and a negligible effect due to residual upward light leading to sky glow was anticipated. (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.130 For motorists, residents and walkers, at Year 1 the magnitude of effect is considered to be 'Very High' in that there would be the 'the addition of new and uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements' as defined in the methodology, resulting in a **'Substantial Adverse Effect**'. By Year 15 the structure planting would have matured to a height of 8-11.5m which would help to further assimilate the development into its surroundings. However, due to the large scale nature of the buildings no reduction from Year 1 effects would be anticipated.

14.8.131 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint L (previously VR22) – View looking east along the A39 to the south of Puriton - Photomontage Viewpoint (850 m from main Site, 0 m from the Gravity Link Road junction) (Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.132 This view is experienced by drivers travelling along the A39 and the small number of residents living to the south of the A39, and comprises the new roundabout with its associated lighting, and Gravity Link Road corridor, which forms the dominant feature in the foreground, and defines a largely urban character. By 2032, the roadside vegetation and that planted in the centre of the roundabout would have matured to reduce views northwards towards the main Site (**Figure 14.45, Appendix 14.1**).

14.8.133 In 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent buildings would not be visible to motorists, since the road bund and associated maturing planting would obscure much of the view northwards, however, it is likely that residents would have views towards them from upper storeys. Similarly, it is not anticipated that the Proposed Development would be visible from this location from ground level due to the bund and maturing vegetation (**Figure 14.46 and 14.47, Appendix 14.1**). However, residents would be likely to have some views towards it from north facing windows in upper storeys.

14.8.134 Due to the 'addition of new but perceptible uncharacteristic features and elements' (as defined in the methodology) in views towards the flat agricultural landscape, resulting in a

'Low' magnitude of effect, the Proposed Development would give rise to a '**Minor Adverse Effect'** for residents and motorists, which by Year 15, would remain for residents but it is anticipated would reduce further for motorists to '**Negligible**' due to vegetation growth.

14.8.135 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location, these would be glimpsed during winter months by motorists, and seen from the upper storeys of the residential properties. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint M (previously VR24) – View looking east from Pawlett (2.4 km from the main Site) (Residents and Motorists Medium Sensitivity)

14.8.136 From this viewpoint, motorists and a small number of residents are able to discern the block of woodland in the Site's north western corner. In 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent would be barely visible, and the buildings would be largely screened by intervening vegetation. The Proposed Development's large scale built form, however, and the tops of stacks would be visible on the skyline, although lower parts of the buildings would be largely screened by intervening vegetation and the Design Guide colour strategy adopted would help to assimilate it into its surroundings. There would be likely to be some perception of lighting within the Proposed Development from this location, however, it would appear distant and be seen in the context of the existing M5 motorway corridor, and the village of Puriton.

14.8.137 The increased built form in the view would result in 'the addition of new but perceptible uncharacteristic features and elements' as defined in the methodology and, therefore, a 'Low' magnitude of effect, on balance, resulting in a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'** in Year 1. This would remain the same at Year 15.

14.8.138 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint N (previously VR25) – View looking east from Steart Drove BW25/3 Long distance trail (5.7 km from the main Site) (High Sensitivity)

14.8.139 Views from this area are very expansive and walkers can just discern the block of woodland in the Site's north western corner as part of a wide panorama, but no detail with the naked eye from this location. In 2032, the 2017 Planning Consent would be unlikely to be visible, with the buildings largely screened by intervening vegetation. The Proposed Development's large scale built form, however, would be just visible on the skyline, although lower parts of the buildings would be largely screened by intervening vegetation and the Design Guide colour strategy adopted would help to assimilate it into its surroundings.

14.8.140 There are already distant views towards lighting within Bridgewater and Burnham from this area, and there would be some very limited views towards lighting on the Site, although this would be unlikely to be obvious in the context of existing lighting in the area.

14.8.141 For walkers, the Proposed Development 'may go unnoticed as a small element in the view, or is not readily visible' as defined in the methodology, and this would be considered a 'Very Low' magnitude of effect, resulting in a '**Minor Adverse Effect'** in Year 1. This would remain the same at Year 15.

14.8.142 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), this would result in an increase in the proportion of the stacks visible above the commercial unit(s) from this location. However, this is a distant view and the change would be very small so that further change to the assessment outcome would not be anticipated as a result.

Viewpoint O (previously VR26) – View looking north east from the Quantock Hills (17 km from the Site) (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.143 Given the distance between this location and the Site and the difficulty in identifying the features of the Site, in 2032 it is considered unlikely that the buildings within the 2017 Planning Consent would be perceptible. Depending on the weather conditions/visibility, on a clear day, it would just be possible for walkers to discern the larger elements of the Proposed Development from this location, although it would be set within the context of the flat Somerset landscape which includes numerous examples of large scale built form. The Design Guide colour strategy adopted would help to assimilate the development into its surroundings.

14.8.144 There are already distant views towards lighting within Bridgwater and Burnham from this area, and there would be some very limited views towards lighting on the Site. The lighting assessment found that there would be negligible effects to night-time views due to the Proposed Development (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.145 For walkers, the Proposed Development 'may go unnoticed as a small element in the view' as defined in the methodology, resulting in a 'Very Low' magnitude of effect and therefore a '**Minor Adverse Effect'** in both Year 1 and Year 15. The Quantocks AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2.**

14.8.146 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), given the distance, and the elevation of the location, it is unlikely that the changes would be perceptible and there would be no further change to the assessment outcome as a result.

Viewpoint P (previously VR27) – View looking north from the bridge above the M5 – Photomontage viewpoint (5 km from the Site) (Low Sensitivity)

14.8.147 This viewpoint has been considered as a means by which to test the emerging parameters for the Proposed Development. For motorists, residents and walkers south of the Polden Ridge, there would not be any views of the 2017 Planning Consent as it would be screened by the ridge itself (**Figure 14.48, Appendix 14.1**). The buildings and stacks of the Proposed Development would not be visible from this location, and, given the well lit context of this location, it is unlikely that any views of lighting would be perceptible, therefore resulting in a magnitude of effect of 'None', and as a result there would be '**No Change'** in both Year 1 and Year 15 (**Figure 14.49, Appendix 14.1**).

14.8.148 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), no further change to the assessment outcome would be anticipated as a result, as although the 25m stack height could just break the ridge, vegetation along the ridge top would mean that the stacks would be unlikely to be perceptible.

Viewpoint Q (previously VR29) – View looking south from the Mendip Hills (15 km from the Site) (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.149 Given the distance between this location and the Site, and the difficulty in discerning the existing features on it, it would be unlikely that the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible. Within the Proposed Development much of the detail would not be perceptible from these hillsides, however, on clear days the large commercial unit(s) would be likely to be distantly visible although the Design Guide colour strategy adopted would help to assimilate the development into its surroundings. At this distance lighting within the rail yard areas to the north of the large commercial unit(s) would be likely to be just visible, however, the numbers of walkers on the hillsides at night would be likely to be small. The lighting assessment found that there would be negligible effects to night-time views due to the Proposed Development (**Appendix 14.5**).

14.8.150 For walkers, as a result of the existing context of views towards the flat Somerset landscape, which include some large scale built form, and the distance involved, the introduction of the

'Proposed Development may go unnoticed as a small element in the view' as defined in the methodology, resulting in a 'Very Low' magnitude of effect and therefore a '**Minor Adverse Effect'** in both Year 1 and Year 15. The Mendips AONB officer was not concerned about the Proposed Development during consultation as noted in section **14.4.2.**

14.8.151 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), given the distance, and the elevation of the location, it is unlikely that the changes would be perceptible and there would be no further change to the assessment outcome as a result.

Viewpoint R (previously VR30) – View looking south east from the Brent Knoll (8.5 km from the Site) (Very High Sensitivity)

14.8.152 Although this location is not as distant as the Mendip Hills, it is still quite far north of the Site, and given the distance between this location and the Site, and the difficulty in discerning the existing features on it, it would be unlikely that the 2017 Planning Consent would be visible. Within the Proposed Development much of the detail would not be perceptible from this elevated viewpoint, however, on clear days the large commercial unit(s) would be likely to be distantly visible set within the context of the M5 motorway and some large scale built form along its corridor. The Design Guide colour strategy adopted would help to assimilate the development into its surroundings. At this distance lighting within the rail yard areas to the north of the large commercial unit(s) would be likely to be distantly visible, although, the numbers of walkers on the hillside at night would be likely to be small, and views would be experienced in the existing context of large scale commercial/industrial buildings along the M5 corridor (and the motorway itself) which would be lit due to passing car headlights at night.

14.8.153 As a result of the existing context of views towards the flat, Somerset landscape, which include some large scale built form, and the distance involved, for walkers the 'introduction of new but perceptible uncharacteristic features and elements (adverse change)' as defined in the methodology, would result in a 'Low' magnitude of effect and therefore a '**Moderate Adverse Effect'** in both Year 1 and Year 15.

14.8.154 In the event of a requirement for 25 m stacks (as opposed to the more likely 10 m), given the distance, and the elevation of the location, it is unlikely that the changes would be perceptible and there would be no further change to the assessment outcome as a result.

14.9 Further Mitigation

14.9.1 Significant landscape and visual effects have been identified within the LVIA, and in line with EIA best practice and recent IEMA guidance, further mitigation has been considered. However, due to the nature of the landscape and visual effects in this case, no further mitigation would be considered likely to change the assessment outcomes further, and therefore, no further mitigation is proposed.

14.10 Residual Effects

14.10.1 Residual effects would remain the same as operation stage effects at year 15, as due to the nature of landscape and visual effects, in this case no further mitigation is possible.

14.10.2 Refer to **Appendix 14.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Tables** for a summary of residual landscape and visual effects.

14.10.3 As would be anticipated with a Proposed Development of this scale, significant residual effects have been identified within those landscapes local to the Site. Of the local landscape character areas established as part of this LVIA to investigate a finer grain of change to local landscape character, effects on CA1, CA2, CA4, CA5, CA6 and CA7 have been identified as significant adverse. Residual adverse effects on CA3 Moors and Levels adjacent to the M5 have been identified as not significant, due to the existing characteristics of this local

landscape character area. In relation to the SLA, there would be significant adverse effects on both 'Levels and Moors' and 'Lowland Hills - Polden Hills' due to proximity to the Site, however, effects on 'Lowland Hills – wider area' would be not significant. In addition, effects on the Quantocks and the Mendips AONBs would be considered not significant.

14.10.4 In terms of visual effects, residual adverse effects on the views of all visual receptors within a 2.5 km radius have been identified as significant, with the exception of View H within Puriton, from which the intervening bund and maturing planting of the Gravity Road Link corridor, along with the approved residential development would reduce the extent of views available by operation year 15 to not significant. Residual adverse effects on all views from visual receptors beyond 2.5 km from the Site have been assessed to be not significant, this includes views from the sensitive receptors on the Quantocks and Mendips AONB. However, with the exception of visual receptors on Brent Knoll for whom effects would be considered significant due to a combination of location and the elevated views available.

14.11 Monitoring

14.11.1 There would be residual significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development. However, in this case, monitoring measures are not considered appropriate in relation to landscape and visual effects. This is because monitoring the landscape and visual effects would not be anticipated to result in any changes to the assessment outcomes.

14.11.2 During construction, protection measures for existing vegetation would be noted within the **FDCEMP**.

14.11.3 During detail design and operation, the **Design Guide** would ensure the design principles included in section 14.7 would be taken forward to detail design stage.

14.11.4 There would be on-going monitoring of the success of landscaping/planting within the Proposed Development, which is covered within the **Design Guide**.

14.12 Summary

14.12.1 This chapter considers the landscape and visual effects that are likely to arise from the Proposed Development. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the findings.

Key policies

14.12.2 Much of the LDO Site has historically been occupied by the industrial built form of the former Royal Ordnance Factory, and the Site is recognised within the local planning background documents, recorded as 'Puriton Energy Park' and within the Bridgwater Vision 2009.

14.12.3 The 2017 Planning Consent for the Site accepts the principle of large scale buildings on the Site, supported by local planning policy, which places emphasis on careful consideration of local landscape character, the setting of the Mendips and Quantocks Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, visual amenity and green infrastructure networks within the local landscape, and on the Site itself.

Headline methodology

14.12.4 The chapter examines the following as separate, although linked, considerations:

- Landscape effects; derived from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may, in turn, affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.

- Visual effects; related to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and to the overall effects on visual amenity value of the views from surrounding uses.

14.12.5 The broad study area for landscape effects is 5 km, with a more detailed study of local landscape character concentrated within 2 km of the Site. The study area for visual effects extends across the area from which the Site can been seen, in this case, views of the Site are available, albeit distantly, from the Mendip Hills and Quantock Hills, located approximately 15 km and 17 km away respectively

Baseline conditions

14.12.6 At the time of writing the majority of demolition and remediation works have been completed, on the Site, and the Gravity Link Road to the A39 is largely complete according to the 2017 Planning Consent. Areas of the Site outside of the former Royal Ordnance Factory are predominantly green field. To reflect the evolving conditions on the Site, the assessment refers to a baseline in 2032 which considers the Site as it will be at that time, with the 2017 Planning Consent in place and large scale built form across the central areas, and vegetation establishing within the layout, including along the Gravity Link Road.

Mitigation

14.12.7 Mitigation measures, which have been 'in built' into the design include locating the tallest built form in the central part of the Site with the stepping down of building heights to the south, in reference to the scale of the Woolavington Road; the retention of existing vegetation around the much of the periphery of the Proposed Development, and the structural tree and woodland planting proposed to help integrate built form into its surroundings; a green edge to Woolavington Road, and open space to enhance the perception of a distinct edge to the separate villages and provide opportunities for biodiversity; a network of pedestrian and cycle routes, careful design of the lighting strategy and a Design Guide colour strategy to help assimilate the buildings into their landscape setting.

Likely effects

14.12.8 The LVIA considers the worst case scenario for likely effects based on the parameters established in the suite of parameter plans, and the parameters for the Proposed Development include some very large-scale buildings, with stacks rising above the buildings. As a result there is the potential to give rise to substantial adverse effects on landscape character and the views of some people living and working nearby, and passing through the area.

14.12.9 The chapter records that during construction, there would be substantial adverse effects on:

14.12.10 Local landscape character, as areas within the Site would undergo an 'intensive change over a limited area' for the duration of the works, and there would be substantial adverse effects on the setting of nearby local landscape character areas due to the influence of views towards the construction works; and

- Visual amenity as the construction of the Proposed Development would potentially be visible to all visual receptors. For those receptors within the immediate locality these would be substantial, however, with distance the effects would diminish.

14.12.11 On completion of the construction works, buildings and green infrastructure would be in place, although vegetation would be limited in size at this stage, there would be substantial adverse effects on:

- Local landscape character, as areas within the Site would undergo an 'intensive change over a limited area', and there would be substantial adverse effects on the setting of

nearby local landscape character areas due to the influence of views towards the large scale buildings; and

- Visual amenity as the Proposed Development would potentially be visible to all visual receptors. For those receptors within immediate locality these would be substantial, however, with distance the effects would diminish.

14.12.12 It should be noted that while both the construction works and the operational development would theoretically be visible from the more distant viewpoints within the Quantocks and Mendips Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, they would be difficult to pick out with the naked eye.

14.12.13 The residual effects are considered to be 15 years from completion of the construction works, this allows time for proposed vegetation to mature, and achieve its design intentions. In this case, due to the large scale of the buildings, although this maturation would soften views and assimilate the development in its setting, providing an attractive environment for those living and working within the Proposed Development, levels of effects would remain as for Year 1.

14.12.14 In summary substantial adverse landscape and visual effects are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development.

14.12.15 There would be significant adverse effects on landscape character within the Site itself, its immediate surroundings within the Levels and Moors to the north, Puriton and Woolavington and the landscape along the northern flank of the Polden Hills.

14.12.16 There would be significant adverse visual effects experienced by motorists on the M5 motorway, and Batch Road, the residents of Puriton and Woolavington, those travelling between the two villages along Woolavington Road, motorists and walkers along the Causeway, motorists and residents at East Huntspill and Pawlett, walkers and riders on the Polden Ridge, and walkers on Brent Knoll.

14.12.17 Although the Proposed Development would be just visible from the Mendips and Quantocks AONBs, no significant adverse effects are anticipated due to the distance involved and the existing context of the low lying Somerset landscape which lies within their setting.

Conclusion

14.12.18 The Proposed Development would provide a Smart Campus and Community, with associated sports, recreation and amenity facilities, and improved links to the surrounding areas.

14.12.19 The adverse landscape and visual effects, which unavoidably result from the introduction of a development of this scale, have been set out within this chapter, and should be considered in the context of the Site, much of which has historically been populated by industrial buildings, and recently obtained planning permission in 2017 for large scale buildings. It should be noted that whilst the 2017 Planning Consent was granted for the Huntspill Energy Park, the safeguarded land uses were also considered and assessed cumulatively in the Environmental Statement. The safeguarded land uses included some very tall energy generating elements with stacks up to 105 metres high, and although these elements did not obtain planning permission at that time, they illustrate the intention that large scale elements could be considered.

14.12.20 The mitigation proposed, as set out in the **parameter plans** and **Design Guide** will facilitate a high quality of design as the project moves forward.

14.12.21 The Design Guide provides a unique opportunity to offer both mandatory principles for mitigation, and guidance to create a sense of place, specific to Gravity and to its location. It establishes the key spatial qualities and characteristics to support the development of a

cohesive and aspirational place, whilst creating flexibility and creative opportunities for future potential occupiers.

14.13 Referencing

14.13.1 This chapter refers to the following best practice guidance documents:

- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition);
- Christine Tudor, October 2014, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment;
- Landscape Institute, March 2017, Technical Advice Note Tranquillity – An Overview 01/2017 (Revised); and
- Landscape Institute, June 2019, TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals.