

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Land off Mill Lane, Whitburn, South Tyneside.

On behalf of Story Homes Ltd

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects from Pegasus Group to support a planning application for a proposed residential development at Lizard Lane, Whitburn, South Tyneside. The development comprises approximately 205 dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space on a 10.65-hectare site currently in agricultural use.
- 1.2. The LVIA considers the potential effects of the indicative proposals upon:
 - individual landscape features and elements;
 - landscape character; and
 - visual amenity and the people who view the landscape.
- 1.3. The main objectives of the LVIA are as follows:
 - to identify, evaluate and describe the current landscape character of the Site and its surroundings and also any notable landscape features within the Site;
 - to determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed;
 - to identify potential visual receptors (i.e. people who would be able to see the development) and evaluate their sensitivity to the type of changes proposed;
 - to identify and describe any impacts of the development in so far as they affect the landscape and/or views of it and evaluate the magnitude of change due to these impacts;
 - to develop mitigation measures to avoid, reduce and compensate for landscape and visual impacts; and
 - to evaluate the relative significance of residual landscape and visual effects.
- 1.4. Site visits were undertaken by Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute in late April 2025, in spring when vegetation was in full leaf. Professional judgment has therefore been applied to assess winter-time conditions.
- 1.5. The site falls within the administrative boundary of South Tyneside Council and is located on the northern edge of Whitburn village. With Reference to Appendix 4: Environmental Designation Plan, the site is currently positioned within the Green Belt and has been assessed as potentially comprising grey belt.

2. Methodology

2.1 This assessment has been undertaken by Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute and follows best practice, as outlined in the following current published guidance:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) - Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) and LITGN-2024-01: Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of GLVIA3 (August 2024);*
- *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment – Natural England (October 2014);*
- *Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 (2021); and*
- *Visual Representation of Development Proposals - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (2019).*

2.2 The main objectives of the Assessment are as follows:

- To identify the landscape character of the application site and its surroundings and also any notable landscape features within the application site boundary;
- To determine the impact that the type of development proposed would have on the landscape, through assessment of the landscape and the degree to which it would change as a result of the proposed development type;
- To identify potential visual receptors (i.e. people who would be able to see the development) and evaluate the impact of change based on the proposed development;
- To describe measures proposed to avoid, reduce or mitigate potential negative effects; and,
- To identify and describe any impacts of the development in so far as they affect the landscape and/or views of it.

2.3 The assessment methodology follows the systematic approach established in GLVIA3, incorporating both landscape effects (changes to the landscape as a resource) and visual effects (changes to specific views and visual amenity). The assessment considers the sensitivity of landscape character

and visual receptors, the magnitude of change resulting from the proposed development, and combines these factors to determine the significance of effects.

- 2.4 A 2km study area has been established around the Site boundary, which is considered appropriate for a residential development of this scale and type. This study area encompasses the zone within which substantial landscape and visual effects are most likely to occur, based on the screening effects of existing vegetation, topography, and built development.
- 2.5 The assessment considers effects during three key phases: Construction Phase (temporary effects during site preparation and building); Year 1 (completion of development with newly implemented landscape mitigation); and Year 15 (established mitigation planting providing mature landscape integration). Seasonal variations have also been considered, particularly the screening effects of deciduous vegetation during summer months compared to winter conditions.
- 2.6 A Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (**Appendix 6: Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility**) has been prepared using digital terrain modelling to assist in defining the study area and identifying potential visual receptors. The analysis incorporates existing vegetation and buildings to provide a realistic assessment of potential visibility, though field verification has been undertaken to confirm actual viewing conditions and account for local variations not captured in digital modelling.

3. Site Context and Description

Site Context

- 3.1 The site is located on the northern edge of Whitburn village in South Tyneside, positioned between the built edge of the settlement to the south and agricultural land extending toward the Cleadon Hills to the north and west. Whitburn village is characterised by its attractive historic core centred on a linear village green surrounded by buildings of architectural interest, mature trees, and traditional limestone construction reflecting the local geological heritage. The medieval parish church provides a focal feature to the south of the green, while the landmark windmill in the northern part of the settlement serves as a notable orientation point visible from considerable distances.
- 3.2 The settlement has experienced suburban expansion in the mid to late 20th century, extending westward from the historic core while maintaining much of its essential village character and relationship with the surrounding agricultural landscape.

- 3.3 The site is bounded by Mill Lane (A183) to the east, providing the primary vehicular access route and connection to the wider highway network.
- 3.4 Lizard Lane defines the western boundary of the site, functioning as a rural road that provides access to surrounding agricultural properties. It connects the village centre to the south and extends northward toward Marsden Quarry and the Cleadon Hills plateau. The existing residential area of Whitburn lies to the south, with Marsden Primary School situated just beyond the site's southern boundary, establishing a clear transition between developed areas and the proposed settlement extension.
- 3.5 The area benefits from excellent accessibility via the A183 corridor, proximity to bus services providing connections to wider urban areas, and connections to the wider public rights of way network including the Tyne and Wear Heritage Way, which provides long-distance recreational walking opportunities. The England Coast Path further to the east offers additional recreational infrastructure connecting to coastal recreational facilities and the wider regional path network.
- 3.6 The broader landscape context includes the active limestone workings at Marsden Quarry approximately 1.5 kilometres to the north, representing ongoing mineral extraction that forms part of the area's economic and landscape character. The Marsden Old Quarry Local Nature Reserve (LNR) provides important habitat and recreational resources within the wider Cleadon Hills complex. The extensive plateau farmland that characterises the Cleadon Hills area supports the local agricultural economy, and coastal recreational facilities at Whitburn Coastal Park provide additional recreational context and tourism infrastructure.

Site Description

- 3.7 The site comprises agricultural land currently in arable use, forming part of the farmland that characterises the wider Cleadon Hills area. The site area totals 10.6 hectares with a net developable area of 8.55 hectares, reflecting the retention of landscape buffers and open space within the development proposals to ensure appropriate integration with the surrounding landscape.
- 3.8 The topography is characterised by a gentle but consistent slope upward from east to west across the site, with the lower ground along the eastern boundary at Mill Lane (A183) rising toward Lizard Lane on the western edge. Site levels range from approximately 32m AOD along the eastern boundary to approximately 42m AOD along the western boundary, creating a clear directional slope that influences drainage patterns, views, and the overall character of the site. This westward-

rising slope positions the site on the lower eastern flanks of the Cleadon Hills, forming part of the transition between the higher plateau areas to the west and the lower coastal plain to the east.

- 3.9 The east-west slope creates a distinct orientation within the site, with some longer views available looking eastward toward the coast when facing downslope, while westward views looking upslope extend toward the higher ground of the Cleadon Hills. This topographical characteristic plays an important role in defining the site's relationship with its surroundings, creating a transitional area between the higher Cleadon Hills plateau and the lower coastal settlement edge.
- 3.10 Existing boundary treatments reflect the typical agricultural character of the area and comprise a variety of materials characteristic of the local Magnesian Limestone landscape. The northern boundary with Kitchener Lane is formed by stone walling constructed from local limestone, which continues from the northern boundary and cuts across the northwest corner to join Lizard Lane, demonstrating traditional boundary construction techniques using readily available local materials. The upper half of the eastern boundary with Mill Lane (A183) is also formed of low stone walling, which terminates at the recently built housing cluster in the northeast corner adjacent to the existing playground.
- 3.11 A short section of stone walling is present at the southwest corner, while the remainder of the western boundary with Lizard Lane is formed of low open post and wire fenced boundary typical of modern agricultural management practices. The lower half of the eastern boundary is formed of low concrete post and wire mesh panel fencing. The southern boundary shared with Marsden Primary School and playing field beyond the site boundary is defined by low palisade fencing.
- 3.12 Significantly, all existing boundary treatments are of low height and open character, allowing for open views over the site and the adjoining agricultural landscape. This creates a high degree of visual permeability across the site boundaries and contributes to the sense of openness that characterises the agricultural landscape of the area. The combination of traditional stone walls reflecting the geological heritage and modern agricultural fencing demonstrates the evolution of agricultural practices while maintaining the essential open character of the farming landscape.
- 3.13 The site field is of a similar medium to large scale arable comparable to fields found in the local area. The simplified field pattern typical of contemporary arable farming reduces ecological diversity compared to traditional mixed farming systems but remains characteristic of productive

agricultural areas throughout the region and consistent with the wider Cleadon Hills agricultural landscape.

- 3.14 The site provides open views northward across the agricultural landscape toward the active limestone workings at Marsden Quarry and the wider Cleadon Hills plateau, contributing to the sense of openness and connection to the wider landscape. The westward-rising slope creates distinctive viewing conditions, with observers on the lower eastern portions looking upslope toward the higher western boundary, while those on the higher western edge have more extensive eastward views across the site and beyond toward the coast. Views southward are contained by the existing residential development of Whitburn and Marsden Primary School, while views eastward from the higher western portions extend toward the coastal edge where the plateau gives way to the coastal plain. The open boundary treatments ensure that these views are relatively unimpeded and contribute to the visual connectivity between the site and the surrounding agricultural and settlement areas.

4. The Proposed Development, Potential Impacts and Mitigation Proposals

- 4.1 The proposed development comprises approximately 205 dwellings on a 10.6-hectare site with a net developable area of 8.55 hectares, that reflects an appropriate response to the rural edge location and landscape context. The site layout plan proposes a comprehensive approach to site development that responds to landscape and visual context while providing appropriate integration with the existing settlement pattern and transition to the wider agricultural landscape.
- 4.2 Key elements of the proposal include a single vehicular access from Mill Lane (A183) providing primary connection to the wider highway network while concentrating traffic movements along the eastern boundary, a linear park along the western edge providing pedestrian and cycle connections while creating a substantial landscape buffer between built development and the wider agricultural landscape, green streets aligned with key view corridors to maintain visual connections to the wider landscape and preserve important sight lines, an attenuation basin and focal green space designed as an integrated landscape feature serving drainage functions while providing biodiversity enhancement and visual interest, higher density development to the south adjacent to the existing settlement edge providing appropriate transition and efficient use of land close to existing services, and lower density development to the north at the rural edge responding to the agricultural context and providing sensitive transition to the wider countryside.

- 4.3 The consolidated single access strategy focuses vehicular movements to the eastern boundary where the road infrastructure is already established to handle increased capacity. This approach minimizes disruption to the rural character of Lizard Lane to the west, maintaining its function as a quiet rural lane while providing enhanced pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the linear park without introducing vehicular traffic conflicts.
- 4.4 The development layout has been informed by detailed analysis of landscape character and visual amenity constraints, with particular attention to maintaining important views, protecting the setting of the adjacent Area of High Landscape Value, and providing appropriate transition between the built settlement and the rural landscape. The design approach recognises the importance of landscape structure in creating successful residential environments while contributing positively to the wider landscape character.
- 4.5 The site's eastward-sloping topography has influenced the development layout, with the attenuation basin positioned at the lower eastern side to work with natural drainage patterns. The gradual upslope toward the west has informed the positioning of the linear park along the higher western boundary, creating opportunities for views eastward across the development and toward the coast from this elevated edge. The topographical variation across the site creates opportunities for development to respond sensitively to the natural landform, working with rather than against the existing slope.
- 4.6 The Public open space totals approximately 2 hectares and would be provided throughout the development, including the linear park providing substantial landscape buffer and recreational resource, focal green space incorporating sustainable drainage and biodiversity enhancement, and green corridors that maintain connectivity across the site while preserving important visual relationships. The retention of existing mature vegetation where possible and comprehensive new planting would ensure the development integrates effectively within its landscape setting while providing enhanced environmental quality.

Potential Key Impacts

- 4.7 The potential key impacts of the development are as follows:

Effects During Construction

- 4.8 Any effects on landscape and visual receptors during construction are likely to arise from temporary construction works including:
- Site clearance and preparation works including removal of existing vegetation where necessary for development areas and access arrangements;
 - Minor landform alterations necessary to facilitate earthworks associated with development platforms, road infrastructure and drainage systems requiring soil movement and level changes;
 - Movement of construction vehicles and plant via the single Mill Lane (A183) access point creating temporary increases in traffic volume and changes in traffic character at this location;
 - presence of construction compounds, site offices and welfare facilities introducing temporary built development and activity areas;
 - and general construction activity across the site over an estimated construction period of multiple phases extending over several years.
- 4.9 The concentration of construction traffic to a single access point on Mill Lane would focus construction-related movements to the eastern boundary, where the existing road infrastructure is most capable of accommodating increased traffic volumes. This approach avoids impacts on the more sensitive rural character of Lizard Lane to the west, maintaining its quieter character throughout the construction phase.
- 4.10 The site's sloping topography will require some cut and fill operations to create appropriate development platforms and road gradients, though the layout has been designed to work with the existing landform as far as possible, minimizing extensive regrading while ensuring suitable development surfaces. Earthworks will be most prominent during the early construction phase before being integrated into the overall development.
- 4.11 The construction phase would represent the period of maximum visual impact due to the prominent nature of construction activities, though these effects would be temporary and would diminish as construction progresses and landscape mitigation establishes. Careful phasing of development and early implementation of landscape mitigation would help minimise construction impacts and ensure progressive improvement in environmental quality.

Effects at Completion (Year 1) and Year 15

4.12 The permanent components of the proposed development which may give rise to effects on landscape and visual receptors are listed as follows:

- The permanent change from agricultural to residential land use, introducing built development into the agricultural landscape and associated alteration in landscape pattern and character;
- Introduction of residential curtilages, gardens and domestic infrastructure including boundary treatments;
- The new vehicular access point and internal road infrastructure creating permanent changes to movement patterns and highway character along Mill Lane;
- Changes to local traffic patterns and usage;
- lighting and domestic activity, and lighting associated with the residential development and highway infrastructure;
- Long-term effects on landscape character and visual amenity;
- Mitigation integrated into the proposed development, including provision of new planting.

4.13 The new vehicular access point and internal road infrastructure creating permanent changes to movement patterns and highway character along Mill Lane, changes to field patterns and fundamental change in land use from agricultural to residential across the majority of the site, introduction of residential curtilages, gardens and domestic infrastructure including boundary treatments, lighting and domestic activity, and lighting associated with the residential development and highway infrastructure, though this would be controlled to minimise impact on rural character and dark skies.

4.14 The development would represent a fundamental change from agricultural to residential land use across the majority of the site, though the comprehensive landscape framework would help integrate the built development within the wider landscape context and ensure appropriate transition between different land uses.

4.15 These impacts would be addressed through the comprehensive landscape strategy (framework) and ongoing landscape management arrangements.

Landscape Mitigation and Outline Planting Proposals

- 4.16 Mitigation measures have been embedded within the design development process, ensuring that landscape and visual considerations inform layout, building design, and landscape proposals. This approach ensures that mitigation is integral to the development rather than added retrospectively, maximising effectiveness whilst creating places of quality that contribute positively to local character.
- 4.17 The proposed landscape strategy (Refer to **Appendix 9: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan**) aims to integrate the development sensitively within its landscape context while delivering meaningful enhancement of landscape structure and biodiversity value that extends benefits beyond the immediate development area. Primary mitigation measures include retention and enhancement of existing boundary vegetation where possible, with strengthening of fragmented sections through new native hedgerow planting using species appropriate to the local landscape character.
- 4.18 The principal aims and additional measures of the landscape and visual mitigation are shown on the Illustrative Landscape Framework Plan shown on the plan at Appendix 9. All of the mitigation measures proposed are located within the red line of the application site. These measures can therefore be secured through the development.
- 4.19 The revised single access strategy from Mill Lane allows for a more coherent and continuous landscape treatment along the western boundary with Lizard Lane, where the linear park can now form an uninterrupted landscape buffer without vehicular access requirements. This creates a stronger and more consistent landscape edge to the west, enhancing the transition between the development and the wider agricultural landscape while maintaining the rural character of Lizard Lane.
- 4.20 The creation of a substantial linear park along the western boundary would provide a strong landscape buffer between the built development and the wider agricultural landscape, serving multiple functions including visual screening, habitat enhancement, recreational provision, and drainage management. This feature would incorporate native tree and shrub planting selected to reflect local landscape character, grassland management for biodiversity including wildflower areas and species-rich grassland, pedestrian and cycle routes connecting to the wider network and providing enhanced recreational access, and educational interpretation opportunities highlighting the local landscape character, geological heritage, and biodiversity value.

- 4.21 The positioning of the linear park along the higher western boundary takes advantage of the site's topography, creating opportunities for eastward views across the development and toward the coast from this elevated edge while providing an appropriate landscape transition to the wider countryside. The park's location at the higher western edge also helps to reduce the visual impact of development when viewed from the west, providing a softer edge to the settlement extension.
- 4.22 Green corridors aligned with key view corridors would maintain visual connections to the wider landscape while providing habitat connectivity throughout the development, ensuring that the built development does not create barriers to landscape appreciation or ecological movement. These corridors would incorporate native tree planting providing visual structure and habitat resources, sustainable drainage features including swales and retention areas designed as positive landscape elements, and pedestrian routes that enhance permeability and accessibility while providing opportunities for landscape appreciation.
- 4.23 The attenuation basin in the eastern portion of the site would be designed as a positive landscape feature, incorporating wetland planting that provides biodiversity enhancement while serving essential drainage functions and flood risk management. The basin would be integrated with surrounding grassland and tree planting to create an attractive focal point for the development while demonstrating sustainable design principles and providing educational value regarding sustainable drainage and biodiversity enhancement.
- 4.24 A comprehensive tree and hedgerow planting strategy throughout the development would include structural boundary planting to filter views and provide screening, using native species that reflect local landscape character and provide habitat value, street trees within residential areas to provide environmental quality and visual structure, selected to provide appropriate scale and seasonal interest while accommodating utility infrastructure, specimen tree planting within open spaces and key locations, chosen to provide landmark features and contribute to sense of place, and native hedgerow planting to reinforce landscape character and provide habitat connectivity, using traditional hedgerow species appropriate to the Magnesian Limestone landscape.
- 4.25 Enhanced boundary treatments, particularly along the southern boundary to provide appropriate interface with Marsden Primary School beyond the site boundary, would provide appropriate separation and screening through structural hedgerow and tree planting, ensuring that the development interface with educational land uses is appropriately managed while contributing to the school's environmental setting through enhanced landscape quality.

- 4.26 These mitigation proposals have been developed in accordance with GLVIA3 methodology and are designed to address the specific landscape and visual sensitivities identified in the baseline assessment whilst creating a high-quality residential environment that enhances rather than detracts from the local landscape character.

Study Area and Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 4.27 In order to assist in defining the study area a digital Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV) model was generated to illustrate the geographical area within which views of the development within the Site are theoretically possible. The Screened ZTV is included at Appendix 6.
- 4.28 The SZTV includes existing vegetation and buildings to assumed height of 15m for vegetation and 8m for buildings which would affect the areas across which visibility of the proposed development is likely. The SZTV has been produced using Digital Terrain Modelling (DTM) data with the proposed development height set at 9m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 4.29 The buildings and vegetation data used for the SZTV is obtained from OS Open Map Local Data for buildings and woodland which is then used to create a Digital Surface Model. However, the screening effect provided by individual trees, smaller blocks of woodland and hedgerows/hedgerow trees have not been considered in the SZTV.
- 4.30 The SZTV is a useful tool used to provide focus on the area and receptors that are most likely to be affected by the proposed development but should always be subject to verification in the field. In considering, however, the nature of the local townscape and the wider landscape within which it is located, it is considered that the SZTV is a good reflection of actual potential visibility, although it should be noted that the SZTV does not distinguish between the extent of the proposed development which could be theoretically visible i.e. whether the full extent of a dwelling/group of dwellings is visible or only partially visible.
- 4.31 Following a review of the SZTV and visit to the Site and surrounding landscape/townscape it is proposed that an appropriate study area for the assessment is 2km from the Site. Although there are areas of theoretical visibility beyond these principal locations, considering both increasing distances from the Site, local designations, and settlement context, it is considered that the study area described above represents a reasonable and proportionate approach and one which will identify those effects which are most material in considering the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development of the Site.

5. Policy Context Designations and Planning

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the extant designations and policy framework of particular relevance to the landscape and visual issues considered in this LVIA. Policies with specific geographical limits and which are relevant to a consideration of landscape and visual matters are illustrated on the plan at Appendix 4 Environmental Designations Plan.

European Landscape Convention

- 5.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. The convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning, as well as European co-operation on landscape issues. Signed by the UK Government in February 2006, the ELC became binding from March 2007. It applies to all landscapes, towns and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that are afforded protection.
- 5.3 The Government has stated that it considers the UK to be compliant with the ELC's requirements and in effect the principal requirements of the ELC are already enshrined in the existing suite of national policies and guidance on the assessment of landscape and visual effects.
- 5.4 The ELC defines landscape as '*An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.*' (Council of Europe 2000)
- 5.5 It is important to recognise that the ELC does not require the preservation of all landscapes although landscape protection is one of the core themes of the convention. Equally important though is the requirement to manage and plan future landscape change.
- 5.6 The ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes. The analysis of landscape and visual matters in this LVIA read in context with appropriate national and local policy will enable decisions to be made with due regard to landscape character as promoted by the ELC.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (Updated February 2025) provides the overarching policy context for landscape considerations in planning decisions, establishing the presumption in favour of sustainable development while ensuring appropriate protection of environmental assets. Paragraph

187 requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value, and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

- 5.8 The assessment demonstrates that while the site contributes to the agricultural landscape, it does not constitute a valued landscape as defined in national policy, being outside the most highly designated areas and lacking exceptional landscape qualities that would warrant the highest level of protection from development. The proposed development responds appropriately to landscape character while providing comprehensive enhancement of landscape structure and biodiversity value.
- 5.9 The Framework's emphasis on achieving well-designed places is particularly relevant to this development, with Paragraph 136 highlighting the important contribution trees make to character and quality of environments and requiring that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees within developments. The proposed development responds positively to these requirements through comprehensive landscape design, substantial tree retention and planting strategies totalling substantial enhancement of tree coverage, and integration of green infrastructure throughout the development that provides multiple environmental benefits.

Local Planning Policy

Local Plan for South Tyneside 2007-2021

- 5.10 The site falls within South Tyneside Council's administrative area and is subject to policies within the Core Strategy Local Plan for South Tyneside 2007-2021 and emerging Local Plan policies. Key policies relevant to landscape and visual considerations include Key Statement EN1 relating to Green Belt, which confirms that the site is located within the Green Belt designation, and Policy ENV2 relating to Landscape protection and enhancement.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy

- 5.11 The site falls within the Whitburn Neighbourhood Plan area (2021-2036), which provides additional local policy context for landscape and visual considerations. Two policies are particularly relevant to the proposed development:

Policy WNP6: Green Infrastructure Enhancement and Connectivity

5.12 Policy WNP6 requires development proposals to restore, maintain and enhance the connectivity and biodiversity value, landscape value and recreational value of local green infrastructure. The policy identifies a Green Infrastructure Corridor covering much of the countryside around Whitburn village, within which the northern half of the site is located with reference to the Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map.

5.13 The policy specifically requires that:

- Areas of woodland, healthy trees and hedgerows should be retained and where necessary, improved as part of development proposals
- Where unavoidable loss occurs, replacement trees or hedgerow should be provided either on-site or elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Area
- Green infrastructure should be enhanced through increased tree cover and use of native tree and hedge species
- Major housing development should incorporate at least one of the following types of Green Infrastructure:
 - Linking to green infrastructure adjacent or nearest to the development site
 - Creation and/or enhancement of wildlife corridors through the development site
 - Provision of sustainable drainage systems which provide biodiversity benefits
 - Linking green spaces with walking/cycling routes to avoid isolated green spaces

5.14 The proposed development responds positively to Policy WNP6 through the comprehensive landscape strategy including the linear park along the western boundary that provides substantial new green infrastructure, enhanced connectivity to the wider Green Infrastructure Corridor, native tree and hedgerow planting using species appropriate to local landscape character, sustainable drainage systems designed as positive landscape features providing biodiversity enhancement, and pedestrian and cycle routes connecting to the wider network through the linear park and green corridors.

Policy WNP7: Local Landscapes and Seascapes

5.15 Policy WNP7 requires development proposals to include consideration of the impact on the character of local landscape, identifying three locally important landscapes. The site falls within the "Lower slopes of Cleadon Hills to the north west of Whitburn, including magnesian limestone outcrops and

quarry, agricultural land and nature reserves" - one of the three locally important landscape areas specifically identified in the policy.

- 5.16 The policy supports proposals leading to the conservation of these local landscapes and the rural setting of Whitburn, while encouraging landscape enhancement opportunities wherever possible. The site's location within this locally valued landscape area adds additional weight to landscape considerations and requires demonstration that the development would not compromise the essential characteristics that justify the local landscape designation.
- 5.17 The proposed development responds to Policy WNP7 through comprehensive landscape mitigation measures that maintain the essential characteristics of the lower slopes of Cleadon Hills, including retention of agricultural character in the wider area, enhancement of landscape structure through substantial new tree and hedgerow planting, preservation of the rural setting of Whitburn through appropriate density and design response, and creation of landscape enhancement opportunities that extend benefits beyond the immediate development area.
- 5.18 The development's positioning as immediate settlement extension rather than countryside encroachment, combined with the substantial linear park buffer along the western boundary, demonstrates commitment to conserving the locally important landscape character while accommodating necessary settlement growth. The comprehensive landscape enhancement strategy provides opportunities to strengthen rather than diminish the landscape characteristics that justify the area's identification as locally important within the Neighbourhood Plan framework.

Neighbourhood Plan Compliance

- 5.19 The proposed development demonstrates compliance with both relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies through the comprehensive green infrastructure strategy that enhances connectivity and biodiversity value, the landscape design approach that conserves and enhances the locally important landscape character of the lower slopes of Cleadon Hills, substantial native tree and hedgerow planting that increases tree cover and strengthens landscape structure, sustainable drainage systems that provide biodiversity benefits while serving essential infrastructure functions, and enhanced pedestrian and cycle connectivity that links green spaces and provides access to the wider Green Infrastructure Corridor.

- 5.20 The development provides meaningful enhancement of the Green Infrastructure Corridor while respecting the locally important landscape designation, ensuring that Neighbourhood Plan objectives for landscape conservation and enhancement are achieved alongside necessary housing provision.

Landscape Designations

- 5.21 The site is not covered by any statutory landscape designation at national or regional level, including National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscapes), or Heritage Coasts that would provide the highest level of landscape protection. The site is not located within any other nationally designated landscape areas that represent key environmental constraints in other parts of the country.
- 5.22 The Environmental Designations Plan at Appendix 4 confirms that the site itself is not within the Cleadon Hills Area of High Landscape Value, a local designation that recognises the landscape importance of the elevated plateau area to the north and west. This designation boundary appears to follow the existing settlement edge, with the site falling within the transition zone between the built settlement and the valued landscape, indicating the appropriateness of the site for settlement extension while maintaining protection for the most valued landscape areas.
- 5.23 The proximity to the AHLV requires careful consideration of potential effects on the setting and character of the designated area, though the site's position outside the proposed designation boundary indicates its reduced landscape sensitivity compared to the valued plateau landscape to the north and west. The comprehensive landscape mitigation strategy, particularly the linear park buffer, ensures that development would not compromise the essential characteristics that justify the local designation.
- 5.24 The nearby Marsden Old Quarry Local Nature Reserve, located approximately 1.5 kilometres to the north, represents an important landscape and ecological resource within the wider Cleadon Hills complex, providing habitat for Magnesian Limestone grassland communities and serving as a substantial recreational and educational resource. The Lizard Lane Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery Scheduled Monument, also located to the north of the site, adds historical significance to the wider landscape context and contributes to the area's heritage value.

Heritage Designations

- 5.25 Whitburn Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the village to the south of the site, centring on the village green and historic buildings including the medieval parish church and traditional limestone buildings that reflect the area's geological heritage and construction traditions. The Conservation Area represents the historic and architectural significance of the village core and contributes to the area's sense of place and local distinctiveness.
- 5.26 The assessment of potential effects on heritage assets and their settings would be addressed through separate heritage impact assessment, though the landscape setting of these assets forms part of their significance and requires consideration within landscape planning and design development. The proposed development's positioning and comprehensive landscape framework would help maintain the rural setting that contributes to the heritage value of Whitburn Conservation Area and that of Cleadon (although the latter has no intervisibility with the Site).

Public Rights of Way and Recreational Routes

- 5.27 The immediate area surrounding the Site benefits from good connectivity to the wider public rights of way network, including the Tyne and Wear Heritage Way long-distance route that passes to the west of the Site and provides important recreational and educational value within the wider landscape. The England Coast Path provides additional recreational infrastructure to the east, connecting to the wider coastal recreational facilities and contributing to the area's tourism and recreational economy.
- 5.28 The proposed development includes enhancement of public access through the linear park and improved connections to the wider rights of way network, potentially providing beneficial outcomes for recreational access and landscape enjoyment that extend benefits to existing as well as future residents. The integration of educational interpretation within the landscape strategy would contribute to public understanding and appreciation of local landscape character and heritage.

6. Landscape Baseline and Effects

- 6.1 This section provides an overview of the landscape features in the Site and its surrounding landscape, an indication of their susceptibility to development of the type proposed, and an assessment of the impact the proposed development would have upon each.
- 6.2 The assessment of effects on landscape features and character firstly assesses the sensitivity of the landscape resource in terms of its susceptibility to development and the value of the landscape resource. An assessment is then made as to the magnitude of the change, in terms of its scale or size.
- 6.3 The assessment of sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of change are then combined with the duration of the effect and the reversibility of the effect, to assist in determining the relative level of effect on each landscape feature or character area.
- 6.4 A summary of landscape effects are included at Table 1.

Published Landscape Character

National Level Landscape Character

- 6.5 The Site is located within National Character Area 35 (Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau) as defined by Natural England, which provides the broad-scale landscape context for the assessment. This character area is characterised by gently undulating plateau farmland with important exposures of Magnesian Limestone geology that contribute to the area's distinctive character, productive arable agriculture that supports the rural economy, numerous quarries and former quarrying sites that have shaped the landscape over centuries, varied coastal scenery that provides important recreational and environmental resources, and strong urban development balanced with small villages in rural areas that maintain traditional settlement patterns.
- 6.6 Key characteristics relevant to the site include:
- the gently undulating low upland plateau of predominantly arable farmland that characterises the site's immediate setting;
 - clearly defined west-facing escarpment with remnant woodland and species-rich limestone grassland that provides ecological value;
 - widespread industrial development including active and disused quarries that form part of the area's economic character and;

- varied coastal scenery with low cliffs and headlands rich in wildlife that contribute to the area's recreational and environmental value.

Local Level Landscape Character

6.7 At the local level, the site falls within Character Area 35 (Cleadon Hills) as defined in the South Tyneside Landscape Character Study (2012), which provides detailed analysis of landscape character at a scale appropriate for development planning. This area is described as prominent high ground within South Tyneside, forming one of the highest points in the area and serving as a popular recreational resource for walking and open space that contributes to quality of life for local residents.

6.8 Key characteristics of the Cleadon Hills Character Area include the following:

- Broad hill form with flat or gently undulating tops generally over 50m elevation that provides the setting for the site;
- Relatively steep slopes particularly to north and west that define the character area boundaries;
- Predominantly agricultural land use with large arable fields and some pasture that reflects modern farming practices;
- Active mineral workings at Marsden Quarry with former workings at several sites that contribute to the area's economic character;
- Large areas of publicly accessible land with good access and public footpaths that provide recreational value;
- Local Nature Reserves protected for Magnesian Limestone grassland communities that contribute to biodiversity conservation and;
- Important exposures of Magnesian Limestone geology including the distinctive concretionary limestone that contributes to geodiversity value.

6.9 The area hosts several key landmarks including the Victorian water tower at Cleadon and the disused windmill, both of which serve as important viewpoints and orientation features within the wider landscape and contribute to the area's sense of place and navigational value. Several farm buildings and substantial stone walls of local limestone contribute to the agricultural character and demonstrate traditional building materials and techniques, while remains of Second World War era anti-aircraft battery defensive structures add historical interest and contribute to the area's heritage value.

Landscape Features

Topography and Landform

- 6.1 The development would require some modification of the existing topography to accommodate building platforms, access roads, and drainage infrastructure, with design approaches that work with the site's east-west slope rather than requiring substantial regrading. The eastward-sloping character of the site would be largely retained, with earthworks focused on localised areas for specific infrastructure requirements including building foundations, road gradients, and utility installation.
- 6.2 The proposed sustainable drainage systems, including the attenuation basin positioned at the lower eastern portion of the site, would be designed to work with existing landform and drainage patterns, creating positive landscape features that enhance rather than detract from the site's topographical character. The overall sloping landform character would be maintained, with localised modifications integrated into comprehensive landscape design that ensures topographical changes contribute positively to development character.
- 6.3 Effects on topography and landform are assessed as Minor to Moderate Adverse, recognising localised changes required for development while confirming that essential landform character would be preserved and enhanced through sensitive design approach that works with the natural slope.

Agricultural Land

- 6.4 The development would result in the permanent loss of the whole site area which consists of agricultural land, currently in arable production, which represents a direct effect on the productive agricultural resource that contributes to the local agricultural economy. This represents a relatively small proportion of the wider agricultural estate within the Cleadon Hills area, though it constitutes complete loss of agricultural function for the specific site area.
- 6.5 The agricultural land is not classified as the highest grade, reflecting soil quality and agricultural productivity that, while contributing to food production, does not represent the most valuable agricultural resource requiring protection from development. The loss would be balanced by the development's contribution to housing provision and the retention of the wider agricultural landscape beyond the site boundaries that maintains the essential agricultural character of the area.

- 6.6 The loss of agricultural land represents a High magnitude of change for this landscape feature, resulting in Major Adverse effects that are permanent and irreversible. However, this must be balanced against the development's contribution to housing provision and the retention of agricultural function across the wider area that ensures agricultural character is maintained at the landscape scale.

Field Pattern and Boundaries

- 6.7 The existing boundary treatments comprise a combination of traditional stone walls constructed from local Magnesian Limestone and modern agricultural fencing including post and wire boundaries and concrete post and wire mesh panel fencing. The stone walls along the northern boundary with Kitchener Lane, continuing across the northwest corner to Lizard Lane, and along the upper half of the eastern boundary represent important examples of traditional boundary construction using local materials that reflect the geological heritage of the area.
- 6.8 The development proposals would largely retain the existing stone wall boundaries where possible, recognising their contribution to local landscape character and historical field patterns. These stone boundaries would be enhanced and integrated into the development's landscape framework, providing continuity with traditional landscape character while serving contemporary development needs. The retention of stone walls would maintain important examples of traditional craftsmanship and local material use that contribute to the area's distinctive character.
- 6.9 Existing post and wire boundaries and mesh panel fencing along other boundaries would be replaced or enhanced as part of the comprehensive landscape strategy, with new native hedgerow planting proposed to strengthen the landscape structure and improve habitat connectivity while maintaining appropriate boundary definition. The low palisade fencing along the southern boundary with Marsden Primary School would be enhanced through additional landscape planting to provide appropriate screening and visual integration.
- 6.10 The fundamental change from the current open boundary character that allows unimpeded views across the site to a more enclosed residential development represents a High magnitude of change in the visual permeability and openness that currently characterises the site. However, the retention and enhancement of traditional stone boundaries would ensure that important landscape heritage features are preserved and celebrated within the development.

- 6.11 Long-term effects on field pattern and boundaries are assessed as Moderate Adverse effects reducing to Minor Beneficial effects at Year 15, as new planting matures and provides enhanced landscape structure that strengthens rather than diminishes traditional field patterns while maintaining the heritage value of existing stone walls.

Vegetation and Trees

- 6.12 The existing open boundary treatments provide very limited vegetation cover, with the site currently characterised by its open agricultural character rather than substantial tree or hedgerow coverage. The sparse existing vegetation reflects the site's intensive agricultural use and the predominance of low, open boundary treatments that prioritise agricultural access and machinery movement over habitat provision.
- 6.13 The development proposals would result in substantial enhancement of vegetation cover across the site through comprehensive new tree and hedgerow planting that would transform the current sparsely vegetated agricultural land into a well-structured residential environment with substantial landscape framework. The linear park along the higher western boundary would provide extensive new tree planting, while internal green corridors and residential area planting would create comprehensive vegetation coverage that far exceeds existing levels.
- 6.14 The integration of native hedgerow planting with retained stone walls would create enhanced boundary treatments that combine traditional materials with habitat provision, demonstrating how development can respect landscape heritage while providing environmental enhancement. This approach would create boundaries that maintain the agricultural character through stone wall retention while providing the screening and habitat functions necessary for successful residential development.
- 6.15 Long-term effects on vegetation and trees are assessed as Major Beneficial, representing substantial enhancement of landscape structure and biodiversity value that provides substantial net environmental gain and contributes positively to local landscape character while respecting existing heritage features.

Effects on Landscape Character

Effects on National Character Area

National Character Area 35 (Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau)

Landscape Value: Medium

- 6.16 The Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau represents a distinctive regional landscape with recognised national character, characterised by its gently undulating low upland plateau of predominantly arable farmland, clearly defined west-facing escarpment with remnant woodland and species-rich limestone grassland, and widespread industrial development including active and disused quarries. The NCA possesses moderate landscape value through its geological significance as the northern-most extent of Magnesian Limestone in the UK, its important exposures of distinctive Concretionary Limestone, and its role in supporting productive agriculture and recreational resources. However, the landscape has been subject to considerable change through industrial development, quarrying and mining activities, and urban development pressures, which have modified its traditional rural character in many areas.

Susceptibility to Residential Development: Medium

- 6.17 The character area demonstrates medium susceptibility to residential development, reflecting its established pattern of urban and industrial development balanced with productive agricultural areas. The plateau landscape has shown capacity to accommodate settlement expansion, particularly around existing urban edges, while retaining its essential agricultural and geological character. The broad, gently undulating topography and existing settlement pattern provide logical opportunities for appropriate development without compromising the fundamental characteristics that define the NCA. However, the importance of maintaining productive agricultural land and protecting key geological exposures creates some sensitivity to change.

Overall Sensitivity: Medium

- 6.18 The combination of medium landscape value and medium susceptibility results in medium sensitivity for the National Character Area as a whole. This reflects the area's ability to accommodate appropriately located development while maintaining its essential characteristics of productive agriculture, geological interest, and recreational value.

Magnitude of Change: Low

- 6.19 The proposed development represents a low magnitude of change in the context of the extensive Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau, constituting a very small proportion of the overall character area and representing logical settlement extension rather than isolated countryside development.

The development would maintain the established pattern of settlement consolidated around existing villages, preserving the predominant agricultural character across the wider plateau while contributing to the existing mix of land uses that characterise this National Character Area.

Level of Effect: Minor Adverse

- 6.20 The combination of medium sensitivity and low magnitude of change results in minor adverse effects on National Character Area 35. The development would not materially affect the key characteristics that define the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau, including its predominantly agricultural land use, geological significance, recreational value, or essential landscape pattern. The effects would be localised to the immediate development area and would not compromise the integrity or character of the broader National Character Area, ensuring that the landscape continues to fulfil its function as a productive agricultural plateau with important geological heritage and recreational resources.

Effects on Site Character

- 6.21 The development would result in a fundamental change to the character of the site itself, transforming it from agricultural to residential use through the introduction of housing, roads, and associated infrastructure. This represents a High magnitude of change to the site's immediate character, resulting in **Major Adverse** effects that would be permanent and irreversible.
- 6.22 However, the development has been designed to reflect local landscape character through appropriate density that respects the rural edge location, layout that works with the natural east-west slope, maintains important visual connections and respects existing field patterns, and comprehensive landscape integration that creates development sympathetic to its landscape setting. The retention of landscape structure and enhancement of vegetation cover would help create development that contributes positively to local character while serving contemporary housing needs.

Immediate Landscape Context

- 6.23 The proposed development has been designed to provide appropriate transition between the existing settlement edge and the wider agricultural landscape, recognising the importance of maintaining rural character while accommodating necessary settlement growth. The linear park along the western boundary would help maintain separation between the built development and the adjoining agricultural areas, while the green corridors would preserve important visual connections to the wider landscape.

- 6.24 The development would provide an appropriate interface with adjacent land uses including Marsden Primary School through careful positioning of development parcels and enhanced boundary treatments, with structural hedgerow and tree planting along the southern boundary providing appropriate separation and visual screening for the educational setting beyond the site boundary.
- 6.25 The development would be seen as a logical extension of the existing settlement rather than isolated intrusion into the countryside, maintaining the essential relationship between Whitburn village and its agricultural setting. The comprehensive landscape framework would ensure that development enhances rather than detracts from the landscape setting of the existing village.
- 6.26 Effects on the immediate landscape context are assessed as **Moderate to Major Adverse**, reflecting the location and extension of built development while recognising the comprehensive mitigation measures and appropriate design response to landscape character that ensures development integrates successfully with its setting.

Cleadon Hills Character Area

- 6.27 Effects on the wider Cleadon Hills Character Area would be more limited, with the development representing a modest northward extension of Whitburn village rather than a substantial intrusion into the rural landscape that characterises the designated area. The retention of agricultural land to the north and west would help maintain the essential characteristics of the plateau landscape, including its role as elevated ground, agricultural resource, and recreational area.
- 6.28 The development would be seen in the context of existing settlement and would not materially affect the key characteristics that define the Cleadon Hills area, including its role as prominent high ground, popular recreational resource, important geological exposures, and setting for key landmarks. The proposed enhancement of public access through the linear park would contribute positively to the recreational value that forms part of the area's character.
- 6.29 Effects on the wider Cleadon Hills Character Area are assessed as **Minor to Moderate Adverse**, recognising localised change without substantial impact on area-wide character that maintains the essential qualities that define this important landscape resource.

Area of High Landscape Value

- 6.30 The development's effects on the adjacent AHLV would be minimised through the comprehensive landscape buffer and the positioning of lower density development toward the rural edge that

provides appropriate transition to the valued landscape. The linear park positioned along the higher western boundary would provide additional separation and screening while offering enhanced public access to the valued landscape that contributes to its recreational and educational value.

- 6.31 The development would not extend into the designated area and would not materially affect the characteristics that justify the local designation, including the elevated character, recreational value, geological interest, and setting for important landmarks. The comprehensive landscape mitigation would ensure that development contributes to rather than detracts from the setting of the valued landscape.
- 6.32 Effects on the AHLV are assessed as **Minor Adverse**, recognising potential impacts on setting while confirming that essential landscape value would be maintained and potentially enhanced through improved public access and landscape management.

Summary of Landscape Effects

- 6.33 The most substantial landscape effects relate to the change in land use from agricultural to residential across the site itself, representing **Major Adverse** effects that are inevitable with any development of agricultural land.
- 6.34 However, the development has been designed to minimise wider landscape impacts through comprehensive mitigation measures, sensitive positioning that respects landscape character, layout that responds to the natural east-west slope, and appropriate density distribution that provides transition between settlement and countryside. The landscape sensitivity of the site is assessed as **Medium to High**, reflecting its agricultural value, balanced against its location adjacent to existing development and role as logical settlement extension.
- 6.35 The magnitude of landscape change varies from High for the site itself to Low-Medium for the wider character area, resulting in a range of effects from **Major Adverse** locally to **Minor-Moderate Adverse** at the wider scale. The proposed landscape strategy, including substantial new tree and hedgerow planting will together provide enhanced vegetation coverage across the site, equating to the long-term enhancement of landscape structure and could result in beneficial effects over time through improved habitat connectivity, enhanced public access, and strengthened landscape character that contributes positively to the wider area.

Table 1: Summary of Landscape Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect
Landscape Features				
Topography and Landform	Medium	Construction	Medium	Moderate Adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate Adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate Adverse
Agricultural Land	High	Construction	High	Major Adverse
		Year 1	High	Major Adverse
		Year 15	High	Major Adverse
Field Pattern and Boundaries	Medium-High	Construction	High	Major-Moderate Adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate Adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor Beneficial
Vegetation and Trees	Medium-High	Construction	Medium	Moderate Adverse
		Year 1	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate Beneficial
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate Beneficial
Landscape Character				
Site Character	Medium-High	Construction	High	Major Adverse
		Year 1	High	Major Adverse
		Year 15	High	Major Adverse
Immediate Landscape Context	Medium-High	Construction	Medium-High	Major-Moderate Adverse
		Year 1	Medium-High	Major-Moderate Adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate Adverse
Cleadon Hills Character Area	Medium	Construction	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate Adverse
		Year 1	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate Adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor Adverse
Area of High Landscape Value	Medium-High	Construction	Low	Minor Adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor Adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor Adverse

7. Visual Baseline and Effects

- 7.1 The assessment of visual effects deals with changes in views and visual amenity. The aim is to establish the area from which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of any predicted change in the views and visual amenity.
- 7.2 The criteria at Appendix 1 sets out the sensitivity to a change in the views for various receptors. The following assessment initially describes the views from the north, east, south and west respectively, considering those potential receptors where there may be more than an incidental change to views. Those receptors are then considered further to identify their sensitivity, magnitude of change to views and overall effect.
- 7.3 The open character of existing boundary treatments significantly influences the visual baseline conditions, with all boundaries comprising low height stone walls, post and wire fencing, mesh panel fencing, and palisade fencing that allow unimpeded views across the site from surrounding areas. This creates a high degree of visual exposure from adjacent residential properties, roads, and public areas, contributing to the sense of openness that characterises the agricultural landscape but also resulting in comprehensive visibility of the development site from multiple directions.
- 7.4 The stone walls along the northern boundary with Kitchener Lane and the upper eastern boundary provide some visual structure while maintaining openness, creating attractive traditional boundary features that contribute to local landscape character. However, their low height means they provide limited visual screening and the site remains clearly visible from adjacent residential areas, particularly properties along Kitchener Road and Augusta Terrace/Thill Stone Mews.
- 7.5 The open post and wire boundaries along Lizard Lane and the mesh panel fencing along the lower eastern boundary provide minimal visual obstruction, ensuring that views from these routes clearly encompass the entire site. The low palisade fence along the southern boundary with Marsden Primary School similarly provides little visual screening, creating direct visual relationship between the school grounds and the development site.
- 7.6 This comprehensive visual exposure confirms that the development would be clearly visible from immediate surrounding areas during construction and upon completion, though the retention and

enhancement of stone wall boundaries would help maintain some elements of traditional landscape character within the visual composition.

- 7.7 The site's east-west slope creates particular viewing conditions, with observers on the lower eastern side looking upslope toward the higher western boundary, while those on the higher western edge have more extensive eastward views across the site and beyond toward the coast. This topographical characteristic influences the extent and nature of views both into and across the site.
- 7.8 The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility analysis indicates that potential visibility of the development would be relatively contained due to the site's position within the gently undulating plateau topography and the screening effects of existing vegetation and built development that limit long-distance views. The analysis demonstrates that theoretical visibility is largely confined to the immediate vicinity of the site, with more distant views limited by topographical screening and intervening vegetation that provides natural visual containment.
- 7.9 Key visual receptor groups have been identified based on their proximity to the site, potential for substantial views, and sensitivity to change. These include:
- Residential properties within Whitburn village, particularly those along the northern edge adjacent to the site that would experience the most direct visual relationship with the development;
 - Users of the public rights of way network including the Tyne and Wear Heritage Way that provides important recreational value within the wider landscape;
 - Road users along Mill Lane (A183) and Lizard Lane that represent different types of transport experience and sensitivity and;
 - Recreational users of the wider Cleadon Hills area including visitors to Marsden Old Quarry and coastal facilities that contribute to the area's recreational economy.
- 7.10 The baseline photography and field assessment confirm that actual visibility is often more limited than indicated by the theoretical analysis due to intervening vegetation, built development, and local topographical variations that are not captured in the digital terrain modelling. This indicates that visual effects would be more localised than might initially be anticipated, with substantial effects concentrated in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Viewpoint Assessment

- 7.11 The visual effects assessment is based on detailed analysis of eight representative viewpoints selected to cover the range of views toward the Site from different directions, distances, and receptor types. The viewpoint locations are shown on the Visual Receptors Plan at Appendix 8 and baseline photography has been undertaken from each location to establish existing visual conditions under varying lighting and weather conditions.

Viewpoint 1: Kitchener Road Looking South Over the Site

Existing View and Context

- 7.12 This viewpoint represents views from residential properties along Kitchener Road on the northern edge of Whitburn village, providing the closest residential relationship with the site. The existing stone wall boundary provides some visual structure while maintaining clear views across the arable field of the site towards the existing settlement edge, creating a direct visual connection between residential properties and the development area. The baseline view comprises the open arable Site field with established field boundary hedgerow and occasional mature trees that provide some visual structure. From this northern viewpoint, observers look across the site with awareness of its eastward-rising slope toward Lizard Lane. The existing residential development of Whitburn forms the backdrop to the view, with the village appearing well-integrated within its landscape setting through mature vegetation and varied building heights that create a well-defined settlement edge.
- 7.13 Receptor Sensitivity: High - Residential receptors with permanent occupation and primary living spaces facing the site, where outlook contributes significantly to residential amenity.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.14 During the construction phase, high magnitude change would result in **major adverse** visual effects from this viewpoint. Construction activities would be highly visible across the entirety of the site, given the open boundary treatments, causing substantial disruption to residential amenity as there is little existing screening to mitigate the impact.
- 7.15 By Year 1 following completion, medium to high magnitude change would correspond to **major-moderate adverse** effects. While the new development would remain clearly visible, the retention of the traditional stone wall would provide some reference to the area's character. Additionally, as the newly established landscape framework begins to soften the appearance, its mitigating effect would still be limited in the short term.

- 7.16 By Year 15, medium magnitude change would bring about a **moderate adverse** effect. The mature planting would help to screen and blend the development into its surroundings, while the presence of the retained stone wall would continue to uphold a sense of landscape heritage and connection to the existing setting.

Viewpoint 2: Kitchener Road at Junction of Lizard Lane Looking South Over the Site

Existing View and Context

- 7.17 This elevated viewpoint provides a broader vista across the site toward Whitburn village, with greater awareness of the site's relationship to the wider landscape context and settlement pattern. From this higher western location, observers have a clearer appreciation of the site's eastward-sloping topography, with views extending across the site toward the lower eastern boundary and beyond. Agricultural buildings associated with local farms contribute to the rural agricultural character that defines the area's identity, while the elevated position provides enhanced appreciation of the landscape structure and settlement relationship.
- 7.18 Receptor Sensitivity: High - Residential receptors and road users with comprehensive views across the site and enhanced appreciation of landscape relationships.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.19 During the construction phase, the magnitude of change is high, resulting in a **major adverse** visual effect from this elevated position. Construction activities would be prominently visible across the site, and the panoramic vantage point ensures that the full extent of the transformation is observed, causing substantial disruption to the rural landscape character and to residential amenity.
- 7.20 By Year 1, the magnitude of change remains high, which continues to produce a major adverse effect. The new development is clearly evident as an extension of the settlement within the existing village context, with few mitigating features having yet matured to soften its appearance within the broader landscape.
- 7.21 By Year 15, the magnitude of change becomes medium-high, leading to a major-moderate adverse effect. At this stage, the maturing of landscape mitigation provides substantial integration of the development within the established settlement pattern, helping to blend the new features with the surrounding context while still leaving some degree of visual impact apparent from this comprehensive viewpoint.

Viewpoint 3: A183 (Mill Lane) Looking West Over the Site

Existing View and Context

- 7.22 Views from Mill Lane look west across open agricultural fields with the low stone wall along the upper eastern boundary providing minimal visual obstruction. From this eastern viewpoint, observers look upslope across the site toward the higher western boundary, with the ascending terrain creating a distinct viewing experience that emphasises the site's topography. The combination of stone walling and mesh panel fencing creates a mixed boundary character that reflects both traditional and modern agricultural practices while maintaining open visibility across the site.
- 7.23 Receptor Sensitivity: **Medium** (road users) to **Medium-High** (recreational users of the cycle path and footway) Transient users with varying exposure times and recreational purpose that increases sensitivity to landscape quality.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.24 During construction, the magnitude of change is high, resulting in a **major adverse** visual effect. Construction activities are comprehensively visible due to the low, open boundary treatments, offering little effective screening. The visibility of construction traffic using the single access point further accentuates the impact on the landscape from this view.
- 7.25 By Year 1, the magnitude of change remains high, which continues to generate a **major adverse** effect. The development is prominently visible, with the retention of the stone wall providing some continuity of character. However, the introduction of the new access point establishes a focal feature of change in the landscape.
- 7.26 By Year 15, the magnitude of change has reduced to medium, resulting in a **moderate adverse** effect. Enhanced boundary treatments offer improved visual screening, while the preservation of stone wall heritage features maintains a link to the site's traditional character. The access point becomes integrated within the landscape as mitigation planting matures, further reducing the visual impact from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 4: A183 (Mill Lane) Adjacent Marsden Primary School Looking Northwest Over the Site

Existing View and Context

- 7.27 This viewpoint represents views from the A183 adjacent to Marsden Primary School looking northwest across the site toward the existing settlement edge and wider agricultural landscape beyond. From this eastern viewpoint, observers look upslope across the site with awareness of its rising topography toward the agricultural landscape to the west.
- 7.28 Receptor Sensitivity: Medium-High - School users and road users with daily exposure to the site and educational setting context.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.29 During construction, the magnitude of change is medium-high, resulting in **moderate-major adverse** effects. Construction activities are clearly visible from both the school and the road, significantly impacting the educational setting.
- 7.30 By Year 1, the magnitude of change is medium, producing **moderate adverse** effects. The development is distinctly apparent as an extension of the settlement, with new boundary treatments beginning to offer some screening.
- 7.31 By Year 15, the magnitude of change is low-medium, leading to **minor-moderate adverse** effects. Landscape mitigation along the boundaries now provides effective screening, though the development remains noticeable due to its close proximity.

Viewpoint 5: Lizard Lane at Entrance Track to Lizards Farm Looking East Over the Site

Existing View and Context

- 7.32 This viewpoint emphasises the open agricultural character with low post and wire boundary providing no visual obstruction to views across the western portion of the site. From this elevated western viewpoint, observers look eastward and downslope across the site, with longer views extending toward the coast due to the site's eastward-falling topography. The open boundary treatment reinforces the agricultural setting while creating direct visual connection between the rural lane and the productive arable farmland.
- 7.33 Receptor Sensitivity: Medium (road users) to High (farm residents) - Mixed users with varying relationship to agricultural landscape and different sensitivity levels.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.34 During construction, the magnitude of change is high, resulting in **major adverse** effects—construction remains highly visible across open fields with no boundary screening.
- 7.35 By Year 1, the magnitude of change is medium-high, leading to **moderate-major** adverse effects. The development remains visible, but the emerging linear park begins to offer some separation from the rural lane.
- 7.36 By Year 15, the magnitude of change is low-medium, resulting in **minor-moderate adverse** effects. Here, the now-mature linear park provides effective screening and enhances the character of the rural lane, with visual impacts further reduced by the absence of vehicular access on this boundary.

Viewpoint 6: Lizard Lane Adjacent to Southwest Corner of the Site Looking Northeast

Existing View and Context

- 7.37 This represents one of the closest public viewpoints to the proposed development, providing direct views across the southwestern corner of the site where higher density development is proposed adjacent to the existing settlement edge. From this elevated western viewpoint, observers look downslope across the site with awareness of its eastward-falling topography.
- 7.38 Receptor Sensitivity: Medium-High to High - Close proximity users with clear views of development area and high sensitivity to visual change.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.39 Construction: The magnitude of change is high, resulting in **major adverse** effects. Construction activity remains highly visible from close proximity, substantially impacting the experience along the rural lane.
- 7.40 Year 1: The magnitude of change is high, leading to **major adverse** effects. The development continues to be clearly visible and prominent within the immediate view, with limited mitigation at this early stage.
- 7.41 Year 15: The magnitude of change is medium-high, resulting in **major-moderate** adverse effects. Although boundary planting provides some screening, the close proximity ensures the development remains visible. The absence of vehicular access along this boundary helps maintain the rural character of Lizard Lane.

Viewpoint 7: Tyne and Wear Heritage Way Looking Northeast Towards the Site

- 7.42 Existing View and Context This recreational route provides elevated views across the landscape toward the site, with the development appearing within a broad panoramic view across agricultural landscape that contributes to the recreational and educational value of the Heritage Way.
- 7.43 Receptor Sensitivity: High - Recreational users with expectation of high-quality landscape views and educational value from landscape appreciation.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.44 Construction: The impact is assessed as low to medium magnitude, resulting in **minor to moderate adverse** effects. Construction activities are visible across the panoramic landscape, but the overall appreciation of the setting remains largely unaffected.
- 7.45 Year 1: The development reflects a low magnitude of change, with **minor adverse** effects. It appears as a modest addition to the settlement, remaining consistent with the established character of the landscape.
- 7.46 Year 15: The magnitude of impact is negligible to low, producing negligible to minor adverse effects. As mitigation planting matures, the development becomes increasingly integrated within the prevailing landscape pattern.

Viewpoint 8: Whitburn Coastal Park Looking Southwest Towards the Site

Existing View and Context

- 7.47 This viewpoint from within the coastal park is sufficiently set down with land sloping down towards the coast, such that views do not extend beyond the road corridor (A183 Mill Lane). Views terminate at terraced properties lining Mill Lane and the small residential cluster at the north east corner of the site which is partially visible. Views are also constrained by the woodland screening block adjacent to the main road corridor which then precludes any views looking back towards the village and surrounding agricultural landscape.
- 7.48 Receptor Sensitivity: High - Recreational users with expectation of high-quality coastal and landscape views that contribute to recreational experience.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.49 During construction, the magnitude of change is negligible, resulting in effects that are barely perceptible due to the distance from the viewpoint and the intervening development.
- 7.50 By Year 1, the magnitude of change remains negligible to low, leading to **negligible to minor adverse** effects. The development appears only as a small element within the expansive vista, blending with the broader landscape context.
- 7.51 By Year 15, the magnitude of change is negligible, producing **negligible effects** as the development becomes well-integrated into the surroundings and no longer impacts the coastal park experience.

Road Users Assessment

- 7.52 Road users represent a substantial category of visual receptors due to the site's proximity to major and minor transport routes that serve both local and recreational traffic. The assessment considers varying sensitivity levels and the transient nature of road user experiences while recognising cumulative exposure along route sections that can create meaningful visual impacts.

A183 Mill Lane

- 7.53 Baseline Conditions: Primary vehicular route serving local traffic accessing Whitburn village and through traffic travelling between coastal settlements, with varying types of users that experience different sensitivity levels to landscape quality. The road runs along the lower eastern boundary of the site, with views westward looking upslope across the site toward the higher ground at Lizard Lane.
- 7.54 Receptor Sensitivity: Medium due to transient nature of road user experience, though slower travel speeds and recreational purpose of some users increases appreciation of environmental quality.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.55 Road users would experience clear views of the development representing fundamental change from agricultural to residential use along this section of the route. Construction activities would be particularly prominent, especially with the concentrated construction traffic using the single access point on Mill Lane. The new primary access junction would create a focal point of change, though careful design treatment would ensure it appears consistent with existing highway character.

- 7.56 The development would be seen in settlement transition context rather than isolated countryside intrusion, maintaining the essential character of the route while accommodating necessary settlement growth. Enhanced landscape structure would provide long-term benefits for recreational route users while effective boundary screening reduces visual prominence of built development and maintains rural route character.
- 7.57 Construction: During construction, road users will experience a medium-high magnitude of change, resulting in **moderate to major adverse** effects. Activities and concentrated construction traffic at the single access point will be clearly visible, marking a significant focal change along the route.
- 7.58 Year 1: In the first year, a medium magnitude of change will yield **moderate adverse** effects. The development will remain prominently visible, illustrating a substantial shift from agricultural to residential use, although this occurs within a settlement transition context rather than as an isolated countryside intrusion.
- 7.59 Year 15:– By year 15, the magnitude of change will be low to medium, producing **minor to moderate** adverse effects. The maturing enhanced landscape structure will offer effective screening, preserving the essential character of the route and further diminishing the visual prominence of built development.

Lizard Lane

Baseline Conditions

- 7.60 Local access route with intimate rural character, serving agricultural properties and recreational users seeking rural driving experiences that contribute to the area's recreational value. The road runs along the higher western boundary of the site, with views eastward looking downslope across the site toward the lower ground at Mill Lane and some potential long views toward the coast.
- 7.61 Receptor Sensitivity: Medium-High due to rural character, slower travel speeds, and agricultural landscape expectations that increase sensitivity to visual change.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.62 The revised access strategy, with no vehicular access from Lizard Lane, would help maintain the quieter rural character of this route throughout both construction and operational phases. The absence of vehicular access requirements allows the linear park along the western boundary to

provide a more continuous and effective landscape buffer, enhancing the transition between development and rural lane.

- 7.63 The development would remain visible from Lizard Lane, though the linear park would provide substantial visual screening as planting matures. The positioning of the linear park along the higher western boundary responds to the site's topography, creating effective screening while maintaining the lane's quieter character. The preservation of the lane's quiet rural character would be a notable benefit of the revised access strategy, maintaining its recreational value and agricultural setting while accommodating appropriate views of settlement expansion beyond.
- 7.64 During construction, the magnitude of change will be medium-high, resulting in moderate to major adverse effects. The development will be clearly visible from the elevated western position, serving as a prominent new feature in the landscape. However, the absence of construction traffic on Lizard Lane will help retain the route's quiet rural character, even as construction activity introduces significant visual transformation.
- 7.65 In the first year following completion, the magnitude of change will be medium, leading to moderate adverse effects. The new development will remain readily visible from Lizard Lane, particularly before planting and landscape measures mature. Nonetheless, the establishment of the linear park along the western boundary will begin to provide an emerging buffer, offering some relief and starting to soften the development's presence within the views from the lane.
- 7.66 By year 15, the magnitude of change is expected to be low to medium, resulting in minor to moderate adverse effects. The linear park will have matured, with established planting now providing substantial screening between the development and Lizard Lane. This mature landscape feature will preserve the quiet rural character of the route and significantly reduce the visual prominence of built structures, helping to integrate the development into its rural setting.

Local Road Network

- 7.67 The broader local road network would experience limited visibility due to intervening topography and vegetation that provide natural screening. Where glimpsed views occur, the development would appear as a modest settlement extension rather than countryside intrusion, maintaining the essential character of rural routes while accommodating appropriate settlement growth.

- 7.68 During construction, the magnitude of change is assessed as negligible to low, resulting in effects that are **negligible to minor adverse**. This is primarily due to the limited visibility from the local road network, as intervening topography and existing vegetation provide natural screening.
- 7.69 In the first year following completion, the magnitude of change remains negligible to low, and the effects on the rural driving experience are assessed as **negligible to minor adverse**. Where the development is visible, it presents as a modest extension of the existing settlement, ensuring the essential character and recreational value of rural routes are maintained.
- 7.70 By Year 15, the magnitude of change is considered negligible, and the effects reduce further to **negligible adverse**. At this stage, the development is effectively integrated into the landscape, with no substantial impacts anticipated on the wider rural road network or the enjoyment of the rural driving experience.
- 7.71 Effects assessed as **Negligible to Minor** with no substantial impacts on the rural driving experience beyond immediate site vicinity, ensuring that the wider network of rural routes maintains its character and recreational value.

Residential Receptors Assessment

- 7.72 Residential receptors represent the most sensitive visual receptor category due to permanent property occupation and the importance of outlook to residential amenity and property enjoyment.

R1: Augusta Terrace/Thill Stone Mews

Baseline Conditions

- 7.73 Properties on northern edge of Whitburn with direct views across site over the existing stone wall boundary, which provides traditional character while maintaining clear sight lines across the agricultural landscape. The open nature of boundaries ensures that these properties currently enjoy comprehensive rural outlook across the entire site area. From these properties, residents look across the site with awareness of its eastward-rising slope toward Lizard Lane.

Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.74 High due to permanent occupation and primary living space orientation toward site where outlook contributes significantly to residential amenity.

Visual Effects Assessment

7.75 These properties would experience the most substantial visual effects, with clear views of construction and completed development representing substantial change from rural to residential outlook. The comprehensive landscape mitigation including linear park and structural planting would provide meaningful visual integration over time while maintaining some visibility due to proximity, though the development would be seen within a planned landscape framework rather than ad hoc intrusion.

- Construction: **Major Adverse** (High magnitude)
- Year 1: **Major-Moderate Adverse** (Medium-High magnitude)
- Year 15: **Moderate Adverse** (Medium magnitude)

R2: Arthur Street and Mill Lane (North of Site)

Baseline Conditions

7.76 Terraced properties are oriented inward within a compact street layout, restricting views toward the site until reaching the end of each terrace row. End-of-terrace properties have angled views into the site, adjacent to Kitchener Road along the northern site boundary. This configuration limits the visual interaction with the development area, as properties aligned to Mill Lane form a contained development block that is separated from the rest of the settlement.

Receptor Sensitivity

7.77 High as residential receptors, though distance and screening reduce impact significance compared to immediately adjacent properties.

Visual Effects Assessment

7.78 Greater distance and intervening vegetation would reduce prominence while landscape mitigation provides effective screening over time, ensuring that visual impact diminishes progressively and development appears well-integrated within the settlement pattern.

- Construction: **Moderate Adverse** (Medium magnitude)
- Year 1: **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (Low-Medium magnitude)
- Year 15: **Minor Adverse** (Low magnitude)

R3: Marsden View

Baseline Conditions

- 7.79 Properties immediately north of Marsden Primary School on Mill Lane with direct views across the site. These properties have clear sight lines across the open agricultural land with minimal screening from the low boundary treatments. From these properties, residents look northwest across the site toward the existing settlement edge and wider agricultural landscape beyond, with awareness of the site's westward-rising topography.

Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.80 High - Residential receptors with permanent occupation and direct views across the development site where outlook contributes significantly to residential amenity.

Visual Effects Assessment:

- 7.81 Construction: **Moderate-Major Adverse** (Medium-High magnitude) - Construction activities clearly visible across the site due to open boundary treatments and direct overlooking relationship, with substantial impact on residential amenity and daily outlook
- 7.82 Year 1: **Moderate Adverse** (Medium magnitude) - Development clearly visible as settlement extension with new access point creating additional focal feature, though boundary treatments begin to provide some screening
- 7.83 Year 15: **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (Low-Medium magnitude) - Boundary landscape mitigation provides improved screening though development remains visible due to direct overlooking relationship and proximity to access point

R4: Mill Lane (South of Site)

Baseline Conditions

- 7.84 Properties with oblique views toward site across existing settlement edge, well-integrated within village context where development would appear as a natural extension.

Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.85 High with reduced impact potential due to settlement context and viewing angles that reduce visual prominence.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.86 Minor to Moderate Adverse impact, which diminishes over time as the development aligns with current residential patterns and supports village consolidation.

- Construction: **Minor to Moderate Adverse** effect (low to medium magnitude)
- Year 1: **Minor Adverse** effect (low magnitude)
- Year 15: **Minor Adverse** effect (low magnitude)

R5: Lizard Lane (Adjacent to Southwest Corner)

Baseline Conditions

- 7.87 Properties immediately adjacent to southwest corner with direct views across development area, representing the closest residential relationship with the proposed development. From these properties at the higher western edge, residents look eastward and downslope across the site.

Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.88 High due to close proximity and direct relationship with site where development would be clearly visible.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.89 The proximity of the proposed development ensures that it remains visually prominent, even as boundary planting matures. However, the development would be viewed within the context of existing residential areas rather than as an isolated incursion into the agricultural landscape.

- Construction Phase: **Major Adverse** (High magnitude)
- Year 1: **Major Adverse** (High magnitude)

- Year 15: **Major-Moderate Adverse** (Medium-High magnitude)

R6: Wellands Lane, Farrow Drive and Parry Drive

Baseline Conditions

- 7.90 Properties at moderate distance with mixed visibility potential depending on specific location and orientation, representing varied relationships with the development.

Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.91 High as residential receptors, though distance and intervening development reduce impacts for most properties.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.92 The development is considered to have Minor to Moderate adverse effects, which are expected to reduce to Minor Adverse effects as the settlement expands in line with the existing development pattern.

- Construction phase: **Minor to moderate adverse** impact (low to medium magnitude)
- Year 1: **Minor adverse** impact (low magnitude)
- Year 15: **Minor adverse** impact (low magnitude)

R7: Wellands Farm

Baseline Conditions

- 7.93 Agricultural property with longer-distance views across agricultural landscape toward site, maintaining strong agricultural context and rural setting.

Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.94 High due to agricultural setting and rural context expectations that increase sensitivity to change in agricultural landscape character.

Visual Effects Assessment

7.95 The level of adverse visual impact is assessed as Moderate initially, decreasing to Minor-Moderate as the proposed landscape mitigation becomes established and the development integrates with the surrounding agricultural setting.

- Construction Phase: **Moderate Adverse** (Medium magnitude)
- Year 1: **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (Low-Medium magnitude)
- Year 15: **Minor Adverse** (Low magnitude)

R8: Lizards Farm

Baseline Conditions

7.96 Agricultural property immediately adjacent to site with direct relationship to agricultural landscape and farming operations. From this property at the higher western edge, residents and workers look eastward and downslope across the site.

Receptor Sensitivity

7.97 High due to agricultural operations and immediate proximity that creates direct relationship with development area.

Visual Effects Assessment

7.98 Linear park would provide substantial screening while potentially offering beneficial landscape enhancement to farm setting through improved landscape structure and habitat connectivity.

Public Rights of Way Assessment

Tyne and Wear Heritage Way

Baseline Conditions

7.99 This long-distance recreational route provides elevated views across the agricultural landscape toward the site, with the development appearing within a broad panoramic view that encompasses the wider Cleadon Hills landscape and agricultural areas. The Heritage Way serves both recreational and educational functions, allowing users to appreciate the landscape character and geological heritage of the Magnesian Limestone plateau. From this elevated western position, users look eastward across the site with awareness of the broader landscape context including the transition from the plateau to the coastal plain.

- 7.100 Receptor Sensitivity: High - Recreational users have heightened expectations of landscape quality and visual amenity, with the Heritage Way specifically designed to showcase local landscape character and heritage. Users are engaged in leisurely activity with attention focused on landscape appreciation, and the route's educational function increases sensitivity to changes in landscape character and visual quality.

Visual Effects Assessment:

- 7.101 The Heritage Way's elevated position and distance from the site means that the development would appear as a modest element within a broad panoramic view that encompasses extensive agricultural landscape and existing settlement. The comprehensive landscape mitigation, particularly the linear park buffer, would help integrate the development within the wider landscape pattern as viewed from this recreational route.
- 7.102 The route's educational value would be maintained, with the development representing logical settlement consolidation rather than inappropriate countryside intrusion. The retention and enhancement of agricultural land beyond the development would preserve the essential landscape characteristics that contribute to the Heritage Way's recreational and educational value.
- 7.103 During the construction phase, the magnitude of change would be low to medium, resulting in **minor to moderate adverse** effects. Construction activities would be noticeable within the wider panoramic view but would not dominate the landscape experience. As a result, the overall recreational and educational value of the Heritage Way would be maintained.
- 7.104 In Year 1 following completion, the magnitude of change would be low, producing **minor adverse** effects. The development would present itself as a modest extension of the existing settlement within the established landscape pattern, with initial landscape mitigation measures beginning to soften its integration into the surroundings.
- 7.105 By Year 15, the magnitude of change would be negligible to low, leading to **negligible to minor adverse** effects. At this stage, the mature landscape mitigation would effectively integrate the development into the broader landscape, resulting in minimal impact on the recreational experience or educational value of the Heritage Way.

Coastal Park Users

Baseline Conditions

- 7.106 Users of Whitburn Coastal Park are positioned at lower elevation with land sloping down toward the coast, creating viewing conditions where sight lines are constrained by the intervening A183 road corridor and associated development. Views toward the site are largely terminated by terraced properties lining Mill Lane, with only the small residential cluster at the northeast corner of the site partially visible. The woodland screening block adjacent to the main road corridor further limits views looking back toward the village and surrounding agricultural landscape, creating a contained viewing experience focused primarily on the coastal environment.

Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.107 High - Recreational users of coastal facilities have high expectations of environmental quality and visual amenity, with the coastal park serving important recreational functions for both local residents and visitors. Users are engaged in leisure activities with attention focused on environmental appreciation, though the coastal context means their primary focus is seaward rather than toward the inland development site.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.108 The topographical and vegetation screening significantly limits visibility of the development from the coastal park, with views largely constrained by intervening development and woodland screening. The development would appear as a very minor element within glimpsed views where visible and would not affect the primary coastal recreational experience.
- 7.109 The coastal park's function and recreational value would be maintained, with the development having no material impact on the coastal setting or seaward views that form the primary attraction of this recreational facility. The separation and screening ensure that the development would not compromise the coastal park experience.
- 7.110 During the construction phase, the magnitude of change would be negligible. The resulting effect would also be **negligible**, as construction activities would be barely perceptible due to the distance, differences in elevation, and extensive intervening development and vegetation screening.
- 7.111 In Year 1 after completion, the magnitude of change would range from **negligible to low**. This would result in a negligible to minor adverse effect, with the development appearing only as a small element within heavily constrained, glimpsed views where it is visible. Importantly, there would be no impact on the primary coastal recreational experience.

- 7.112 By Year 15, the magnitude of change would be **negligible**, leading to a negligible level of effect. At this stage, the development would be fully integrated and effectively imperceptible from the coastal park, ensuring that there are no adverse effects on recreational experience or the appreciation of the coastal setting.

Summary of Visual Effects Assessment

- 7.113 The viewpoint assessment demonstrates that the most substantial visual effects would occur from close-range locations, particularly residential properties on Whitburn's northern edge and closest approach points along adjacent routes. These effects reflect inevitable visual change from residential development on previously undeveloped land, though the comprehensive landscape mitigation strategy would provide effective reduction in visual effects over time.
- 7.114 The site's east-west slope influences the nature and extent of visual effects, with observers on the higher western edge looking eastward and downslope across the development, while those on the lower eastern edge look westward and upslope toward the higher portions of the site. The linear park along the higher western boundary responds to this topographical characteristic, providing effective screening from the more elevated western viewpoints while preserving the rural character of Lizard Lane.
- 7.115 The linear park along the western boundary offers substantial visual buffering while providing recreational and environmental benefits, while the tree and hedgerow planting strategy would soften and integrate development within its landscape setting. From distant viewpoints representing recreational users of the wider landscape, visual effects would be minor and would diminish further as landscape mitigation matures, confirming that development would not significantly impact wider landscape experience or valued Cleadon Hills landscape setting.
- 7.116 Road users would experience notable effects, particularly along adjacent routes, though these would be appropriately mitigated through boundary treatments and structural planting that enhance rather than diminish route character. The single access strategy from Mill Lane concentrates traffic-related visual effects to the eastern boundary, maintaining the quieter character of Lizard Lane along the western edge. Enhanced landscape structure would provide long-term benefits for recreational users while maintaining rural route character and contributing to the area's recreational value.
- 7.117 The assessment confirms that while substantial visual effects would occur in immediate proximity to the site, these effects would be appropriately mitigated through comprehensive landscape strategy

and would not extend significantly into the wider landscape or affect the experience of valued landscape areas beyond the immediate development vicinity.

7.118 Public rights of way users would experience varied levels of visual impact depending on proximity and viewing context. The Tyne and Wear Heritage Way, representing the most significant recreational route in the area, would experience **Minor-Moderate Adverse** effects during construction reducing to **Negligible-Minor** Adverse effects by Year 15, as the development appears as a modest settlement extension within the broader panoramic landscape view. The Heritage Way's elevated position and distance from the site ensures that the development would not compromise the route's recreational and educational value or its appreciation of the wider Cleadon Hills landscape character. Other public rights of way in the immediate area would benefit from enhanced connectivity through the proposed linear park, which would provide improved pedestrian and cycle links to the wider network while maintaining the essential rural character that contributes to the recreational experience.

Table 2: Summary of Visual Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect (Adverse)
Viewpoints				
Viewpoint 1: Kitchener Road	High	Construction	High	Major
		Year 1	Medium-High	Major-Moderate
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate
Viewpoint 2: Kitchener Road/Lizard Lane Junction	High	Construction	High	Major
		Year 1	High	Major
		Year 15	Medium-High	Major-Moderate
Viewpoint 3: A183 Mill Lane	Medium-High	Construction	High	Major
		Year 1	Medium-High	Moderate-Major
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate

Viewpoint 4: A183 Adjacent School	Medium-High	Construction	Medium-High	Moderate-Major
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate
		Year 15	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
Viewpoint 5: Lizard Lane at Farm Track	Medium-High	Construction	High	Major
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate
		Year 15	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
Viewpoint 6: Lizard Lane Southwest Corner	High	Construction	High	Major
		Year 1	High	Major
		Year 15	Medium-High	Major-Moderate
Viewpoint 7: Heritage Way	High	Construction	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
		Year 1	Low	Minor
		Year 15	Negligible-Low	Negligible-Minor
Viewpoint 8: Coastal Park	High	Construction	Negligible	Negligible
		Year 1	Negligible-Low	Negligible-Minor
		Year 15	Negligible	Negligible
Residential Receptors				
R1: Augusta Terrace/Thill Stone Mews	High	Construction	High	Major
		Year 1	Medium-High	Major-Moderate
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate
R2: Arthur Street and Mill Lane	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate
		Year 1	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate

		Year 15	Low	Minor
R3: Marsden View	High	Construction	Medium-High	Major-Moderate
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate
		Year 15	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
R4: Mill Lane (South of Site)	High	Construction	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
		Year 1	Low	Minor
		Year 15	Low	Minor
R5: Lizard Lane (Adjacent SW Corner)	High	Construction	High	Major
		Year 1	High	Major
		Year 15	Medium-High	Major-Moderate
R6: Wellands Lane Group	High	Construction	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
		Year 1	Low	Minor
		Year 15	Low	Minor
R7: Wellands Farm	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate
		Year 1	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
		Year 15	Low	Minor
R8: Lizards Farm	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate
		Year 1	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
		Year 15	Low	Minor
Road Users				

A183 Mill Lane	Medium	Construction	Medium-High	Moderate-Major
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate
		Year 15	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
Lizard Lane	Medium-High	Construction	Medium-High	Moderate-Major
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate
		Year 15	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
Local Road Network	Medium	Construction	Negligible-Low	Negligible-Minor
		Year 1	Negligible-Low	Negligible-Minor
		Year 15	Negligible	Negligible
Recreational Users				
Tyne and Wear Heritage Way	High	Construction	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate
		Year 1	Low	Minor
		Year 15	Negligible-Low	Negligible-Minor
Coastal Park Users	High	Construction	Negligible	Negligible
		Year 1	Negligible	Negligible
		Year 15	Negligible	Negligible

8. Summary and Conclusions

- 8.1 This LVIA has considered the effects of the proposed development on the landscape features within the Site, on the character of the surrounding landscape, and on the visual amenity perceived by receptors likely to be present in the surrounding area.
- 8.2 The proposed development would result in permanent loss of agricultural land and fundamental change of character for the site itself, representing Major-Moderate Adverse effects that are inevitable with residential development of agricultural land.
- 8.3 However, the development has been designed to minimise effects on the wider landscape through comprehensive mitigation measures, sensitive positioning that respects landscape character, layout that responds appropriately to the site's east-west slope, and appropriate density distribution that provides effective transition between settlement and countryside. The site's immediate adjacency to the existing settlement edge of Whitburn village positions the development as a logical settlement extension rather than inappropriate countryside sprawl, which provides important context for assessing landscape impact.
- 8.4 The wider Cleadon Hills Character Area is anticipated to experience minor to moderate adverse effects, with the proposed development serving as a logical continuation of existing settlement rather than constituting a major encroachment into valued landscape. The preservation of the linear park and landscape buffers will be instrumental in sustaining the fundamental character and setting of the Area of High Landscape Value, while also offering improved public access that supports its recreational significance as outlined in the area's designation criteria.
- 8.5 The proposed landscape strategy includes new tree and hedgerow planting to increase vegetation coverage on the site, addressing the current limited landscape structure. The plan aims to enhance landscape structure and habitat connectivity beyond the development area. Sustainable drainage systems are incorporated into the design to manage flood risk, support biodiversity, and contribute to visual amenity.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 8.6 Visual effects would be most significant for residential properties on the northern edge of Whitburn and users of immediately adjacent routes (Mill Lane, Lizard Lane and Kitchener Road) though these effects would be substantially reduced through comprehensive landscape mitigation strategy

implementing enhanced boundary treatments, structural tree and hedgerow planting, and creation of a linear park buffer that provides multiple benefits including visual screening, recreational access, and habitat enhancement.

- 8.7 The site's east-west slope influences the nature and extent of visual effects, with observers on the higher western edge looking eastward and downslope across the development, while those on the lower eastern edge look westward and upslope toward the higher portions of the site. The linear park along the higher western boundary responds to this topographical characteristic, providing effective screening from the more elevated western viewpoints while preserving the rural character of Lizard Lane.
- 8.8 The development would be seen in context of existing settlement edge rather than isolated intrusion into countryside, maintaining the essential relationship between Whitburn village and its agricultural setting while accommodating necessary settlement growth. The linear park would provide an appropriate buffer between built development and rural landscape while offering enhanced public access and recreational opportunities for existing and future residents that contribute to quality of life and environmental appreciation.
- 8.9 From more distant viewpoints, particularly those representing recreational users of the wider landscape including the Tyne and Wear Heritage Way (Viewpoint 7), visual effects would be minor and would diminish further as landscape mitigation matures. This confirms that development would not significantly impact wider recreational experience or landscape appreciation, maintaining the essential qualities that contribute to the area's recreational and tourism value.
- 8.10 Road users may experience different impacts based on the proximity and nature of their routes, while changes to landscape structure could result in long-term environmental changes affecting both practical and recreational travel. The single access strategy from Mill Lane concentrates traffic-related visual effects to the eastern boundary, maintaining the quieter character of Lizard Lane along the western edge. Transport routes would benefit from improved landscape quality while maintaining essential rural character that contributes to the experience and promotes sustainable transport.

Mitigation Effectiveness

- 8.11 The proposed landscape mitigation strategy is comprehensive and appropriate to the site's landscape and visual context, demonstrating thorough understanding of local landscape character and effective

response to potential impacts. The linear park along the western boundary provides substantial buffering between development and wider agricultural landscape, achieving multiple objectives including visual screening, habitat enhancement, recreational provision, and sustainable drainage management that demonstrates integrated environmental design.

- 8.12 The positioning of the linear park along the higher western boundary takes advantage of the site's topography, creating opportunities for eastward views across the development and toward the coast from this elevated edge while providing an appropriate landscape transition to the wider countryside. The park's location at the higher western edge also helps to reduce the visual impact of development when viewed from the west, providing a softer edge to the settlement extension.
- 8.13 Green corridors aligned with key view corridors maintain important visual connections to the wider landscape while providing internal structure and permeability that enhances rather than diminishes landscape appreciation. The incorporation of an attenuation basin as positive landscape feature demonstrates integrated design approach that maximises environmental and visual benefits from essential infrastructure while contributing to biodiversity enhancement and educational value.
- 8.14 The substantial tree and hedgerow planting throughout the development would provide progressive screening, habitat enhancement, and visual integration while strengthening overall landscape structure using native species appropriate to local landscape character. This approach ensures development contributes positively to landscape quality and ecological connectivity while maintaining and enhancing the characteristics that define local landscape identity.
- 8.15 Enhanced boundary treatments, particularly along the southern boundary to provide appropriate interface with Marsden Primary School beyond the site boundary, would provide appropriate separation and screening through structural hedgerow and tree planting, ensuring that the development interface with educational land uses is appropriately managed while contributing to the school's environmental setting through enhanced landscape quality.

Compliance with Landscape Related Planning Policy

- 8.16 The development complies with National Planning Policy Framework requirements for landscape protection and enhancement while contributing to well-designed places through comprehensive landscape integration and substantial tree planting provision that exceeds policy requirements. The design approach responds positively to policy requirements for countryside character recognition while providing appropriate housing development that meets identified housing needs.

- 8.17 Local planning policy requirements for landscape character compatibility are addressed through careful consideration of density that provides an appropriate transition between settlement and countryside, layout that maintains important visual connections and respects existing settlement patterns, landscape treatment that enhances existing landscape structure while providing comprehensive new planting, and integration with existing settlement patterns that provides logical extension rather than isolated development.
- 8.18 The comprehensive landscape strategy ensures development would be in keeping with local landscape character while providing meaningful enhancement of landscape structure, public access, and environmental quality that extends benefits beyond the immediate development area and contributes to wider environmental improvement. The development demonstrates compliance with European Landscape Convention requirements for landscape protection, management and enhancement.

Overall Conclusions

- 8.19 From a landscape and visual perspective, the proposed development represents an acceptable extension of Whitburn village that responds appropriately to landscape context while providing comprehensive mitigation of potential adverse effects through sensitive design and comprehensive landscape integration. The development's design and landscape strategy demonstrate a thorough understanding of local landscape character and visual context, ensuring that development contributes positively to rather than detracts from local environmental quality.
- 8.20 The site's east-west slope has been carefully considered in the development layout, with the attenuation basin positioned at the lower eastern side to work with natural drainage patterns and the linear park placed along the higher western boundary to maximize screening effectiveness and provide an appropriate transition to the wider countryside. This topographically-responsive approach ensures the development works with rather than against the natural landform, minimising earthworks requirements while creating a development that sits comfortably within its landscape setting.
- 8.21 While significant effects would occur on the site itself and in immediate views, reflecting the inevitable change associated with residential development of agricultural land. The development would not result in unacceptable impacts on wider valued landscape of Cleadon Hills or the setting of the Area of High Landscape Value. The comprehensive landscape mitigation strategy ensures

essential landscape character and value would be maintained while providing opportunities for enhancement that extend benefits to existing as well as future residents.

- 8.22 The positioning of the site immediately adjacent to the existing settlement edge, combined with comprehensive landscape integration measures and adherence to design principles that respect local character, confirms that development would provide a balanced approach to housing provision while respecting landscape context and providing meaningful environmental and recreational enhancements that benefit both new and existing communities within the wider Whitburn area.
- 8.23 The revised single access strategy from Mill Lane represents a refinement of the initial proposals, allowing for a more coherent and continuous landscape treatment along the western boundary with Lizard Lane. This approach minimises disruption to the rural character of Lizard Lane while focusing traffic movements to the eastern boundary where the existing road infrastructure is most capable of accommodating increased capacity. The result is a more sensitively integrated development that respects the character of adjacent routes while providing appropriate access to meet transport requirements.

The assessment concludes that, subject to implementation of proposed landscape mitigation measures and adherence to design principles established in the masterplan, the development would not result in unacceptable landscape and visual impacts and would comply with relevant planning policy requirements for landscape protection, enhancement, and design quality.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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