

## **10. LANDSCAPE, AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT**

### **10.1 Introduction**

10.1.1 This section of the Environmental statement addresses:

- the visual effects of the development;
- the effects upon landscape character; and the amenity of public open space.

10.1.2 Landscape effects associated with a development relate to changes to the fabric, character and quality of the landscape resource and how it is experienced. Landscape assessment studies:

- direct effects upon specific landscape elements, especially prominent and eye catching features;
- change in character, which is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that creates distinctiveness and a sense of place;
- subtle effects that contribute towards the experience of intangible characteristics such as tranquillity, wildness and cultural associations;
- effects on designated landscapes, conservation sites, and other acknowledged special areas of interest.

10.1.3 Visual effects relate closely to landscape effects, but concern changes in views. Visual assessment concerns people's perception and response to changes in visual amenity. Effects may result from new landscape elements that cause visual intrusion or new features that obstruct views across the landscape.

10.1.4 Both landscape and visual effects can be positive or negative.

### **10.2 Methodology**

10.2.1 The methodology for this assessment follows the recommendations and guidance set out in the following reports:

- Guidelines for the Assessment of Landscape and Visual Impacts, Second Edition (2002), edited by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; and
- Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (2002), Countryside Agency in conjunction with Scottish Natural Heritage.

10.2.2 The landscape and visual assessment has been carried out by means of a site and desk survey and analysis of the study area.

**Visual assessment**

10.2.3 The visual assessment considers the site and its surroundings, focusing on a radius of approximately 1km. This is because the nature of the development, (the creation of football fields), means that the landscape changes will not be readily apparent except in relatively close proximity to the site. This limits the potential for significant visual effects to those areas closest to the site.

10.2.4 Views have been assessed from an average height of approximately 1.75m above ground level.

*Viewpoint sensitivity*

10.2.5 The visual impact assessment identifies and assesses the impact of the proposals upon visual receptors. Visual receptors include the public or community at large, residents, visitors and other groups of viewers as well as the visual amenity of people affected. The types of viewers, the numbers, the duration of the view and the importance of the view or views of and from valued area define the sensitivity of a visual receptor. The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment state (paragraph. 7.31) that “The sensitivity of visual receptors and views will be dependent on:

- The location and context of the viewpoint;
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor; and
- The importance of the view.”

From this and in this urban context the scale of viewpoint sensitivity outlined in Table 10.1 has been used.

<b>Table 10.1</b>	
<b>Criteria for the assessment of viewpoint sensitivity</b>	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Typical criteria</b>
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users of outdoor recreational facilities whose attention is focused on the townscape</li> <li>• Communities where the development results in changes in the setting or valued views enjoyed by the community</li> <li>• Occupiers of residential properties with views affected by the development</li> </ul>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation whose attention maybe focused away from the townscape</li> <li>• People travelling through or past the development in cars, on trains or other transport routes</li> </ul>
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People at their place of work, or engaged in similar activities, whose attention maybe focused away from the change in view</li> </ul>

10.2.6 A consideration of the combination of the sensitivity of visual receptors and the magnitude of the change determines the level of significance of the predicted impact. Properties/settlements are considered to be of high sensitivity, whereas industrial landscapes are considered to be of low sensitivity. The magnitude is determined by the distance from the viewer, the extent of change in the field of vision, the proportion or number of viewers affected and the duration of activity apparent from each

viewpoint, or a sequence of points that may have transient views, e.g. along a road. In visual assessment greater weight is given to the visual impacts of the development as seen from public viewpoints, rather than from private properties, though these are also given due consideration.

### ***Landscape character assessment***

10.2.7 The assessment analyses the value and sensitivity of the landscape, which is a measure of its capacity to accommodate change without significant loss of character. The magnitude of landscape effects depends upon the extent to which the landscape resource changes as a result of the proposed development, and is considered together with the scale and duration of the change. The relationship of the site to the surrounding area is also taken into consideration. The sensitivity of the landscape depends upon the nature of the development so this can not be considered as baseline information alone.

### ***Magnitude value and significance***

#### *Value*

10.2.8 Table 10.2 explains how criteria are applied to arrive at an assessment of landscape value. It is derived from the, GLVIA Second Edition.

<b>Table 10.2</b>				
<b>Criteria for the assessment of landscape value</b>				
<b>Value</b>		<b>Typical criteria</b>	<b>Typical scale</b>	<b>Typical examples</b>
High	Exceptional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High importance and rarity</li> <li>No or very limited potential for substitution</li> </ul>	International, National	World Heritage site, National Park, AONB
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High importance and rarity</li> <li>Limited potential for substitution</li> </ul>	National, regional & local	National Park, AONB, National Scenic Area, AGLV etc
Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium importance and rarity</li> <li>Limited potential for substitution</li> </ul>	Regional, local	AGLV, Regional Scenic Areas etc
	Medium-Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium importance and rarity</li> <li>Some or good potential for substitution</li> </ul>	Regional, local	Undesignated but value expressed for instance in demonstrable use
Low	Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low importance and rarity</li> </ul>	Local	Areas identified as having some redeeming feature or features and possibly identified for improvement
	Very poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low importance and rarity</li> </ul>	Local	Areas identified for recovery

#### *Magnitude*

10.2.9 Table 10.3 explains how criteria are applied to arrive at an assessment of magnitude and is derived from GLVIA, Second Edition.

<b>Table 10.3</b>	
<b>Criteria for the assessment of magnitude</b>	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Typical criteria</b>
High	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/ features/characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape or view and/ or introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to key elements/ features/characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape or view and/ or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape
Low	Minor loss of or alteration to key elements/ features/characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape or view and/ or introduction of elements that may not necessarily be considered to be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape
Negligible	Very minor loss of or alteration to key elements/ features/characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape or view and/ or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape- approximating the ' no change' situation

### *Significance*

10.2.10 Overall impacts may be adverse, neutral or beneficial, and are assigned a level on the scale: Imperceptible-Slight-Moderate-Substantial-Severe, taking into account mitigation measures, and at different stages of the project lifecycle. Intermediate levels, such as slight to moderate, may also apply. Table 10.4 assigns criteria to each level, as applied in this assessment.

<b>Table 10.4</b>	
<b>Criteria for determining significance</b>	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Typical criteria</b>
Imperceptible	The degree of change is so small as to have little or no effect
Slight	The proposals have some, but only a limited effect within the mainly local context
Moderate	The proposals have a noticeable effect within the context of the wider area
Substantial	The proposals have a large effect within the context of the wider area
Severe	The proposals are wholly out of character with the existing situation, both locally and on the wider scale

10.2.11 Additional information regarding the threshold criteria applicable to landscape and visual impact assessment is given in Appendix 6.0 of the GLVIA, Second Edition. The GLVIA guidance advises that sensitivity of the landscape is dependent upon the nature of the development so it can not be considered in the baseline assessment without consideration of the nature of the development. The sensitivity of visual receptors is defined in the GLVIA.

## Aspects of the development

Table 10.5 Summary of potential effects of aspects of the development	
Aspect of the development	Potential change
<b>Construction phase</b>	
Construction vehicle movement	<i>Townscape physical attributes/elements</i> and pattern not affected
	<i>Perceptual characteristics:</i> increase in activity for short time, temporary increase in amount of visual clutter
Construction of buildings	<i>Townscape physical attributes:</i> Introduction of new elements, loss of existing buildings
	<i>Perceptual characteristics:</i> increase in activity for short time, temporary increase in amount of visual clutter
Construction of infrastructure and outdoor spaces	<i>Townscape physical attributes:</i> Introduction of new elements
	<i>Perceptual characteristics:</i> increase in activity for short time, temporary increase in amount of visual clutter
Storage areas including compound with stockpiles of materials	<i>Physical attributes/elements:</i> new incongruous elements obvious but contained
	<i>Perceptual characteristics:</i> potential effect upon urban fringe character
<b>Operation</b>	
The buildings	<i>Physical characteristics:</i> introduction of new small scale building of contrasting materials to surrounding
	<i>Perceptual characteristics:</i> potential effect built development in the area
Outdoor spaces	<i>Physical characteristics:</i> loss of plantation and introduction of new pitches
	<i>Perceptual characteristics:</i> potential positive effect upon potential for accessibility

## 10.3 Baseline assessment

### Visual assessment

10.3.1 Generally the short distance views of the development area are defined and restricted:

- To the west by the topography which falls gradually towards Blind lane,
- To the north by the rising land on which Philadelphia/ New Herrington are built, though there is a narrow view towards Penshaw on the skyline,
- To the immediate east by the by the screening mound and housing east of Staddon Lane. The housing soutog Grange view provides the skyline
- To the south by landform housing and hedges along Coaley lane.

10.3.2 Visual barriers are shown on Figure 10.1.

10.3.3 A series of photographic viewpoints have been chosen and illustrated in the ES to characterise views from the north, south east and west. The locations are shown collectively on Figure 10.1. The individual viewpoints are explained with text on Figures 10.2 to 10.9 inclusive.

### ***Landscape character receptor assessment***

10.3.4 Effects on landscape character could arise either through the introduction of new elements that alter the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements in a particular type of landscape, or through visibility of the development, which may alter the way in which the pattern of elements is perceived. The key landscape character receptors and issues that require further assessment are:

- The effect on the setting of designed/designated landscapes identified in Table 10.4
- The effect on the local landscape character of the Tyne and Wear lowlands (referred to as the central lowlands in the Great North Forest Plan) and amenity open space; (see Figure 10.1)
- The effect on the character of the setting of the edge of Newbottle;
- The effect on local public Rights of Way especially footpath 60 (AW Drawing no. 03\_001 00A).

10.3.5 The location of the designated sites is shown in Figure 4.3 Proximity plan. This plan used in combination with Table 10.6 – Proximity of Designated Sites shows the location of SSSIs, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, National Register of Parks and Garden properties English Heritage Sites, National Trust Properties, Ancient woodland and local nature reserves. There are no sites of international importance near the site such as Ramsar sites, special protection areas or special areas of conservation.

<b>Table 10.6</b>	
<b>Proximity of Designated Sites</b>	
<b>(Also See Figure 4.1)</b>	
<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Distance (km)</b>
<b>Sites of special scientific interest</b>	
Herrington Hill	1.79
High Haining Hill	2.29
Joe's Pond	2.40
Hetton Bogs	2.77
Dawson's Plantation Quarry	2.98
Hastings Hill	3.40
Gilleylaw Quarry	4.76
Moorsley Banks	5.02
High Moorsley	5.42
South Hylton Pasture	5.63
Humbledon Hill Quarry	6.09
Claxheugh Rock & Ford Limeston	6.19
Tunstall Hills & Ryhope Cutting	6.38
Brasside Pond	6.70
Pig Hill	7.33
Hesledon Moor West	7.83
Hesledon Moor East	7.98
<b>National Trust Properties</b>	
Penshaw Monument	2.51
Washington Old Hall	5.17
Moorhouse Woods	5.45
<b>National Register of Parks and Gardens</b>	
Lamton Castle	2.42
Lumley Castle	3.14
Mowbrey Park	8.04
<b>English Heritage Sites</b>	
Finchale Priory	5.26
<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Distance (km)</b>
<b>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</b>	
Seven Sisters Round Barrow, Copt Hill, Houghton-le-Spring	2.82
Hasting Hill Cursus and Causewayed enclosure, 600m south of Hasting Hill Farm	2.91
Round Barrow on Hasting Hill, 230m west of Hasting Hill Farm	3.46
Chester New Bridge	4.56
Finchale Priory Benedictine Cell, Hermitage, Monastic precinct and Site of Priory Watermill	5.26
Concangium Roman fort	5.31
Coal Mining remains in Mallygill Wood	5.45
Harbour House Chapel	5.64
Settlement SW of Harbour House	5.89
Colliery Engine House at Washinton F Pit, Albany	6.40
Ryhope pumping engines	7.09
Bowes Railway	7.73

## 10.4 Assessment of effects

### *Visual effects*

#### *Housing*

- 10.4.1 The visual impact on housing east of Staddon Way would be generally **slight adverse** changing to **slight beneficial** as the landscape planting matured. The houses along Devonport are already screened by a mound, see Figure 2.5. The rear of the houses along Dainton and Warrington crescent are screened by tall close-boarded fencing, see Figure 10.7. Therefore they would be screened from view of construction activity. The field boundary along Staddon way is in poor condition and the proposed landscape scheme would be an improvement to this. There are few views from within the housing but the most open publicly accessible view is illustrated by viewpoint 8 on Figure 10.9 Westleigh Road.
- 10.4.2 The effects on the houses south west of the site around Chestnut Crescent would also be generally **slight adverse** changing to **slight beneficial** as the landscape planting matured. See Figure 10.2.
- 10.4.3 Housing in Shiney Row would not have views into the site.
- 10.4.4 The housing on Aster Terrace to the north would experience a **moderate adverse** impact during construction reducing to **slight beneficial** as planting matures.
- 10.4.5 Jane Pitt Cottage on Blind Lane would have **no view** of the development. Neither would the ground floor rooms in the Beehive Pub on the corner of Blind lane.

#### *Roads*

- 10.4.6 Staddon Way is illustrated on viewpoint 7, Figure 10.8. Because the hedgerow is defunct there would be no screening of the construction phase from the road, potentially leading to a **short term moderate adverse** impact because of disturbance. But even during this stage the long distance views would not be obstructed. Once the planting matured views into the development would be screened except at the entrance therefore the effect would change to **moderate beneficial**.
- 10.4.7 Coaley Lane has only intermittent views of the development as there is an intact hedge for most of its length that curtails close views. This is illustrated by viewpoints 2 and 3 on Figure 10.3 and 10.4. Viewpoint 1 would be worse than the rest of the lane during the construction period, **moderate adverse** due to the close view of the temporary site compound, however this would change to **slight beneficial** once this area was reinstated.
- 10.4.8 Blind Lane does not have a clear view into the development as illustrated by Figure 10.5 because of the intervening landform. The effects would therefore be **imperceptible**.

#### *Footpaths*

- 10.4.9 Footpath 60 would have open view of the development that would be disturbed during construction, potentially arising to a **temporary moderate adverse effect** that would diminish and become **slight beneficial** the site planting matures.
- 10.4.10 The railway cutting path has **no view** as illustrated by viewpoint 9 Figure 10.10. There is an informal path on the top of the embankment but it would also be screened by Russell Wood south of the site and by the perimeter planting of the area to be felled.
- 10.4.11 The Footpath from Newbottle to Philadelphia is illustrated by Viewpoint 6 Figure 10.7. The effect would be **slight adverse changing to beneficial** as planting matures.

### ***Landscape character***

#### *Sensitive receptors*

- 10.4.12 It has been concluded that due to the separation distances and lack of inter-visibility, the development of the site would not significantly alter the setting of these sensitive receptors having only a **very slight/ negligible impact**. This is the case even for those such as Durham Cathedral and Penshaw Monument, where the siting of the feature gives panoramic views outwards over the surrounding area. In views towards the site from the top of the tower of Durham Cathedral the change from arable field to pitches would not be readily apparent and the loss of the woodland would no bring prominent change as it would only be seen against a backdrop of housing behind it. Similarly in views from Penshaw Monument the intervening housing would provide screening and the retention of the northern fringe of woodland would also screen views of the pitches.

#### *Effect on local landscape character and amenity open space*

- 10.4.13 A formal Open Space Audit in accordance with PPG17 has not yet been carried out by the Planning Authority. Therefore in the absence of this an audit has been carried out of the available open space in the local area up to 1km radius of the site ie within easy walking distance. The consideration of the use and availability of this has guided the judgement of the impact of the proposed land use on local amenity.
- 10.4.14 The typology used to assess the open space is based upon PPG17 categories outlined in Table 2.1.
- 10.4.15 Each site was mapped and categorised using air photography and site survey. The results of the survey and consideration of the effect of the development upon open space provision are summarised in section 2 of this ES. There would be **no adverse impact**.

10.4.16 The site is in the landscape character of the site is described in the former Countryside Commissions Character Study as the Tyne & Wear Lowlands. (A tiny part on the south east of the site is in the Magnesian Limestone Plateau area but this is really a result of the scale of the drafting of the boundaries and it does not mean this corner of the site differs materially. (See Figure 10.1) The key characteristics of the Tyne and Wear Lowlands Area are described in Table 10.7. The characteristics of the site are broadly consistent with the description of the wider landscape character of the area.

<b>Table 10.7</b> <b>Key characteristics of the Character Area 14 Tyne &amp; Wear Lowlands</b> <b>from Countryside Character Volume 1 :North east</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An undulating landform incised by the rivers Tyne and Wear and their tributaries. dominated by widespread urban and industrial development, and a dense network of major road and rail links.</li> <li>• A landscape of considerable recent change, with a long history of coal mining, now revealed only by locally prominent open cast extraction areas and spoil heaps, and recently restored sites</li> <li>• Large open fields of arable crops, with urban fringe effect of pony grazing and other miscellaneous activities around settlements.</li> <li>• Irregular woodland cover, generally sparse, but with well wooded steep valley sides, estates with mixed woodland and parkland trees, and plantations on restored spoil heaps.....</li> </ul>

- The pressures for change identified in the document are summarised in Table 10.8. The most pertinent to this development are the potential for pressure to extend the urban fringe and for new recreational facilities to give a cluttered appearance to the edge of the urban area.

<b>Table 10.8</b> <b>Pressures for change in the character area</b> <b>from Countryside Character Volume 1 :North east</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread dereliction was left following the decline of coal mining and heavy industry; much of this has now been reclaimed and the land restored to a range of afteruses, including agriculture, forestry, housing, retail and amenity.</li> <li>• Large areas of redundant industrial land have been left by the decline of industry, most notably along the Tyne valley. This legacy of economic decline is still much in evidence in some urban areas.</li> <li>• Pressure for new development, however, has continued to extend the urban fringe into open countryside, with light industry, retail and housing development often poorly integrated into the surrounding landscape.</li> <li>• New roads, with their associated lighting and urban detailing, erode the rural character of the remaining areas of open countryside.</li> <li>• Pressures for recreational facilities give a visually cluttered appearance to the urban fringe.</li> <li>• Similarly, open-cast mining on green field sites continues to erode the rural areas removing long-established landscape features.</li> <li>• Agricultural intensification, with a move from pasture to arable, has resulted in the loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and the inappropriate management of many of the surviving hedges.</li> <li>• Lack of management of broadleaved woodland and parkland trees, resulting in overmature stock without young trees to replace them.</li> <li>• Industrial pollution in the rivers has been reduced in recent years, although some remain severely polluted.</li> <li>• The potential for further pollution from minewater, should the pumping of the deep mines cease, remains a potential threat.</li> </ul>

10.4.17 In this case such a potential effect is **slight adverse during construction changing to slight beneficial** because:

- the amount and scale of built development is very small and most of the site would remain 'green',
- The facilities would be contained in a framework of planting comprising the retained plantation edge and hedges, new perimeter structure planting, and planting around the car park and sports pavilion.

10.4.18 The management objectives for this area from the character assessment are summarised in Table 10.9.

<b>Table 10.9</b> <b>Countryside management objectives for the character area</b> <b>from Countryside Character Volume 1 :North east</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The retention of the rural character of the countryside between settlements is important and consideration should be given to the improvement of the urban fringe environment.</li><li>• The conservation and management of historic townscapes, parklands and landmark features, and the improvement of the urban environment including riversides, should be addressed.</li><li>• There are opportunities to conserve and manage traditional landscape features, in particular semi-natural woodlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees, heathlands and wetlands.</li><li>• Integrated management of watercourses and river corridors would restore riparian vegetation, reduce pollution and improve their visual and nature-conservation value.</li><li>• The development of community forests is important in the urban fringe, and where appropriate in the wider countryside, particularly within the area defined as the Great North Forest.</li><li>• The improved restoration of mineral extraction sites would integrate them more fully into the surrounding landscape and provide quality landscapes combining a range of land uses, including forestry, amenity, recreation and nature conservation.</li></ul>	

10.4.19 The scheme would maintain the open character of the urban fringe. While some of the plantation would be lost the Area of Russell Wood remaining would be guaranteed for public access and nature conservation management as part of the Great North Forest.

*Effect on character of Newbottle*

10.4.20 The green space on the settlement edge of Newbottle is described in the former Countryside Commission's character study as 'urban fringe' ie it is influenced by the proximity of built development and is therefore not open countryside in this respect. The housing on the immediate edge of Staddon Way 'turns its back' on the greenspace because of the noise attenuation mound and the acoustic fencing which separates it from the road and field and plantation beyond. The more established housing further eastwards is at higher elevation so looks over and beyond the development. For these houses the development site is a small part of the setting. Maintaining the predominantly green and recreational use of the site preserves in tact the open space relationship of the housing to the site area the effects would therefore be **negligible**.

10.4.21 From the housing in Newbottle there is only a distant view of the top of the tower of Durham Cathedral to the south west. The new pitches would not obscure this.

Neither would views of Penshaw Monument to the north east be obscured. Thus these visual relationships would remain in tact. Overall therefore the effect would be **negligible**.

#### *Effect on rights of way*

10.4.22 Footpath 60 is the only right of way within the application boundary. Since it is being retained on its original alignment, there would be **no direct effect** upon it. In addition as this route is not being changed there would be no effect upon the available public right of way network links.

10.4.23 Creating football pitches would not obstruct any long or short distance views from the path in a southerly, easterly or westerly direction. The felling of the trees to the north of the path would open up views in this direction over the land to be used for the senior pitches. The small building proposed would be visible but would not be an obstruction in views towards landmarks such as Penshaw Monument due to its elevation. The experience of open space would thus remain broadly unchanged in this respect and just **slightly adverse** initially during construction.

10.4.24 The current tree planting has a number of routes through it where people have followed paths through the fire breaks in the plantation. These are not rights of way but are permissive routes. Part of one of these in the north east of the site would have to be realigned westward. The others would remain unaltered. However, because it is proposed that the remainder of the new woodland in Russell Wood not directly affected by the scheme and would be dedicated under provisions of the CROW Act this means that public access to these remaining paths would become a right and would be protected. Thus the availability of woodland walks with permitted access would be increased as a result of the scheme and it would be **beneficial** in the longer term.

## **10.5 Mitigation measures**

10.5.1 These can be summarised as :

- retention of perimeter hedges and some plantation around the edge of the site,
- incorporation of new native planting,
- replacement planting off site in the Great North Forest,
- preservation of the Right of Way number 60 and improved access to Russell Wood and its dedication.

## **10.6 Residual impacts**

- 10.6.1 These include a change in character with reduced woodland cover and change in the landform to include terracing to allow pitch construction.
- 10.6.2 Adverse visual impacts would occur during construction as a result of disturbance from some viewpoints.

## **10.7 Summary and Conclusions**

- 10.7.1 There would be some moderate adverse temporary visual impacts during the construction phase on footpaths and properties, but this would diminish as the landscape planting matured during the operational phase, eventually becoming beneficial.
- 10.7.2 There would not be a significant adverse impact upon landscape character receptors.
- 10.7.3 Long distance views of landmarks such as Durham Cathedral and Penshaw Monument would be unaffected.