

APPEAL RELATING TO LAND KNOWN AS DANETREE

Proof of Evidence of

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Landscape and Visual Issues

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MB APPENDIX 5 EXTRACT FROM:
*ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE AND
PROCEDURES A CONSULTATION PAPER*
DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MB APPENDIX 6 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA USED IN THE ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND
VISUAL IMPACTS

MB APPENDIX 7 EXTRACT FROM:
INSPECTOR'S REPORT INTO THE DAVENTRY LOCAL PLAN

I INTRODUCTION

I.1 Qualifications and Experience

- I.1.1 My name is Michelle Bolger. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and an Associate of LiZLaKe Chartered Landscape Architects and Urban Designers. I have a degree and a Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Greenwich University and I am a Member of the Landscape Institute. I also have a degree in English from Durham University and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from London University
- I.1.2 I have worked at LiZLaKe since 1996. During this time, I have prepared landscape proposals for a range of projects including a 600ha stud farm, historic landscapes, and educational, commercial and residential developments.
- I.1.3 I have prepared Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) to accompany planning applications for a range of projects including residential, leisure and commercial developments. I have also prepared the landscape and visual assessments required for the Environmental Impact Assessments of highway projects and commercial development. With the Principal of the practice I have been responsible for preparing the Practice Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and have delivered a series of training workshops on this issue for other landscape architects and local authority officers.
- I.1.4 Over the last eight years I have assisted the Principal in the preparation of evidence at public inquiry and have presented evidence myself over the last five years at appeal, call-in and local plan inquiries with regard to the landscape and visual impacts of development. During the last three years I have given evidence on behalf of Broadland District Council, and East Northamptonshire District Council at public inquiry to support their refusals to grant planning permission for proposed wind turbine developments.

I.2 Scope of Evidence

I.2.1 I was appointed in November 2008 by Daventry District Council (DDC) to prepare evidence to support the reasons for refusal, with respect to landscape issues, that would have formed part of their refusal had the application been determined. My late appointment was on account of the last minute withdrawal of the previous landscape witness due to a conflict of interest.

I.2.2 My evidence is based on site visits that I made in November and December 2008, a desk top study of the local landscape and my reading of the various studies that have been undertaken in respect of the future development of Daventry. In particular these have included the following:

- Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite
Co-ordinated by the River Nene Regional Park (CD2.5)
- Daventry Strategic Development Options Study (The Atkins Report) (CD 3.15)
- Daventry Infrastructure Studies (DIS) Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC)
(Consultation draft May 2008) (CD4.2)

I.2.3 I have reviewed the application documents for the Appeal Site (the Site), in particular the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) prepared for the Environmental Statement (ES) and for the Supplementary Environmental Statement (SES). A description of the proposed development can be found in the Statement of Common Ground.

I.2.4 My evidence has been prepared to address the landscape and visual aspects of those issues identified as reasons for refusal had the application been determined, in particular Reason no 2 that :

The proposed development would result in a substantial loss and change of character of an area of open countryside that forms the setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument - Borough Hill. It has not been adequately demonstrated why development should take place in the area that forms the setting to a nationally important area – especially where it may be possible to locate suitable sustainable urban extensions in other less harmful locations. To develop in such an area of open countryside the need for which has not been fully and

comprehensively justified such as to outweigh the harm that would arise to the setting of the ancient monument would be contrary to national and local policies and guidance.¹

I.2.5 The conclusions I have reached are:

- the development would appear as an isolated settlement within a rural landscape and would not be visually integrated to the existing urban area.
- this would result in an unacceptable loss of landscape character within the surrounding landscape
- this loss of character would harm the rural setting of Daventry.

I.3 **The Structure of this report**

I.3.1 The structure of my evidence is as follows:

Section 2 provides a brief summary of the planning policies relevant to this application.

Section 3 describes the existing landscape context of the Appeal Site,

Section 4 reviews the conclusions of the LVIAs in the ES and the SES.

Section 5 assesses the landscape sensitivity of the Appeal Site and the surrounding landscape potentially affected by the development.

Section 6 assess the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development

Section 7 summarises the conclusions of the various strategic studies that have been undertaken with respect to the capacity of the Appeal Site to accommodate urban development.

Section 8 provides a summary and conclusion

¹ CD 5.14 Daventry District Council Planning Committee Report | 1th June 2008,

I.3.2

A large number of Figures and Plans have been prepared both by the applicant and in the course of the strategic studies that have been undertaken. Due to my late appointment I have only prepared four Figures of my own which can be found in MB Appendix 1. For ease of reference I have also included in MB Appendix 2 copies of a couple of Figures prepared by others to which I make particular reference.

2 PLANNING POLICY

2.1 National, Regional and Local Planning Policies

2.1.1 The Daventry District Council Planning Committee Report 11th June 2008² lists the policies in support of its intended reasons for refusal. This section provides a brief summary of the policies that I consider are relevant to the landscape impacts of the proposals.

2.2 National Planning Policy: PPS 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.2.1 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.

2.2.2 Objective (i) of PPS7 is to raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of, amongst other things, good quality, sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside; and through the continued protection of the open countryside for the benefit of all, with the highest level of protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources.³

2.2.3 Sustainable development is the core principle of PPS7 and amongst the key principles that should be applied with the policies set out in PPS7 are:

(iv) New building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; the Government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all.⁴

² CD 5.17 Daventry District Council Planning Committee Report 11th June 2008 Para 11.11

³ PPS 7 *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* The Government Objectives (i)

⁴ Ibid Key Principles Para 1.

(vi) All development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness.

2.2.4 Paragraph 13 of PPS7 recommends that:

Local planning authorities should prepare policies and guidance that encourage good quality design throughout their rural areas, in accordance with Annex C to PPS1, and utilising tools such as Landscape Character Assessments and Village or Town Design Statements, and the design elements of Village or Parish Plans prepared by local communities.⁵

2.3 **Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8)**

2.3.1 RSS8 Policy 4 - **Promoting Better Design** recommends that improved standards of design and construction can be achieved by promoting:

the use of design led approaches which take account of local natural and historic character, for example landscape character assessments, urban design frameworks, town and village design statements, local concept statements, countryside design summaries, and masterplanning exercises;

2.3.2 Policy 27 - **Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Assets** makes clear that sustainable development should ensure the protection, appropriate management and enhancement of the region's natural and cultural assets (and their settings). In particular: local authorities should apply the following principles:

- *the promotion of the highest level of protection for the region's nationally and internationally designated natural and cultural assets;*
- *damage to natural or cultural assets (and their settings) should be avoided wherever and as far as possible, recognising that such assets are usually irreplaceable;*

⁵ CD 1.17 PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas Para 13

- *unavoidable damage must be clearly justified by a need for development in that location which outweighs the damage that would result and should be reduced to a minimum through mitigation measures;*⁶

2.3.3 Policy 30 – **Management and Enhancement of the Regions** sets out that landscape Development Plans, future Local Development Frameworks, and other strategies of local authorities and agencies should be informed by landscape character assessments to underpin and act as key components of criteria-based policies for the consideration of development proposals in rural or urban fringe areas

2.4 Northamptonshire Structure Plan

2.4.1 Saved Policy GS5 – **Design** states that in order to promote high quality design and sustainable development all proposals should have regard to the visual appearance of the development in the context of the defining characteristics of the local area.

2.5 Daventry District Local Plan

2.5.1 GNI – **General** states that the granting of planning permission for development will be guided by the need to severely restrain development in the open countryside.

2.5.2 GN2 – **General** states that planning permission will normally be granted for development provided it is of a type, scale and design in keeping with the locality and that it will not detract from its amenities and that it will not affect a Special Landscape Area (SLA).:

2.6 Other Relevant Planning Documents

2.6.1 **Norton Village Design Statement** was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in May 2008. I have not seen a copy of the final Design Statement but I understand that it does not differ significantly from the Draft Statement. The Site is 400m from the edge of Norton village and the draft statement contains guidance that relates to the landscape setting of the village. In particular the Design Statement states

⁶ CD 1.1 Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands Page 36

that *'It is important that Norton remains as a village, separated from Daventry.'*⁷ The recommendation is made that:

*There must be a 1km (0.58 mile) buffer zone between the Village and any new development. Developers should respect the settlement pattern and retain the important views identified on the map in the appendices.*⁸

2.6.2 The **Daventry Design Codes** were adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in December 2005. The Design Codes cover aspects of green infrastructure, biodiversity, landscape and cultural assets. They also address the retention of existing landscape features, the integration of new development into the landscape and the relationship of new development to the countryside.

2.6.3 The **Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite**. Within this suite are a series of assessments (landscape character, historic character and biological character) accompanied by a Strategy and Guidance. The individual assessments have then been synthesised into a top tier of assessment called Environmental Character Assessment. Although DDC has not adopted the assessments as Supplementary Planning Documents, PPS 7 makes clear the importance of maintaining local distinctiveness and recommends the use of tools such as landscape character assessments.

*Local planning authorities should prepare policies and guidance that encourage good quality design throughout their rural areas, in accordance with Annex C to PPS1, and utilising tools such as Landscape Character Assessments and Village or Town Design Statements, and the design elements of Village or Parish Plans prepared by local communities. (Para 13)*⁹

2.6.4 The assessments have been undertaken in order to inform all those involved in making decisions about changes in the countryside. The appellants in the ES LVIA have accepted the relevance of these assessments to the Site.

⁷ CD 3.9 Norton Village Design Statement (Consultation Draft 2007) Page 13

⁸ Ibid Page 13

⁹ CD 1.17 PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas Para 13

3 EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.1 The Site

- 3.1.1 The Site is located between the A45 Daventry to Northampton road, which forms the southern boundary and the unclassified Daventry to Norton road which forms the northern boundary.
- 3.1.2 Immediately west of the Site lies Borough Hill, (a steep sided hill rising to 200m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) with an elongated top running north south) which separates the Site from the existing urban area of Daventry which lies to the east of Borough Hill. The land ownership boundary lies along the top of steep east facing slope of the hill. The Site boundary does not follow any natural feature but partly follows field boundaries across the hillside.¹⁰
- 3.1.3 Similarly the eastern boundary of the Site mostly follows a number of field boundaries but there is also no natural boundary to the east. In places both the eastern and western boundaries cross through existing fields. The Site comprises 207ha of land which is currently in agricultural use.
- 3.1.4 The Site is close to two Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM). The flattened top of Borough Hill is the site of an Iron Age Hill Fort and the boundary of the SAM lies at its closest 150m from the western boundary of the Site. Further south, close to the A45, the western boundary is immediately adjacent to the Burnt Wall SAM, the exact nature of which is unknown. The Marches Industrial Estate is located further west, beyond the Burnt Wall SAM, and occupies land on both side of the A45.
- 3.1.5 The Site itself contains a number of irregularly sized fields, mostly in arable use but with some pasture. Most field boundaries are formed by hedgerows with a significant number of hedgerow trees that give a wooded appearance to the landscape particularly when within the Site. There are two areas of woodland adjacent to the Site. Borough

¹⁰ Turley Associates Drawing NO PROL1002-106 Rev B

Hill Plantation, which lies on the steep slide slopes of Borough Hill and Oak Spinney, a much smaller copse which is located north of Borough Hill Plantation at the bottom of the steep slope.

3.1.6 The Site includes the bottom of the steep east facing slopes of Borough Hill and more gently undulating land that lies to the east and south of Borough Hill. The western boundary of the Site rises to 180m AOD with the break in slope generally occurring at around 150m AOD. On the southern boundary (the A45) the lowest part of the Site is at 130m AOD, on the eastern boundary 125m AOD and on the northern boundary 140m AOD.

3.1.7 There is a narrow single track road that runs through the Site leading from the A45. On leaving the busy A45 along this narrow road there is an immediate marked contrast. The road provides access for Borough Hill Farm, an isolated farmstead on the steep side slope of Borough Hill, before taking a sharp turn to the right and, after approximately 1.2km joining another narrow road that leads to the village of Norton. The eastern Site boundary lies approximately 500m west of the junction.

3.1.8 There are two aspects to the landscape context of the Site. One relates to role that the Site plays in the setting of Daventry and the second relates to the contribution that the Site makes to the character of the wider surrounding landscape.

3.2 The relationship of the Site to the setting of Daventry

3.2.1 Daventry is located in the west of Northamptonshire, to the north and west of some of the highest hills in the county, in particular Big Hill (213m AOD) and Newnham Hill (201m AOD) to the south and Borough Hill (200m AOD), to the east. The A45 approaches Daventry from the east (from the M1 or Northampton) and passes through an area of relatively lower land between Borough Hill and Newnham Hill. MB Figure 1 in MB Appendix I illustrates the relationship between the Site and the topography of the surrounding area.

3.2.2 The urban area of Daventry has developed to the north and west of these hills on an undulating plateau. The steep west facing scarp slopes of the plateau edge has limited development to the west. These three areas of high ground curve around the head of the valley that stretches to the north west and this has been described as the Daventry

'bowl', with development in Daventry located on the sloping sides of the bowl. Currently the Daventry Reservoir, which sits below the bowl at the head of the valley floor, marks the limit of development along the valley floor although recent urban development in Daventry has taken place on the slopes rising to the west of the Reservoir.

3.2.3 Borough Hill currently contains the urban area of Daventry and limits views of the urban area from the east. Approaching Daventry from the east the town is hidden from view until the last moment. The Marches Industrial Estate is located at the foot of the south western corner of Borough Hill and this is currently the first indication of the presence of the urban area. Until this point the approach has been dominated by the distinctive outline of Borough Hill to the north of the A45 and the less distinctive but equally high Newnham Hill to the south. The approach is entirely rural and there is a notable transition once the A45 passes the southern slopes of Borough Hill. ES Viewpoints 12, 10 and 9 illustrate the views on the approach to Daventry and for ease of reference they have been reproduced in MB Appendix 2.

3.2.4 The approach is all the more marked because Borough Hill is intermittently visible all the way from Flore. The A45 follows an undulating route with views of Borough Hill appearing and disappearing on account of the topography and vegetation. Humphry Repton, one of the great 18th century landscape designers, often deliberately planned principal approaches to grand houses so that key views would be successively hidden and then revealed in order to heighten the expectations of visitors. The approach to Daventry has some of these qualities and could be described as an unintentional Repton-style approach where Borough Hill acts a key landmark and views of Daventry are hidden until the last moment. The relatively dramatic and unspoilt landscape that surrounds the A45 approach to Daventry is a key element in the rural setting of Daventry. The southern part of the Site lies within the rural landscape that forms this approach.

3.2.5 The importance of Daventry's rural setting is recognised in the *Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report* from the *Daventry Infrastructure Strategy*

These hills also serve to screen views of the town on many approaches into Daventry, and therefore help retain the rural character of the town's hinterland. From key approaches into Daventry, from the south on the A361, from the south west on the A425 and from the east

along the A45 there is no awareness of the town's presence until the outer limit of the town is reached with the exception of glimpsed views of the Marches Industrial Estate obtained from the intermittent sections of the A45 in the vicinity of Weedon Bec.¹¹

3.3 National Landscape Character

3.3.1 The Site is located within Joint Character Area 95 Northamptonshire Uplands of the Countryside Agency's *Character of England Map*. Some of the key characteristics of the Northamptonshire Uplands evident in the landscape surrounding the Site are:

- Rounded, undulating hills with many long, low ridgelines.
- Sparse settlement of nucleated villages on hilltops or valley heads.
- Mixed farming: open arable contrasts with pasture enclosed by good hedges with frequent hedgerow trees.
- Wide views from the edges and across the ridgetops.
- Straight, wide, enclosure roads, often following ridges.
- Ironstone and limestone older buildings with a transition across the area. Brick buildings in some villages.
- Great variety of landform with distinctive local features.

3.4 Local Landscape Character

3.4.1 The River Nene Valley Project has co-ordinated the production of a suite of assessments that relate to the environmental character of Northamptonshire, the *Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite*. This includes a *Current Landscape Assessment*. Figure 16 from the DIS¹² shows the landscape character areas in the vicinity of the Site. For ease of reference I have included a copy of this Figure in MB Appendix 2.

¹¹ CD 4.2 *Daventry Infrastructure Strategy Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report (Consultation Draft May 2008)* Prepared for WNDK by URS Chapter 5 Townscape and Visual Character, Page 20 Para 5.2.5

¹² Ibid Figures

3.4.2 The Site is located within the Undulating Hills and Valleys landscape type within the geographically discrete Bugbrooke and Daventry Landscape Character Area (LCA) (13 b). The southern boundary of the Site is adjacent to the Ironstone Hills landscape type and the geographically discrete Staverton Hills LCA.

3.4.3 Key characteristics for the Undulating Hills and Valleys landscape type include:

- extensive undulating and productive rural landscape stretching across the west of the county;
- reservoirs and man made lakes are conspicuous features in the local landscape displaying a wide range of size, function and age;
- mixed farming predominates across the landscape although local land use and field patterns are strongly influenced by changes in landform;
- numerous small deciduous woodlands, copses and shelterbelts punctuate the rural landscape;
- hedgerow trees, within the strong hedgerow network, contribute to the perception of a well treed landscape and combine with other landscape and landform features to create an intimate, human scale landscape;
- strong historic character underlies this deeply rural landscape;
- numerous villages linked by winding country lanes contribute to rural character; and
- communication routes and urban influences and infrastructure have, where present, eroded local rural landscape character.¹³

3.4.4 The description of the Bugbrooke and Daventry LCA identifies the following characteristics as being particularly pronounced in this area:

- Whilst this undulating landscape has a pronounced series of hills and valleys to the west, to the south and east it becomes more subtle due to its proximity to the River Nene and its floodplain.

¹³ CD 2.5 *Current Landscape Character Assessment*, Northamptonshire Environmental Character Suite, Key Characteristics PI30

- Views along the undulations are generally long and open, although landform and vegetation frequently limit more extensive, panoramic views
- Land cover in the area is a combination of both arable and pastoral farmland in fields of varying size.
- Woodland is limited to small, predominantly broadleaved woodland copses sparsely scattered throughout the area.¹⁴

3.4.5 The Site lies in the western part of Bugbrooke and Daventry LCA and the surrounding landscape does contain a series of pronounced hills and valleys. The Site is generally representative of the character area; however Borough Hill, the eastern slopes of which lie within the Site, I consider shares more of the key characteristics of the adjacent Staverton Hills LCA.

3.4.6 The Staverton Hills LCA is one of only two areas of Ironstone Hill landscape character types in the county. Key characteristics of the Ironstone Hills include:

- Elevated, rolling upland landform with distinctive isolated hills;
- varied landform, extensive views and sense of exposure on some prominent hilltops;
- sense of remoteness in some areas;
- steep slopes adjacent to more elevated landscapes;
- agricultural practices create a patchwork of contrasting colours and textures;
- settlement pattern beyond the main villages comprise isolated farmsteads accessible off long tracks;

3.4.7 It is clear from the above that Borough Hill, which is a distinctive isolated hill with extensive views, a sense of exposure and with steep slopes adjacent to the elevated top shares more characteristics with the Staverton Hills landscape character area than with the Bugbrooke and Daventry landscape character area. There is usually a gradual

¹⁴ CD 2.5 *Current Landscape Character Assessment*, Northamptonshire Environmental Character Suite Bugbrooke and Daventry Page 136

transition from one landscape character area to another and it is not uncommon to find areas close to the boundaries that could have been allocated to either landscape character area.

3.4.8 I consider that the Site occupies a transitional landscape, containing both the steeper slopes of Borough Hill, typical of the Staverton Hills LCA and the more gently undulating hills of valleys of the Bugbrooke and Daventry LCA.

3.4.9 Within the landscape surrounding the Site land immediately to the west including the summit of Borough Hill is designated as a Country Park. Land to the south and east of the Site is designated as a Special Landscape Character Area. (See ES LVIA Appendix I2 Figure 6)

3.4.10 The village of Norton also lies 400m from the north eastern corner of the Site. A village design statement has been prepared for the village. The rural setting of the village is acknowledged as the main attraction of the village and views toward Borough Hill are particularly noted:

Magnificent views from the bungalows along the Weedon stretch across the fields to Borough Hill. A sight enjoyed by both the inhabitants of these properties, residents and visitors, from the Millennium seat.¹⁵

This viewpoint is similar to ES Viewpoint 20.

3.5 **Summary**

3.5.1 The Site lies within an area of undulating landscape and distinctive hills that form the rural hinterland of Daventry. The Site is mostly representative of the Bugbrooke and Daventry LCA but is adjacent to and shares some of the characteristics of the Staverton Hills LCA.

¹⁵ CD 3.9 Norton Village Design Statement Consultation Draft 2007 Page 14

4 REVIEW OF THE APPELLANT'S LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

4.1 Landscape Sensitivity

4.1.1 The LVIA prepared for the ES does recognise that both the Bugbrooke and Daventry LCA and the Staverton Hills LCA are of relevance to development on the Site and identifies some of the key characteristics of these character areas¹⁶. However the assessment of sensitivity undertaken in the ES LVIA does not relate to the identified local landscape character areas. Instead it relates to 'character areas' identified on ES Appendix I2 Figure 2.¹⁷ I have several concerns about the way in which these areas have been identified and I do not consider that they represent different landscape character areas.

4.1.2 Firstly the Category 1 and Category 2 Rural Areas (Also called Rural 1 and Rural 2) do not reflect the local landscape character areas identified in the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Assessment.¹⁸ Category 1 appears to reflect their designation as Special Landscape Areas (LCA) rather than similarities in landscape character. Special Landscape Areas were originally designated within the Northamptonshire Structure Plan (Policy ARI) as distinctive landscapes of special character and quality. Policy EN1 Special Landscape Areas is one of the saved policies from the Daventry Local Plan.

4.1.3 My second concern is that Recreation has been identified as a character type. Recreation relates to land use and not landscape character. This has led to both Borough Hill and the Daventry Country Park being identified as belonging to the same character area and being described in the assessment of sensitivity as Urban - Recreational Use.¹⁹ This is inaccurate on two accounts, firstly neither Daventry Country

¹⁶ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Paras 3.5-3.13

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ CD 2.5 CD 2.5 *Current Landscape Character Assessment*, Northamptonshire Environmental Character Suite Figure 7 Landscape Character Types

¹⁹ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 13 Para 3.25

Park nor Borough Hill have an urban character and secondly they share virtually no landscape characteristics. They are described together as '*providing a sense of openness and detachment from the surrounding urban landscape.*'²⁰ Neither Borough Hill nor Daventry Country Park is surrounded by an urban landscape, and the perceptual qualities of the landscapes are quite different.

4.1.4 I consider that the detachment of Borough Hill in the assessment from the landscape to which it belongs indicates that the relationship of the Site to its surrounding landscape has not been understood correctly and therefore the assessment of impact is flawed. I consider the detailed assessment below.

4.1.5 Having incorrectly identified areas of similar landscape character the ES LVIA then compounds the problem by assessing the Site as if it were a separate landscape character area (Area 1). The methodological approach that appears to have been intended, as indicated by the Table in Appendix I2 which accompanies Figure 2,²¹ is one where an application site is zoned into areas that share similar landscape characteristics and each of these areas is assessed separately with regard to landscape and visual sensitivity. This would have been an appropriate approach to take with the Site as it does contain a number of areas with very different landscape characteristics. For example the steep slopes of Borough Hill have a different landscape and visual character to the gently undulating land below the break in slope.

4.1.6 However I do not consider that the Site has a different landscape character to the surrounding landscape and there is no evidence put forward in the ES LVIA to support the idea that it does. As identified neither the western nor eastern boundaries of the Site follow natural features and are arbitrarily defined along field boundaries. The northern and southern boundaries are clearly defined by the roads but these do not necessarily represent changes in landscape character. Indeed even on the southern boundary which does coincide with the boundary between the Bugbrooke and Daventry

²⁰ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 16 Para 3.38

²¹ Ibid Appendix I2

LCA and the Staverton Hills LCA, I consider that Borough Hill is in fact more representative of the Staverton Hills LCA.

4.1.7 It is clear from the above that I consider the approach taken by the ES LVIA to be flawed. Even within the approach taken there are anomalies that are hard to understand. The following Table shows the assessments made in the ES LVIA for Area 1 (the Site), Area 2 (the designated Special Landscape Area), Area 3 (the landscape outside the SLA designation) and Area 5 Borough Hill, Daventry Country Park and Drayton Reservoir.

MB Table 1

	<i>Landscape Character</i>	<i>Landscape Quality</i>	<i>Landscape Value</i>	<i>Landscape Sensitivity</i>
<i>Area 1 – The Site</i>	High/Medium	High	Medium	Medium
<i>Area 2 – The SLA</i>	High	Medium	High	High
<i>Area 3 – Non SLA</i>	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium/High
<i>Area 5 – Borough Hill, Daventry Country Park</i>	Medium	Medium	High	High

4.1.8 Firstly for Area 1 and Area 3 it is entirely unclear how the final assessment of landscape sensitivity has been derived from the preceding assessments. It would be more logical for Area 1 (the Site) to have been assessed as having Medium/High sensitivity and for Area 3 (the non SLA landscape surrounding the Site) to be medium. However it is also unclear as to why the landscape quality of the SLA has been assessed as only medium. This does not accord with the SLA designation which is in recognition of the special environmental qualities of the area.

4.1.9 It is also unclear as to why the landscape quality of Borough Hill and the Country Park are considered to have only medium landscape quality. I do not agree with the explanation given that *‘The quality of the landscape is generally good and is in accordance*

with their function as spaces to accommodate human recreation and managed wildlife habitat.²²

4.1.10 I do not agree with the assessment of the sensitivity of the Site and in Section 5 I give my assessment of the sensitivity of the Site and the surrounding landscape in relation to the development proposed.

4.2 Photomontages

4.2.1 I am also concerned with aspects of the assessment of visual amenity. I do not consider that the photomontages prepared for the ES LVIA give an accurate representation of how the development would appear in the landscape and I do not agree with the assessment on visual impact.

4.2.2 I consider that the size of the photomontages underestimates the impact of the proposals. Scottish Natural Heritage, have prepared guidance on the Visual Representation of Windfarms²³. Although this guidance has been prepared with regard to wind turbine photomontages I consider that it is also relevant to photomontages intended to represent the effects of other development. In particular I consider the recommendations made with regard to the size of the images presented in an ES to be relative to the ES prepared for the Danetree development.

4.2.3 Within the section *Key issues affecting visualisations* the following recommendations are made:

*124 Having chosen a specific camera, the key factors that determine the size of a visualisation are the selected field of view and viewing distance. These factors should be determined on the basis of being able to clearly represent the key characteristics of a view while the visualisation can be viewed comfortably. The resulting image also requires to be large enough to show sufficient detail.*²⁴

The guidance then gives some recommendations regarding minimum heights for

²² CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 16 Para 3.39

²³ *Visual Representation of Windfarms Good Practice* Guidance Prepared for Scottish Natural Heritage, The Scottish Renewables Forum and the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning. (See MB Appendix 3)

²⁴ *Ibid* Key issues affecting visualisations Page 72 Para 124

Photomontages:

*while an image height of approximately 200mm is recommended, an image height over 130mm is considered acceptable.*²⁵

4.2.4 The photomontages prepared for the ES are 65mm high. Only half the minimum recommended height. The location of wind turbines is usually easily identified because they are generally on the skyline. With the photomontages prepared for the ES LVIA it is often not possible to even distinguish where the proposals are located without having an electronic version of the image and 'zooming in'. I do not consider that this is an accurate reflection of the potential visibility of the development. It is not the case that visible development would be indistinguishable from the rural setting from the ES viewpoints. This can be judged by the visibility of existing development, such as Borough Hill Farm.

4.2.5 It is also the case that in all the photomontages the colours of the development are muted shades of brown and green whereas the illustrative images of the development in the Design and Access Statement²⁶ show a range of colours notably white and yellow rendering as well as a range of roof colours.

4.3 Visual Envelope

4.3.1 The visual envelope on Figure 7²⁷ has two categories, 'Filtered Views' and 'No Direct Views of Site'. It is not clear from the ES LVIA whether this visual envelope has been computer generated but it appears to relate to the local topography. The ES LVIA says that *In determining the visual envelope, a degree of approximation has been required to visualise proposed building heights in relation to existing features such as mature vegetation and telecommunication masts. A distinction was made between direct views of the site and filtered or obscured views.*²⁸

I don't understand what is meant by the relationship between the height of the

²⁵ *Visual Representation of Windfarms Good Practice* Guidance Prepared for Scottish Natural Heritage, The Scottish Renewables Forum and the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning Key issues affecting visualisations Page 75 Para 129 (See MB Appendix 3)

²⁶ CD 5.5 *Design and Access Statement*, Detailing the Place Pages 65-71

²⁷ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Appendices to Technical Studies*, Appendix I Figure 7

²⁸ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter I Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 21 Para 3.69

telecommunications mast and the visual envelope but the distinction made on Figure 7 is not between *direct views of the site and filtered or obscured view* but between views described as filtered and no views. (I am not sure what an indirect view would be so I'm assuming that no direct views means no views) I have no idea what '*filtered views*' is meant to imply in the context of Figure 7. Throughout the area identified as such on Figure 7 there will be a range of views of the proposed development. In no single view will all of the development be visible but there will many direct views of the development, some of which shown on the photomontages.

4.4 Methodology,

4.4.1 There appears to be some confusion in the ES LVIA regarding the assessment of the sensitivity of visual receptors, the magnitude of change and the significance of the impact. Paragraph 3.81 of the ES LVIA²⁹ sets out a guide to the assessment of the sensitivity of visual receptors which accords with the guidance in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment*.³⁰ However the preceding paragraph makes it clear that other factors have also been used to determine sensitivity:

*An assessment has then been carried out of the sensitivity of each viewpoint in relationship to the Site based on the location and context and the type of visual receptor.*³¹

4.4.2 The sensitivity of a visual receptor should be confined to the sensitivity of the viewer and the nature of the existing view and should be constant no matter what or where the development is proposed. In the ES LVIA Viewpoint 30, the centre of Borough Hill is classed as having *low sensitivity*³² as are Viewpoints 35 and 36 close to the village of Church Stowe. Viewpoint 35 is located at a gateway on the Macmillan Way long distance path and Viewpoint 36 is adjacent to a bench clearly placed to take advantage of

²⁹ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter I Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 24 Para 3.81

³⁰ *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2nd Edition* The landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. Page 90 Paras 7.31-7.35 (See MB Appendix 4)

³¹ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter I Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 24 Para 3.80

³² *Ibid* Page 30 Para 3.113

a panoramic view. All these viewpoints should have been assessed as having *high* sensitivity.³³

4.4.3

A recent Consultation Paper issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, *Environmental Impact Assessment: A guide to good practice and procedures* makes this clear:

*Sensitive viewpoints to the site are identified (usually from properties, amenity/protected landscape areas, rights of way etc) and a zone of visual influence is usually determined. The impact is assessed on the basis of the sensitivity of the receptor and the degree and nature of change to the view.*³⁴

The paper then summarizes the factors that determine significance:

Broadly, significance is a function of:

- *The value of the resource (international, national, regional and local level importance)*
- *The magnitude of the impact*
- *The duration involved*
- *The reversibility of the effect*
- *The number and sensitivity of receptors*³⁵

4.4.4

In Section 4 of the ES LVIA in the section headed Visual Impact Assessment, as assessment is made for the photomontage viewpoints only of what is describes as *Operational Effects Magnitude*³⁶. In the table on page 50, described as the “*Summary of Visual Impacts from the representative Photomontage Viewpoints*”³⁷ this becomes *Magnitude of Impact of Development*. However this is then taken to be the degree of significance rather than one of the factors, along with others such as the sensitivity of the receptors that should determine significance.

³³ Ibid Pages 30-31 Paras 3.117 3.119

³⁴ *Environmental Impact Assessment: A guide to good practice and procedures* A Consultation Paper Department for Communities and Local Government Page 38 Example Box: Landscape and Visual Assessment (See MB Appendix 5)

³⁵ Ibid Page 39

³⁶ Ibid Pages 42-49

³⁷ Ibid Page 50 Para 4.57

4.4.5 A significance matrix is often used as a guide to how sensitivity and magnitude can be combined to determine the significance of the impact.

MB Table 2

		Magnitude of Change		
		<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
Sensitivity of re	<i>High</i>	Major	Moderate/ Major	Moderate
	<i>Medium</i>	Moderate/Major	Moderate	Moderate/ minor
	<i>Low</i>	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor

4.4.6 Although this is only one approach to determining the significance of impact, the methodology used must be transparent and show clearly how both the sensitivity of the receptor and the degree and nature of change have been taken into account in order to arrive at an assessment of the significance of impact.

4.4.7 In Section 6 I have undertaken a review of some of the ES Viewpoints and made my assessment of impact. MB Appendix 6 includes the significance criteria that I have used for effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

5 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

5.1 Landscape Sensitivity

5.1.1 The concept behind the assessment of landscape sensitivity is to determine whether a particular landscape can accommodate change without an unacceptable loss of character. The principle of residential / mixed use development on greenfield land has been accepted as the only means of growth for Daventry. This will inevitably mean a loss of rural / agricultural / undeveloped land to development and some loss of landscape character.

5.1.2 However it is essential that any proposed development can be satisfactorily accommodated within the wider landscape. That is, whether an extension to the urban area can be accommodated without an unacceptably adverse impact on the key characteristics of the surrounding landscape. It is also essential that the contribution that the existing Site makes to the local landscape character is understood so that the potential significance of its loss can be accurately assessed.

5.1.3 Guidance on the assessment of landscape sensitivity can be found in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment*³⁸ and further developed in *Topic Paper Six: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*.³⁹

In this paper an attempt has been made to weigh up the different arguments and as a result it is suggested that three terms can usefully be adopted as shown below. Further details of the definition and use of these terms are in the later sections of this paper.

i) **Overall landscape sensitivity:** *This term should be used to refer primarily to the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration. It is likely to be most relevant in work at the strategic level, for example in preparation of regional and sub-regional spatial strategies.*

³⁸ *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, The Landscape Institute and IEMA, Second Edition, 2002, Page 87 Paras 7.16-7.17 (See MB Appendix 4)

³⁹ CD I.40 *Landscape Character Assessment Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage,

ii) **Landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change:** *This term should be used where it is necessary to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to a particular type of change or development. It should be defined in terms of the interactions between the landscape itself, the way that it is perceived and the particular nature of the type of change or development in question.* (My emphasis)

iii) **Landscape capacity:** *This term should be used to describe the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type. This should reflect:*

- *the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, but more specifically its sensitivity to the particular type of development in question, as in (i) and (ii). This means that capacity will reflect both the sensitivity of the landscape resource and its visual sensitivity;*
- *the value attached to the landscape or to specific elements in it.*⁴⁰

5.1.4 Section 3 above described the Site and the character of the landscape context. I consider that the landscape surrounding the Site has a *high sensitivity* to an urban extension and my reasons are as follows:

5.2 Lack of physical or visual connection with the existing urban area

5.2.1 As described in paragraphs 3.21-3.25 above the existing urban area is not visible from the approach to Daventry along the A45 being screened in views by Borough Hill to the north and Newnham Hill to the south. There are therefore no existing characteristics in the surrounding landscape to which the proposed urban extension could relate.

5.2.2 The ES LVIA suggests that the villages of Upper Weedon, Weedon Bec and Dodford would provide some visual context for the development⁴¹ however these villages are of a very different scale to the proposed development and are widely spaced in the

⁴⁰ CD 1.40 *Landscape Character Assessment Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage Pages 3-4 Para 3.4

⁴¹ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 33 Para 4.2

landscape. I do not agree that the proposed development would ever be *perceived as part of the pattern of settlement within a rural landscape.*⁴²

5.2.3 This is a key factor in the capacity of the landscape surrounding the Site to accommodate an urban extension. As there is no visible urban area to extend there can be no visual continuity with Daventry. Borough Hill will remain as a physical and visual barrier and the proposed development can only relate to the pattern of visible settlement within the wider rural landscape. The difference in scale between the existing settlements and the proposed development is such that the development would not be seen as part of the existing settlement pattern. Instead it would appear as a new element in the landscape, an isolated urban area surrounded by a rural hinterland; to all intents and purposes it would appear as a new settlement.

5.2.4 I consider that the lack of visible urban development in the landscape surrounding the Site gives it a *high* sensitivity to the proposed development.

5.2.5 **Landscape and Cultural Importance of Borough Hill.**

5.2.6 There are three separate reasons for the importance of Borough Hill in the landscape:

- The role of Borough Hill in the landscape setting of Daventry
- The Scheduled Ancient Monument located on Borough Hill which is directly related to the key landscape characteristics of the hill,
- The perceptual qualities of Borough Hill experienced by recreational visitors

5.2.7 The role of Borough Hill in the landscape setting of Daventry is described in paragraphs 3.21-3.25 above. From the east Borough Hill has an entirely rural appearance and is clearly part of the wider rural hinterland of Daventry. ES Viewpoints 1-4, 9-12, 14-16, 20, 23 and 31-39 illustrate just how significant Borough Hill is in views from the landscape to the east and south east of Daventry. The telecommunications mast on the summit makes it particularly recognisable but the hill itself, because of its distinctive

⁴² CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 40 Para 4..21

elongated shape, creates a familiar backdrop to all views from the east and the south east, this includes more distant views such as those from in and around Church Stowe (ES Viewpoints 34, 35 & 36) and from west of Weedon (ES Viewpoints 37, 39 & 40). Borough Hill also forms the backdrop for views from the north west around Long Buckley. (ES Viewpoints 31 & 32) Borough Hill is also a distinctive landscape feature in views from the west although those views would not be affected by the proposed development.

5.2.8 The importance of Borough Hill as a SAM is addressed in detail in the evidence of Rachel Booth. The presence of the Iron Age Hill Fort and the subsequent importance of the Site, including its use in the 20th century by the BBC as a transmitting station are all directly related to the landscape form of Borough Hill. The steep sides and the flat top, the elongated shape that allows views in all directions and can be seen for miles around have all contributed to the historic importance that Borough Hill has in this landscape.

5.2.9 Borough Hill is present in many views for the people of Daventry as they travel around Daventry and to and from it. It is also a recreational resource for the town and is designated as a country park. The approach to the summit of Borough Hill is from the west and from here it is apparent that 20th century development has partially diluted the character of the Hill. This includes residential development on the west facing slopes Southbrook and the access road to the car park that is unsympathetically fenced and has elements of an urban fringe character.

5.2.10 The summit of Borough Hill is a flat plateau around which there is a circular walk. A number of permissive paths lead up to this circular route from the west and from these paths there are extensive views across the urban area of Daventry. On the northern end of the summit there are views across the reservoir and to the wider landscape beyond. Whilst walking around the western edge of the summit there is an awareness of the presence of Daventry even when the urban area is not visible because it can be heard. The sounds are predominantly from traffic but there are also sounds of people, in particular on one site visit the sounds of children in a nearby school were clearly heard.

5.2.11 In contrast when walking along the eastern side of the summit there is virtually no awareness of the presence of Daventry. None of the urban fringe characteristics of the

western side of the hill are visible although the telecommunications mast and the remains of buildings from the transmitting station are. Views to the west are limited in places by woodland however when they are available they are extensive and reveal a wide rural landscape with some scattered settlements. Traffic on the M1 is visible in places and can sometimes be heard depending on the wind direction. Trains on the west coast line are also visible but both the traffic and the trains are at some distance and do not affect the perception that this is an entirely rural landscape, in good condition with few visual detractors.

5.2.12 Even where the steep sides of Borough Hill will limit views of the proposed development from the summit there will be an awareness of its presence due to the access road from the A45, lighting and noise from traffic and other activities. The relative scale of the proposed development in comparison to the existing urban area of Daventry can be seen clearly on the plans on pages 16 and 17 in the *Design and Access Statement Addendum, Appreciating the Context*.⁴³

5.2.13 From the top of Borough Hill there is a sense of remoteness, openness and extensive views that feel appropriate to the site of a Hill Fort. As described above this sense has been to some extent compromised on the western side of Borough Hill. A golf course is located on the northern and western slopes of Borough Hill and this has also diluted the original character of the hill and has given it a more formal recreational character. In contrast on the eastern slopes of Borough Hill there are extensive rural views across the landscape to the east with only one visual detractor in the vicinity, the mast at the foot of the Borough Hill Plantation.

5.2.14 If the development were implemented Borough Hill would remain a visual and physical barrier between it and the existing urban area of Daventry. However, whereas now it provides a setting for the SAM, a setting for the town and screening for the town, once development had breached that, it would become an isolated landscape feature. On account of this I consider that Borough Hill is highly sensitive to any change that would

⁴³ Danetree Application Documents: *Design and Access Statement Addendum, Appreciating the Context*. pages 16 and 17

adversely affect the existing undeveloped rural character of land to the east and therefore has a *high* sensitivity to the proposed development.

5.3 Existing landscape value: Remoteness

5.3.1 Currently the Site has a quality of remoteness / inaccessibility that is unusual considering its proximity to Daventry. This is in part due to the presence of Borough Hill. Borough Hill prevents any east-west vehicular movement between the Site and Daventry and it prevents any visual or aural awareness of Daventry when within the Site. The Marches Industrial Estate is visible from the southern part of the Site as is the A45, but from much of the Site isolated farmsteads are the only form of visible development.

5.3.2 At the northern end of Borough Hill, from the foot of the steep north facing slope, a spur of elevated land continues to the north east. The Long Buckby Road runs down the centre of this spur of land and although the top is flattened it is generally referred to as a ridgeline and in my evidence I shall refer to it as the Long Buckby ridge. This is shown on MB *Figure 1: Topography* in MB Appendix I. All existing development within Daventry is located to the west of Borough Hill and the Long Buckby Ridgeline. The Site is entirely located to the east.

5.3.3 In addition to being isolated from urban areas to the west, the landscape to the east of Borough Hill and the Long Buckby ridge is also to some extent cut off from the wider landscape further east. The Grand Union Canal which followed the route of the Roman road (now the A5) was the first transport route to limit connectivity between this area and the landscape to the east. This was followed by the west coast railway line and more latterly and decisively by the M1. Although it is possible to cross all three barriers the presence of this transport corridor creates psychological as well as a physical separation.

5.3.4 The Site then lies within an area of landscape restricted to the west by Borough Hill, to the north by the Long Buckby ridge, and to the east by the transport corridor containing the M1. To the south the area is defined by the A45 and rising land to the south. The only road that crosses this area from north to south is the single track road that crosses through the Site and serves a number of isolated farmsteads. A byway open to all traffic does run from Dodford, via Dodford Lodge to Norton but it is a gated road, is not tarmaced in places and is little used by vehicle traffic. As a consequence of the above,

the Site sits within a landscape that has a sense of isolation and remoteness that locally is generally associated only with upland areas.

6 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 In the preceding section I have given my assessment of the sensitivity of the Site in relation to the interactions between the landscape itself, the way that it is perceived and the particular nature of the urban extension that is proposed. I consider that the Site has a *high* sensitivity to an urban extension because:

- There is no physical or visual connection with an existing urban area
- Borough Hill could not accommodate adjacent development without a loss of historic, amenity and landscape value.
- The Site possesses a quality of remoteness that is unusual and valued.

6.1.2 Before dealing with the specific impacts of the development on the landscape I will consider the impacts on visual amenity because the changes to the visual qualities of the landscape are often helpful in understanding the landscape impacts. Rather than dealing with viewpoints in isolation I shall address the changes in views from particular parts of the landscape. For ease of reference I shall deal with views in the order in which the viewpoints are numbered in the ES LVIA. On MB Figures 3 & 4 I have re-presented the viewpoint location information provided on Figure 1 Photo Viewpoints from ES Appendix I3⁴⁴ so that it is more easily readable at A3.

6.2 Views from Newnham Hill

6.2.1 ES Viewpoints 1, 2 and 3 are from the road through Newnham. From ES viewpoints 3 and 4 the Marches Industrial Estate currently marks the extent of urban development and the proposed development will be seen in this context. This is one of the few viewpoints from which the development will be seen in the context of any existing urban development. These viewpoints are within the SLA and the Marches Industrial Estate is

⁴⁴ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Appendices to Technical Studies*, Appendix I3

currently one of the few visual detractors. Extensive, panoramic views are available from Newnham Hill and from these views the development will be seen encircling Borough Hill. From these views it will be clear that Borough Hill is surrounded by development and severed from the wider landscape. Despite the presence of the industrial estate I consider the sensitivity of these views to be *high-medium* on account of the SLA designation. The magnitude of impact will generally be *medium*. The impact significance will be *moderate adverse*.

6.2.2 From ES Viewpoint 4 however there will be extensive views of the development as it snakes around Borough Hill and the magnitude of change here will be *high*. The significance impact will therefore be *moderate - major adverse*.

6.3 Views on the Approach to Daventry

6.3.1 Viewpoint 8, 9, 10 and 11 are representative of views on the approach to Daventry from the east. They are all located on the boundary of the SLA. I consider all views to have a *high* sensitivity because of the importance of the rural setting of Daventry. The magnitude of the impact from Viewpoint 9 is judged to be moderate by the ES LVIA in summer where the photomontage shows ruderal vegetation screening views. In reality the extent of the development would be clearly evident from this view both in summer and winter and in winter the magnitude of change would be *high-very high* as the development would be only 600m distant. The significance of the impact would be *major adverse*.

6.3.2 From ES Viewpoint 11 the impact on the rural setting is evident and this viewpoint is a very good example of how uneasily the development will sit in the landscape. Unfortunately due to the size of the image the development is very difficult to discern in the photomontage although it will not be difficult to see in reality.

6.3.3 From ES Viewpoint 11 the development will appear like a ribbon – surrounding Borough Hill. Such an extensive, elongated line of development lying between the rural background of Borough Hill and the entirely rural foreground has no precedents in this landscape. As with the views from Newnham Hill this is an example of how the development will compromise the setting of Borough Hill. The incongruity of the development and the extent of it within this view will, I consider, result in a *high*

magnitude of change. As part of the approach to Daventry these views have an overall *high* sensitivity and the effect will be *major adverse*.

6.3.4 Within the ES LVIA the assessment of magnitude of impact from ES Viewpoint 11 is assessed as minor / moderate; there is no assessment of the different visual impact during the winter. In the photomontage the eastern end of the development is shown as virtually obscured by proposed planting both in the summer and winter views. On completion and for several years the development would be seen clearly to the right in this photomontage, set against the edge of Borough Hill Plantation.

6.3.5 I consider that viewpoints along the approach to Daventry have *high* sensitivity and that the magnitude of change will range from *high* to *very high*. The significance of the impact will be *major adverse*.

6.4 Views from Weedon Lane

6.4.1 Viewpoints 14-19 are taken from Weedon Lane. This is the gated byway that runs between Weedon and Norton. It is a very quiet county lane with virtually no vehicle traffic and there is an unspoilt, remote quality to the views, with virtually no visual detractors, that is evident in the viewpoint photographs. These views are representative of the impact of the development on the rural landscape to the east of the Site.

6.4.2 From Weedon Lane there would be a succession of views across the landscape that would include some every extensive views of the development on the Site. Initially the development would be seen against Newnham Hill (ES Viewpoint 14) then against Borough Hill. (ES Viewpoint 16)

6.4.3 In Viewpoint 16 the piece of farm equipment in the foreground of this view (whether intentional or otherwise) tends to distract from the fact that this is a quintessentially rural view with virtually no visual detractors. In fact ES Viewpoint 16 is a good example of how the limited size of the photomontages results in an under-representation of the visual impact of the development. From this viewpoint there is a new house, Norton Grounds, on the Norton Road which is clearly visible. However In the photomontage from Viewpoint 16 this is only barely distinguishable in the far right of the extracted detail. Despite this the magnitude of change in this view is clearly evident and is *high*.

This is a little used road and the sensitivity of these viewpoints is *medium*. The significance of the impact on visual amenity will be *moderate – major adverse*.

6.4.4 There is no explanation in the ES LVIA why Viewpoint 19 is assessed as having *low* sensitivity when the adjacent Viewpoints 17 & 18 have *medium* sensitivity. I consider the quality of the views in this area, the junction between the gated road from Weedon and the road that crosses the Site, to be particularly high. There are no visual detractors and the road towards Norton is sharply undulating and enclosed by dense hedges on both sides. Its narrow, undulating qualities are part of the essentially rural character of this area. This is particularly evident in views towards this road from the Site.

6.4.5 **Views in and around Norton**

6.4.6 Viewpoints 20-23 are representative of views from and close to the village of Norton. Viewpoint 20 is adjacent to the millennium seat in Norton which is shown on P14 of the Norton Village Design Statement⁴⁵ It is also identified in the Statement as an Important View⁴⁶ The development will be approximately 400m distant. The ES LVIA acknowledges that the sensitivity of this viewpoint is *high* and the magnitude of change would also be *high*. The significance of the impact would be *major adverse*.

6.4.7 ES Viewpoint 23 is the only viewpoint from due north of the Site even though the visual envelope suggests that there will be views from a wide area to the immediate north including from the Long Buckby Road. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is assessed as low although no explanation is given. This viewpoint is located on a public bridleway that leads from the village of Norton to the Grand Union Canal. I would consider the sensitivity of this viewpoint to be *medium to high*. This is another unspoilt rural view with no visual detractors. The roof of Borough Hill Farm is just visible and proposed development around the end of Borough Hill Plantation would be visible. Although this is the only viewpoint from the north there is no assessment in the ES LVIA of the impact on this view. I consider the magnitude of change will be *medium* and the significance of impact *moderate adverse*.

⁴⁵ CD 3.9 Norton Village Design Statement P14.

⁴⁶ Ibid Appendix I

6.5 Views from Borough Hill

6.5.1 ES Viewpoints 24-26 are located on the southern end of Borough Hill SAM and ES Viewpoints 27-29 are located on the eastern edge of the SAM north of Borough Hill Plantation. Despite their location within a Country Park and a SAM with commanding views over the countryside ES viewpoints 24 and 26 are assessed as having low sensitivity and ES viewpoint 25 medium sensitivity. I consider all these viewpoints to have *high* sensitivity.

6.5.2 From ES Viewpoints 25 and 26 are extensive views that demonstrate some of the exceptional qualities of the vistas from Borough Hill although this is difficult to distinguish on the printed photograph. The slope of the ridge beyond Long Buckby can be seen in the distance with a patchwork of fields divided by treed hedgerows and copses. The assessment for viewpoint 25 suggests that only the roof of the employment buildings would be visible from here but does acknowledge that they would break the continuity of the open fields in the view. In addition they would also be a visible reminder of the presence of the development which, along with sounds and lighting from the development (only 250m distant) would have a noticeable presence from this viewpoint. Although in paragraph 4.45⁴⁷ the assessment of *operation effects magnitude* is given as moderate for this viewpoint, in the Table on Page 50 the assessment of magnitude of impact is recorded as Minor. Aside from this inconsistency this is an example where the sensitivity of the viewpoint (*high*) and the magnitude of change (*medium*) should have indicated that the significance of impact would be *moderate to major adverse*.

6.5.3 From ES Viewpoint 27 on the edge of Borough Hill Plantation I consider that the magnitude of change would be *high to very high*. Given the *high* sensitivity of this viewpoint the significance of the impact would be *major adverse*. This is one of the key views that will affect the perpetual qualities of the top of Borough Hill and therefore the setting of the SAM. The tree belt along the circular path north of Borough Hill Plantation is not dense and there is a clear indication that people walk where views are

⁴⁷ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter I Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 47 Para 4.45

available. The views are extensive and essentially rural. The urban area would be 200m distant and even in the photomontages the extent of visible development is very clear. Tree planting on the edge of the development, as shown in the photomontage, does not in my view reduce the impact to moderate.

6.6 Views from the wider landscape to the east

6.6.1 ES Viewpoints 31 and 33 are from the wider landscape to the east. Although it is not possible to see because of the scale of the photograph and photomontage, the tower of Norton Church is visible in the middle ground of ES Viewpoint 31. It currently sits within an entirely rural setting. A long ribbon of development would be visible behind the church tower, wrapping around the lower slopes of Borough Hill. The scale of the development in this setting would be completely out of character with the existing settlements in this view. I consider that the magnitude of change would be *medium*. This viewpoint is within the SLA and the sensitivity of this view is *medium/high*. The significance of impact would be *moderate to major adverse*.

6.6.2 ES Viewpoint 33 is within the SLA and from a narrow rural road that leads from Norton or Whiton via Muscott to Brockhall and then to Dodford and Flore. It is a typical example of one of the key characteristics of the Undulating Hills and Valleys landscape type⁴⁸: ‘*numerous villages linked by winding country lanes contribute to rural character.*’ At the point where the road takes a sharp left turn to Brockhall the lane continues along a rough track that is also a bridleway. This rough track provides pedestrian / equestrian access across the M1, canal and railway line. It joins the A5 roughly opposite the road to Norton. M1 is a visual detractor in this view however beyond it there are no visual detractors or incongruous elements. I consider this viewpoint to have *medium* sensitivity. The linear extent of the development would be very apparent in this view with views of the development stretching all along the lower slopes of Borough Hill. I consider that the magnitude of change would be *medium*. The significance of impact would be *moderate adverse*.

⁴⁸ CD 2.5 Current Landscape Character Assessment, Northamptonshire Environmental Character Suite, Key Characteristics PI30

6.7 Views from Church Stowe

6.7.1 ES Viewpoints 34-36 are in and around the village of Church Stowe and within the SLA. The village location of ES viewpoint 35 gives it *high* sensitivity and the magnitude of change is *medium* because a considerable extent of the development, wrapping around Borough Hill, would be visible. The significance of impact would be *moderate/major adverse*.

6.7.2 The presence of the bench in ES Viewpoint 36 indicates that this is recognized as a panoramic view enjoyed by local residents. The development will be clearly visible along the lower slopes of Borough Hill and will introduce an urban element into a currently entirely rural view from within the SLA. The sensitivity of this view is *high*, the magnitude of change is *medium* and the significance of impact would be *moderate/major adverse*.

6.8 Revised Masterplan

6.8.1 It is clear from the above that I do not agree with the conclusions of the ES LVIA that *'there will be a general moderate-minor visual impact from the identified receptors'*⁴⁹ I consider that the proposals will have a moderate to major adverse impact on the visual amenity within the surrounding area. The sensitivity of many of the viewpoints are high, due to their locations including a SAM, a country park, a SLA and within villages. The development will be seen wrapping around the lower slopes of Borough Hill and will be out of scale and out of character with the surrounding landscape.

6.8.2 No new photomontages have been prepared for the revised Masterplan and although five of the original viewpoints have been reassessed this is in relation to cumulative impacts. The revised Masterplan indicates that development would be located further up the slope of Borough Hill than in the original Masterplan. This will increase the magnitude of change as a result of the proposals.

6.8.3 However I consider that the most significant change are the paths shown ascending the eastern slopes of Borough Hill. There is no information on the surfacing or other treatment of these routes but even with a very low key treatment these paths will be visible from the wider landscape, in particular from east of the Site and will draw attention to the fact that the eastern slope of the hill has been developed.

6.9 Summary of Visual Impact

6.9.1 It is clear from the above that I do not agree with the conclusions of the ES LVIA that *'there will be a general moderate-minor visual impact from the identified receptors'*⁵⁰ I consider that the proposals will have a moderate to major adverse impact on the visual amenity within the surrounding area. The sensitivity of many of the viewpoints are high, due to their locations including a SAM, a country park, a SLA and within villages. The development will be seen wrapping around the lower slopes of Borough Hill and will be out of scale and out of character with the surrounding landscape.

⁴⁹ CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 67 Para 8.5

⁵⁰ Ibid

6.10 Impacts on Landscape

6.10.1 Many of the landscape impacts are as a result of the visual changes that would result from the development. In particular the lack of context and the incongruities of scale. The following are the key adverse impacts that would result from the development.

6.11 Sense of remoteness

6.11.1 The existing perceptual qualities of the Site, as a remote and somewhat isolated landscape, would be lost entirely. ES Viewpoints 14-19 illustrate the qualities of the landscape including and surrounding the Site, that are representative of the local landscape character⁵¹ including:

- Extensive undulating and productive rural landscape
- Numerous small deciduous woodlands, copses and shelterbelts punctuate the rural landscape
- Strong historic character underlying the deeply rural landscape,
- Long open views,
- A winding country lane that contribute to the rural character

6.11.2 The introduction of extensive development into this landscape will erode the local rural character.

6.12 The setting of Daventry

6.12.1 The ES LVIA recognises that the proposals would result in a considerable change to the character of the existing landscape and to the setting of Borough Hill but suggests that : *This should however be viewed in the context of other recent extensions to the north edge of the town and a transformation from rural to urban character.*⁵²

I have described in Section 5 above the importance of Borough Hill to the landscape

⁵¹ CD 2.5 *Current Landscape Character Assessment*, Northamptonshire Environmental Character Suite, Key Characteristics P130
⁵² CD 5.10 Danetree Application Documents: *Environmental Statement: Technical Studies*, Chapter 1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Page 67 Para 8.1

setting of Daventry and why, as a consequence, this landscape is particularly sensitive to the introduction of urban development. Urban development on this Site would not just transform the Site itself from a rural to an urban landscape but would degrade the role of the surrounding landscape in providing a rural setting for Daventry. Currently this approach to Daventry has few visual detractors and no urban development.

- 6.12.2 The assessment of the key characteristics for the Undulating Hills and Valleys landscape character type identifies that: *communication routes and urban influences and infrastructure have, where present, eroded local rural landscape character.*⁵³ Currently the character of the landscape that forms the setting for Daventry from the east has not been eroded by urban influences. The proposals would have a *major adverse* impact on the rural character of the landscape and as a consequence would have a major adverse impact on the role that land east of Borough Hill plays in the setting of Daventry.

6.13 The setting of Norton

- 6.13.1 From Norton the character of the existing landscape setting for the village would be lost. Long views towards Borough Hill are a key element in the rural setting of Norton. Borough Hill prevents any visual awareness of Daventry. With the proposed development in place Norton would be within 'spitting distance' of the urban edge. The woodland planting proposed on the north eastern edge of the development, as shown in ES Viewpoint Photomontage 20, would screen some views of the development but it would also change the character of the setting of the village. The existing character, which includes long views typical of the local landscape character area, would be lost and would be replaced by an atypical enclosed character. In fact the proximity of the urban edge would remove the rural setting from this side of Norton entirely. The 400m that would separate the village from the urban area would no longer be part of an agricultural landscape but would become a 'green gap' between the town and the village.
- 6.13.2 From the landscape to the east of Norton there are views across the village to Borough Hill. One of these views, south of Whilton on the road to Little Brington, is included in

⁵³ CD 2.5 *Current Landscape Character Assessment*, Northamptonshire Environmental Character Suite, Key Characteristics P130

the Norton Village Design Statement on page 5.⁵⁴ The tower of Norton Church is shown rising above the vegetation that surrounds the village, the slope of Borough Hill is seen beyond. This is representative of a number of views from the east towards the Site. ES Viewpoints 33 and 38 are other examples. Due to the undulating landscape there will not be constant views of the development from this area but when more extensive views are available parts of the development are likely to be visible. From this distance the 400m gap between the village and the development will be foreshortened and Norton will appear as an outlier to the development. This will be even more pronounced at night. Currently the lights of Norton are visible and they punctuate an otherwise dark landscape. If the development were implemented there would be a linear strip of lighting along the lower slope of Borough Hill and Norton would appear as a part of that lit area.

6.13.3 The impact on the landscape setting of the village of Norton would be *major adverse*.

6.14 Borough Hill

6.14.1 The evidence of Rachel Booth sets out in detail the impact that the development would have on the setting of the SAM located on Borough Hill. By compromising the historic setting of the SAM the relationship between Borough Hill and the wider landscape would be damaged. A key characteristic of the local landscape character type, Undulating Hills and Valleys is a '*strong historic character [which] underlies this deeply rural landscape.*'⁵⁵ The proposals would diminish the sense of this as a deeply rural landscape and they would run contrary to the historic characteristics of Borough Hill, the most visible historic feature in the Bugbrooke and Daventry LCA.

6.14.2 Development on the eastern slopes of Borough Hill would also have a significant adverse impact on the enjoyment of perceptual qualities of the Country Park. I have described above how the development would have a *moderate to major adverse* effect on views from Borough Hill. This would be compounded by an awareness of the development that would be a combination of noise and other activities that would be visible at

⁵⁴ CD 3.9 Norton Village Design Statement (Consultation Draft) Page 5

⁵⁵ CD 2.5 *Current Landscape Character Assessment*, Northamptonshire Environmental Character Suite, Key Characteristics PI30

different moments when in the Country Park or accessing it via a Public Right of Way. The access road from the A45 and the employment area close to the A45 would be visible in views from the southern end of Borough Hill. But principally the awareness by local residents would come from the knowledge that the development exists.

6.14.3 This knowledge can increase our enjoyment of a public open space, for example when we know we are surrounded by urban development but cannot see it. However in the case of Borough Hill the existing character of the Country Park is open and rather exposed, on the edge of an entirely rural landscape, with extensive views across the countryside. Borough Hill Country Park is much more country than park and its perceptual qualities rely on the seamless transition from the Park to the landscape beyond.

6.14.4 The development proposed would sever this relationship. The proximity and visibility of the development from some parts of Borough Hill and an awareness of its existence from all parts of the Country Park would have a *major adverse* landscape impact.

6.15 Scale and context

6.15.1 The detailed assessment above of views from the surrounding landscape highlights that the scale of the development is a key characteristic that would prevent it from being assimilated into the existing landscape. In most views from the wider landscape the extent of the development will be incongruous in the rural setting. This is particularly true for views from the immediate east but will also be true in views from Newnham Hill and more distant views such as from Church Stowe.

6.15.2 It will not be possible for the development to become integrated into the existing landscape. Outside of the urban areas of Daventry and Brackley and their zone of influence the settlement pattern of the Undulating Hills and Valleys, character type, is described as ‘*deeply rural with villages and towns interspersed with small farms and hamlets*’⁵⁶ Even when proposed planting has established, the development will not be seen as part of the pattern of sparse settlement but instead will have introduced a new,

⁵⁶ CD 2.5 *Current Landscape Character Assessment* Human Influences Page 132

isolated, element into the landscape. If the development were adjacent to an existing urban area or could be seen in the context of existing urban development it would in time be seen as an extension of that urban area. In the case of the Danetree proposals the development will always be seen as a new settlement surrounded on all sides by a rural landscape. The scale will be such that it cannot be accommodated within the existing pattern of the landscape. The impact of the development will be *major adverse*.

6.16 Lighting

6.16.1 The lack of context for the development will also be a factor in the significance of the impact that lighting within the development will have on the surrounding landscape. Any urban extension would extend the area that is currently lit into an area generally unlit. However Borough Hill currently screens the lights of Daventry to a considerable extent from the wider landscape to the east. Although there is some night glow from Daventry, this remains a generally dark landscape at night. The proposals would not extend a lit area but introduce lighting into a currently dark landscape. The effect on the landscape character would be *moderate adverse*.

7 STRATEGIC STUDIES OF DAVENTRY

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 A number of Strategic studies have been undertaken in recent years to identify where the growth planned for Daventry would be best located. These studies have considered a number of different aspects or themes that are relevant to choosing the most appropriate locations for development. One of these themes has been the impact on the landscape. In addition the Inspector at the Public Inquiry held with respect to the Daventry District Local Plan during 1994 & 1995, also made observations on the appropriateness of development in a number of areas including a site that lies within the current application boundary but more limited in extent

7.1.2 The Inspector's comments on the location of a new residential development on the site, known as Burnt Walls Park, were as follows:

Burnt Walls Park is an isolated site, separated from the rest of Daventry by Borough Hill and the intervening unrelated development. It has been planned with a Local Centre and school in the clear anticipation that its future residents will regard themselves as a community outside the accepted bounds of Daventry. It would be required to accommodate some 750 dwellings by the Council's estimate

Such numbers would thereby compound the sense of a separate settlement; a concept which the Council has rejected in its Policy HS13.⁵⁷

7.1.3 The current proposals for approximately 5,000 dwellings would be equally isolated from the rest of Daventry and would appear as a new settlement in the landscape as described above.

⁵⁷ Daventry District Local Plan Report of an Inquiry in to objections to the local Plan (Volume 2) Michael Griffin Page 116 Para 4.61 (See MB Appendix 7)

7.2 The Atkins Report

7.2.1 In 2004 Daventry District Council commissioned a Strategic Development Options Study from Atkins Consultants Ltd (the Atkins Report.). This study looked at a number of constraints to the development of Daventry, one of which was landscape constraints. Following an analysis of the various constraints three scenarios for growth were developed and an initial assessment made of the potential environmental impacts of each scenario.

7.2.2 The Danetree Design and Access Statement and Access Statement Addendum both make reference to this study and to the third Scenario for growth shown on Figure 11 *Broad Growth Scenario 3*⁵⁸ In particular this Figure shows a potential area for growth east of Borough Hill roughly corresponding to the Appeal Site. It is identified within Scenario three as Area D. The Design and Access Statement says the following with regard to the conclusions reached by the Atkins Report on Area D.

*The environmental assessment work, undertaken as part of the study, identified the location as being that where the least environmental impact would arise from development.*⁵⁹

The Design and Access Statement Addendum also refers to the Atkins Report and makes the following comment:

*This study examined possible growth opportunities around Daventry.It concluded that the land east of Borough Hill was suitable for development subject to some mitigation. The strategic Growth Option Three plan illustrates possible development, identifying that residential and mixed uses east of Borough Hill would be acceptable. However this option was not the preferred option.*⁶⁰

7.2.3 I do not agree that the Atkins report concluded that development east of Borough Hill was suitable for development from a landscape perspective. The landscape assessment makes it clear that development in this area would have significant adverse landscape

⁵⁸ CD3.15 *Daventry Strategic Development Options* (The Atkins Report) Figures

⁵⁹ CD 5.5 *Design and Access Statement*, Historic Context and Legacy Page 14 Para 2.33

⁶⁰ *The Design and Access Statement Addendum* Historic Strategic Background Page 10 Para 1.3

and visual impacts. The Landscape Environmental Appraisal reached the following conclusions with regard to development on Area D:

Radically degrades rural setting of Borough Hill. Development visible over wide area of countryside, particularly at night. Views from Long Buckley, Little Bington, Norton and Dodford affected. Comprehensively breaches natural boundary of Daventry urban area, leaving no natural barrier to prevent urban sprawl swallowing Norton, Dodford and Weedon.

⁶¹

7.2.4

In the evaluation section the landscape recommendation for the three scenarios is clear:

*Of all the options presented, Option One disperses the additional population most widely but has the greatest potential impact on the Leam Valley and Area of Special Landscape Character. In addition, the dispersed pattern of development would result in more impacts upon visual receptors. Option two is the most compact and controlled option and landscape impacts are mostly confined to the north east of Daventry. Option Three is considered to have **the most severe landscape impacts**. Development would radically alter the setting of Borough Hill, the length of much of which can be seen from a wide area of Western Northamptonshire.⁶² (My emphasis)*

7.2.5

This assessment is reiterated in the Appendix 5 – Strategic Development Option Evaluation Table.⁶³

Scenario One	Scenario two	Scenario three
This option has the greatest tendency to reduce the separation of settlements. It disperses the additional population most widely and has the greatest effect on the Leam Valley and Area of Special Landscape Character.	This is the most compact and controlled option. Landscape impact is confined to the Welton side of Daventry. The Development conforms to well defined natural boundaries.	This option is by far the most damaging to the wider landscape. It radically alters the setting of Borough Hill, and much of its length can be seen from a wide area of Western Northamptonshire. It creates a broad flank with no clear barrier to further expansion towards the M1, rendering further unplanned expansion difficult to resist.

⁶¹ CD 3.15 Daventry Strategic Development Options (The Atkins Report) Environmental Appraisal Page 69 Scenario 3 Area D

⁶² CD3.15 Daventry Strategic Development Options (The Atkins Report) Chapter 13 Options Evaluation Page 93 Para 13.20

⁶³ Ibid Appendix 5 – Strategic Development Option Evaluation Table Page 115

7.2.6 The conclusions reached in the landscape assessment for Area D within the Atkins Study concur with the conclusions I have reached in my assessment of the impact of the proposed development. I do not understand how the above assessment could be interpreted as '*identifying that residential and mixed uses east of Borough Hill would be acceptable.*'⁶⁴

7.3 **Daventry Infrastructure Strategy (DIS) .**

7.3.1 A more detailed landscape study of the potential for growth around Daventry has been undertaken as part of the WNDC Daventry Infrastructure Studies (DIS) (Consultation draft), published as the Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report. (DIS Landscape Report) I believe that a final report is due to be published prior to the start of the Inquiry but my observations are based on the consultation draft published in May 2008.

7.3.2 The DIS Landscape Report makes clear the purpose of the Study

*The DIS will form part of WNDC's evidence base and will be a material consideration that will help to inform decisions about the future expansion of the town and the infrastructure required to support that growth. It should also be of assistance to Daventry District Council in determining planning applications which fall (in whole or part) outside of WNDC's planning functions area or beneath the threshold for determination by WNDC within that area.*⁶⁵

7.3.3 The importance of the topographical setting of Daventry is made clear in the Introductory chapter:

The overriding imperative in respect of GI (Green Infrastructure) and Landscape is intrinsically linked with recognising Daventry's unique character arising from the town's strong relationship with its distinctive topographical setting, and the wider rural hinterland that

⁶⁴The Design and Access Statement Addendum Historic Strategic Background Page 10 Para 1.3

⁶⁵ CD 4.2 Daventry Infrastructure Strategy, Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report Consultation Draft Introduction Page 1

surrounds it.⁶⁶

7.3.4 *Figure 14 Visual Analysis* illustrates the key principles and findings of the Visual Assessment ‘that are critical to or supportive of the unique and distinctive setting of Daventry.’⁶⁷ The findings of the assessment ‘have guided the identification of areas of highest visual sensitivity, within which large-scale significant development would present wide-ranging challenges.’⁶⁸ The areas identified as having high visual sensitivity include:

- *summit areas and steep slopes of the hills surrounding the town comprising Borough Hill to the east and Newnham, Fox and Big Hills to the south and south-west.*
- *the wider open landscape to the north-east, east and south-east of Borough Hill forming the rural setting to and intervisibility with this prominent hill,⁶⁹*

7.3.5 The proposed development Site lies entirely within the second of these areas and immediately adjacent to the first.

7.3.6 The DIS Landscape Report comes to the following conclusions with respect to the landscape and visual sensitivity of the area to the east of Borough Hill.

Quadrant 3: South East contains a large area of **High Sensitivity** associated with Borough Hill and its wider landscape setting, and also the predominantly undeveloped summit area and slopes of the hill. While the middle and lower west facing slopes of the hill contain some residential development, the hill presents a prominent setting and visual containment to the town. The east facing slopes of the Borough Hill and the wider rural landscape that extends beyond the hill is physically separate from the setting of Daventry and there is only limited perception of the presence of the town (through the development at the Marches on the southern slopes) or any significant associated built development. The rural landscape is interspersed with isolated farm buildings, houses and villages that are locally characteristic. The intervisibility between the prominent rising middle and upper slopes

⁶⁶ Ibid Introduction Page 2

⁶⁷ CD 4.2 Daventry Infrastructure Strategy, Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report Consultation Draft Part D Implications for Growth Para 11.2.1

⁶⁸ CD 4.2 Daventry Infrastructure Strategy, Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report Consultation Draft Part D Implications for Growth Para 11.2.1

⁶⁹ Ibid

is punctuated by a number of ridgelines. These act to provide a rhythm to the landscape accommodating a number of compartments, some of which visually frame the eastern side of the hill as a single landform, whilst others offer discrete areas screened from the open countryside. From the summit of Borough Hill beyond the hidden lower slopes there is an expansive prospect to the east across the rural landscape with views possible toward Northampton and the rolling agricultural landscape that characterises this part of the county and to the west of the town of Daventry itself.⁷⁰

7.3.7 It is significant to note that within this description there is recognition that the ridgelines within this area do limit intervisibility and that from the summit of Borough Hill some of the lower slopes are hidden. However this does not affect the assessment that this area has overall high sensitivity.

7.3.8 In summary, two strategic studies have been undertaken over the last four years to consider the potential for urban growth around Daventry. These studies have included appraisals of the capacity of the landscape to accept development east of Borough Hill. The studies have identified that land east of Borough Hill would be highly sensitive to urban development and that development in this area would radically alter the setting of Borough Hill and breach the natural boundary of Daventry urban area.

⁷⁰ CD 4.2 Daventry Infrastructure Strategy, Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report Consultation Draft Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Page 37 Para 8.5.9

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Planning Policy

8.1.1 I consider that the proposed Danetree development would be contrary to PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas because:

- it is not in keeping or scale with its location
- it is not sensitive to the character of the countryside
- it fails to preserve local distinctiveness.

8.1.2 The Site is located in an essentially rural landscape with minimal visual links to existing urban developments. Settlements within this landscape are small and sparsely scattered. The proposed development would be out of scale in this context and could not be absorbed into the existing pattern of development.

8.1.3 The proposed development is extensive and urban. It is located partly on the lower slopes of Borough Hill and within 400m of the village of Norton. It would result in a ribbon of development wrapping around Borough Hill. There is no precedent for development of this scale, or in this form, in the landscape from which the proposals would be visible. The development would not be sensitive to the character of the Bugbrooke and Daventry local character area.

8.1.4 Part of the *unique and distinctive setting of Daventry*⁷¹ lies in the relationship between the urban area and the countryside. From the east, urban development is 'hidden' behind Newnham Hill, Big Hill and Borough Hill and the landscape has retained an essentially rural character. The proposals would run contrary to this established character.

8.1.5 The development would also be contrary to RSS8 Policy 4 Promoting Better Design as it does not take account of local natural and historic character, nor does it respect the

⁷¹ CD 4.2 Daventry Infrastructure Strategy, Green Infrastructure and Landscape Technical Report Consultation Draft Part D Implications for Growth Para 11.2.1

recommendations in the Norton Village Design Statement. With regard to the historic character of the landscape it would irreparably damage the current seamless transition from the SAM located on Borough Hill and the wider landscape to which it relates. There is no overriding need for the development in this location that would outweigh the damage that would result. As such the development would be contrary to RSS8 Policy 27 Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Assets.

- 8.1.6 The development would also be contrary to Northamptonshire Structure Plan Saved Policy GS5 – Design as it would have a *moderate to major adverse* impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape by virtue of its scale, its lack of a relationship with any existing urban development and its incongruity within the existing rural landscape. It would also have an adverse impact on the current approach to Daventry and the rural setting of the town.
- 8.1.7 The development would be contrary to Daventry District Plan Saved Policies GN1 and GN2 General, for the reasons given above. The development would also have indirect adverse impacts on the Special Landscape Areas to the south and the east. The Site is located on the boundary of the SLA to the south and the development would have an adverse impact on views from the SLA to the south. The development would also have an adverse impact on the SLA to the east, where there are currently no views of urban development to the west.
- 8.1.8 For the reasons I have set out in my evidence I respectfully recommend that this appeal should be refused.