

Hotel Felix
Cassel Hotels (Cambridge) Ltd
February 2021



HOTEL FELIX, CAMBRIDGE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL AND GREEN BELT STUDY



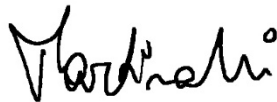
Quality Assurance

Site name: Hotel Felix, Whitehouse Lane, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0LF

Client name: Cassel Hotels (Cambridge) Ltd

Type of report: Landscape & Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Study

Prepared by: Martina Sechi BSc Be MALA CMLI



Signed:

Date: 16/02/2021

Reviewed by: Chris Surfleet MA MSc PGDipUD IHBC

Signed:



Date: 22/02/2021



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1.0 Introduction

1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and Green Belt Review has been prepared on behalf of Cassel Hotels (Cambridge) Ltd in connection with the demolition of existing structures to enable a new building to provide Care Home facilities on the site of the existing Hotel Felix at Whitehouse Lane, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0LX (the Site).

1.1.2 The aim of the appraisal is to:

- Assess the landscape and visual baseline conditions, including relevant planning policy, designations, key characteristics, important views and potential visual receptors;
- Assess the landscape and visual sensitivity to inform the development of a masterplan strategy;
- To make a qualitative assessment of the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development;
- Assess the impact on the qualities of the Green Belt; and
- Make recommendations to avoid or mitigate potential adverse landscape or visual effects and inform ongoing refinement of the design proposals.

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 The Site is located on the north western edge of Cambridge, adjacent to the residential area of Castle, located to the east, and Girton to the west. New development is under construction to the south at Cambridge's new suburb Eddington, with Darwin Green under construction to the north east. Although located within South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Site is immediately adjacent to the boundary of Cambridge City.

1.2.2 The Site comprises:

- Hotel Felix and its immediate surroundings; and
- Associated car park and ancillary structures.

2.0 Appraisal Methodology

2.1.1 The appraisal takes into account current best practice guidance, namely:

- ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal’, (GLVIA3) produced by the Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal (Third Edition, 2013);
- ‘Visual Representation of Development Proposals’. Technical Guidance Note 06/19, by the Landscape Institute (17 September 2019); and
- ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Appraisal’ by Natural England (October 2014).

2.1.2 It considers two separate but inter-linked topics: ‘Landscape effects’ and ‘Visual effects’.

2.1.3 Landscape effects relate to changes in the scale, pattern, character and quality of the landscape. These include direct impacts such as loss of vegetation, or less perceptible effects such as changes to tranquillity. Landscape effects do not need to be visible.

2.1.4 Visual effects relate to specific changes in views and the effects on visual receptors (e.g. residents, users of public rights of way or recreational facilities). Changes to the visual setting of protected cultural heritage features are also considered (e.g. Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas).

2.1.5 The appraisal starts with the definition of the landscape and visual baseline which identifies key characteristics and constraints relating to the Site and its context. The baseline studies include landscape designations, published landscape character assessments, field observation (undertaken in April, October and December 2020) and representative viewpoints. The planning policy context is also taken into consideration to identified distinctive landscape qualities at a local scale.

2.1.6 The baseline findings provide the basis for the understanding of the value in landscape and visual terms of the receptors that will be affected by the proposed development. This is combined with the susceptibility to change to establish the relative sensitivities. Landscape effects will then be considered for a set of receptors relevant to the Site and study area’s character. Similarly, assessment of the visual effects will be determined for critical visual receptors.

2.1.7 At this stage, a full landscape and visual impact assessment has not been undertaken. Instead, a qualitative appraisal of the key issues has been completed to inform the development proposals. Therefore, it should be noted that while relevant guidance is followed to define the applied parameters, this appraisal does not include judgement on the significance of landscape and visual effects.

2.2 Study Area

2.2.1 Initial baseline study found some landscape and townscape designations within the Site’s context, largely located within the urban area of Cambridge. Considering the scale of the proposed development, the level of screening afforded by the surrounding vegetation and existing development, it was concluded that a 2km study area would be appropriate for the assessment (i.e. a 2km radius from the centre of the Site). The study area will encompass the western edge of Cambridge and relevant designations, as well as the Green Belt area surrounding Girton.

2.2.2 However, given the Site’s location on the edge of Cambridge, sensitive views identified in the Cambridge City Local Plan (2018) have also been considered. Visual effects are therefore assessed for an envelope larger than 2km.

2.3 Desk-Based Study

Information for the LVA was gathered from the following sources:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2019;

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, Adopted September 2018;
- Cambridge City Local Plan Adopted 2018;
- South Cambridgeshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2010);
- Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, November 2015;
- Cambridge Green Belt Study: A Vision of the Future for Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire District Council, September 2002;
- Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, June 2011;
- National Character Area (NCA) Profile 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands;
- Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 'Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment', March 2011;
- The Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database;
- Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale site-centred digital raster map; and
- Aerial photography: Google Maps (<http://maps.google.co.uk/>).

2.4 Field Study

2.4.1 A field survey was undertaken in April, October and November 2020 to assess:

- Landscape characteristics;
- Views of the Site from the surrounding areas;
- The location of visual receptors; and
- The potential visual effects arising from the proposed development.

2.4.2 The survey was generally undertaken from publicly accessible locations such as roads, bridleways, tracks, footpaths and public open spaces.

2.5 Consultations

2.5.1 Pre-application advice was sought with Greater Cambridgeshire Local Authority and the LVA and Green Belt Review approach submitted for comments. The Landscape Officer (Bana Elzein, Principal Landscape Architect at Greater Cambridgeshire) accepted the proposed LVA; however, judgement on technical visualisations was withheld until the viewpoint photography had been undertaken and submitted.

2.5.2 This further information was provided on 20th November, with a recommendation to undertake a Type 3, AVR 0 for Viewpoint 4.

2.5.3 Further coordination undertaken once full viewpoint photography had been undertaken has confirmed that Viewpoints 1, 3, 5 and 6 should be supplied as Type 3/AVR 0, Viewpoint 4 upgraded to a Type 3/AVR 1, and all remaining viewpoints to remain as they are (Type 1).

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1 The Care Home Proposal

- 3.1.1 The development consists of the demolition of an existing structure, known as Hotel Felix, and construction of a new 80 bed care home facility with associated recreational spaces, clinical facilities, back of house facilities, kitchens and recreational facilities.
- 3.1.2 This replacement structure would be predominantly 2 storeys, with a localised 3 storey feature to mark the entrance to the care home. Its footprint (2,395 m²) will be slightly more than the existing structure (2,110 m²), and it is located slightly north west compared to the existing.
- 3.1.3 The proposed design has been inspired by a neo-classical aesthetic. The principal external materials are plain grey brick and the pitched roof is slate.
- 3.1.4 A proposed landscape scheme accompanies the development, consisting of a sensory garden, private terraces for ground floor bedrooms, a residents' garden and associated parking court. The parking court has been laid out to prioritise the retention of existing trees, which would be joined by supplementary planting. Furthermore, the landscape proposal incorporates features to enhance biodiversity, such as bat boxes and log piles; the design of the building includes two areas of biodiverse roof.

4.0 Planning Context

4.1 National Planning Framework

- 4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the overall economic, social and environmental objectives that the planning system should follow to achieve sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is a *'presumption in favour of sustainable development'* (Par. 10). More specifically, the NPPF policies relevant to the Site and proposed development are detailed below.
- 4.1.2 The NPPF requires care of the public rights of way setting and strategic vision. Par. 98 states that *'planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails'*.
- 4.1.3 The framework stresses the importance of high-quality design. It states that efficient use of land should take into account *'the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy spaces'* (Par. 122). Par. 124 adds that *'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'* Good architecture and master planning need to be supported by *'appropriate and effective landscaping'* (Par. 137) to enhance and promote a strong sense of place.
- 4.1.4 In defining the planning system obligations and scopes, the framework highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural environment. In particular, *'protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)* (Par. 170). The countryside has a particular value on its own for its intrinsic character and beauty.
- 4.1.5 It is noted that the new NPPF does not clearly define what constitutes a 'valued landscape'. Useful in the NPPF 2018 revision is the update to Par. 11 which provides some additional guidance through footnote 6. This defines, more thoroughly than before, *'areas or assets of particular importance'* as: *'habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 176) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 63); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.'* However, for the purposes of this LVA, it is believed that the 'Stroud DC v Gladman high court judgement (reference CO/4082/2014) is still appropriate and valid, therefore, to be valued in terms of the NPPF would require the landscape to show *"some demonstrable physical attribute rather than just popularity"* i.e. it has to be 'out of the ordinary'
- 4.1.6 The framework promotes a *'strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructures'* (Par 171). Habitat and biodiversity protection and enhancement is a fundamental point for sustainable development and should be considered not just at local scale but as an interaction with wider national and international ecological networks.
- 4.1.7 Furthermore, the NPPF specifically addresses Green Belt policy objectives. It stresses that policies should aim *'to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristic of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence'* (Par. 133). It also defines what is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and exceptions to this definition, such as *'limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would: – not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.'* (Par 145 limb g)
- 4.1.8 The national framework also provides particular emphasis on the countryside, suggesting that the *'intrinsic character and beauty'* should be recognised as well as the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services (Par. 170b).

4.2 Local Planning Framework

4.2.1 The Site falls within the administrative area of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) where planning decisions are regulated by the adopted Development Plan, which includes a number of documents and planning policies, relevant to the landscape and visual assessment. These are listed below (The Green Belt policies are considered in Section 9).

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, South Cambridgeshire District Council, (September 2018)

- **Policy S/2: Objectives of the Local Plan**

4.2.2 This policy sets out the strategic objectives of the local plan, setting out six key objectives to guide development within the district. Objectives include the protection of *'the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage, as well as protecting the Cambridgeshire Green Belt.'*

- **Policy SS/2: Land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road**

4.2.3 This strategic site allocation extends the strategic allocation known by the same name which falls within the adjacent Cambridge City Local Plan and is to be developed as part of *'a sustainable housing-led urban extension of Cambridge.'* The policy also notes that the *'Cambridge Green Belt is revised to provide the northern boundary of this development. The Green Belt will continue to ensure separation from Girton and Histon & Impington villages.'* The allocation will be subject to a Countryside Enhancement Strategy which will cover the area retained in the Green Belt to provide *'new landscape, biodiversity and public access enhancements, to protect and enhance wildlife habitats, and new footpaths, cycleways and bridleways including access via the existing A14 overbridge to connect to the wider public rights of way.'*

4.2.4 The supporting text of the policy notes that the revised Green Belt boundary *'will maintain an open green foreground setting to Cambridge and ensure that the expanded City remains physically separate from surrounding villages especially the closest villages of Girton and Histon & Impington. In this way the character of Cambridge as a city surrounded by a necklace of villages can continue to be protected.'*

4.2.5 The policy also requires any urban related uses (such as playing fields) are *'located and designed to ensure they do not reduce the effectiveness of the Green Belt separation between Cambridge and Girton in visual terms, particularly having regard to matters such as fencing and floodlighting (see Policy NH/8).'*

- **Policy HQ/1: Design Principles**

4.2.6 This policy is prefaced with the acknowledgement that settlements within the district vary in character. *'All new development will have an impact on its surroundings. Development needs to be of an appropriate scale, design and materials for its location and conform to the design principles set out in the policy'*.

4.2.7 *'Any development must also take proper care to respond to its surroundings, and create sustainable, inclusive and healthy environments where people would wish to live, work, shop, study or spend their leisure time'*. In order to achieve such design quality, the policy lists fundamental design principles which include protection and enhancement of natural and historic assets, as well as conserving the countryside and open spaces, referring to the District Design Guide SPD and village design guides where appropriate.

- **Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character**

4.2.8 This policy focuses on the preservation and enhancement of local and national character and distinctiveness of the landscape as prescribed by existing evidence, such as the National Character Area Profiles.

4.2.9 *'The district's landscape is dominated by arable farmland with dispersed woodlands and often low, trimmed hedgerows. As a result, it is a predominantly open landscape, allowing long views. A mosaic of hedgerow, fields, parkland and small woodlands create variety and combine to create an often treed skyline. A greater degree of enclosure and a more detailed landscape is often associated with settlements and the many small river valleys.'*

South Cambridgeshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

- 4.2.10 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) forms part of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF), with a purpose to ensure *'the delivery of sensitively and appropriately designed, sustainable developments.'* The Guide identifies that all *'new development will have an impact on its surroundings. The aim must be that any development, from a major urban extension to Cambridge to an extension to an existing home, takes all proper care to respond to its surroundings, including existing buildings, open spaces and village edges, and ensure an integrated scheme that does not harm local amenity and wherever possible, brings benefits to the area.'*
- 4.2.11 This document also sets out the local landscape character of Cambridge, which is explored further in Section 6.2.
- 4.2.12 The SPD requires that any new development, *'must sit comfortably in its landscape, taking account of the topography and natural or man-made features. New development should not intrude upon the skyline, with the exception of specifically agreed features selected as landmarks, in the tradition of church spires or towers. ... careful consideration must be given to the height and form of buildings, with the built form broken down to appear as a composition of forms, rather than one large form and utilising trees and other planting to soften the impact on long distance views.'*

Cambridge Local Plan, Cambridge City Council (2018)

- 4.2.13 The **Cambridge Local Plan** (2018) forms part of the development plan for Cambridge, setting out a vision and guidance for developments and land use within the city council boundaries. The Site is located on the western boundary of Cambridge City, therefore not all policies will be relevant but some might be.
- **Policy 20: Land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road Area of Major Change**
- 4.2.14 The policy area, located adjacent to the east of the Site boundary, and extending to the north east, is allocated to deliver *'a high quality inclusive new neighbourhood on the edge of the city.'* This neighbourhood will be mixed use with residential areas accompanying complementary facilities including a primary school, retail, food stores, community facilities and open space for recreation including allotments.
- 4.2.15 This policy area abuts the site allocation within South Cambridgeshire Local Plan as Policy SS/2.
- **Policy 55: Responding to Context**
- 4.2.16 The policy states that *'development will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context and has drawn inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings to help create distinctive and high quality places.'*
- 4.2.17 More specifically the proposal is required to fulfil the following parameters:
- *'identify and respond positively to existing features of natural, historic or local importance on and close to the proposed development site';* and
 - *'use appropriate local characteristics to help inform the use, siting, massing, scale, form, materials and landscape design of new development.'*
- 4.2.18 The policy aims to enhance and protect the special character of Cambridge. For this purpose, it is important to understand the proposal context including *'land uses, open spaces, the built and natural environment and social and physical characteristics.'* The proposal is required to be appropriate to its context, particularly in terms of scale and form, and to *'complement the local identity of an area.'*
- **Policy 60: Tall Buildings and the Skyline of Cambridge**
- 4.2.19 The policy sets out criteria that should be considered to protect or enhance the character and qualities of Cambridge's skyline, these include:

- *‘location, setting and context – applicants should demonstrate through visual assessment or appraisal with supporting accurate visual representations, how the proposals fit within the existing landscape and townscape;’*
 - *‘impact on the historic environment - ... including impact on key landmarks and viewpoints, as well as from the main streets, bridges and open spaces in the city centre and from the main historic approaches, including road and river, to the historic core. Tall building proposals must ensure that the character or appearance of Cambridge, as a city of spires and towers emerging above the established tree line, remains dominant from relevant viewpoints as set out in Appendix F;’* and
 - *‘scale, massing and architectural quality – applicants should demonstrate through the use of scaled drawings, sections, accurate visual representations and models how the proposals will deliver a high quality addition to the Cambridge skyline and clearly demonstrate that there is no adverse impact.’*
- 4.2.20 The policy describes Cambridge as free from clusters of modern towers and bulky buildings, except for the hospital and airport areas, which contrast with the surrounding low-lying suburbs. Also noted is the difference between the *‘background buildings’* in the historic core and the suburban built form. The former rises between three and five storeys with occasional modern, six storey buildings, while the latter is largely characterised by two storey buildings with only a few areas of three storeys.
- 4.2.21 Policy 60 goes on to say: *‘Trees form an important element of the Cambridge skyline, within both the historic core and surrounding suburbs. Elevated views from the rural hinterland and from Castle Mound reveal a city of spires and towers emerging above an established tree line. Buildings therefore work with subtle changes in topography and the tree canopy to create a skyline of ‘incidents’, where important buildings rise above those of a prevailing lower scale.’*
- 4.2.22 Appendix F (Tall Buildings and the Skyline) provides further guidance in regard to Policy 60.
- 4.2.23 Relevant to this assessment are the following criteria listed in Appendix F:
- *‘maintain the character and quality of the Cambridge skyline;’*
 - *‘ensure that tall buildings, as defined in this guidance, which break the established skyline are well considered and appropriate to their context;’* and
 - *‘support only new buildings which are appropriate to their context and contribute positively to both near and distant views.’*
- 4.2.24 The Appendix acknowledges that it is the nature of the contextual townscape that defines a tall building. Based on this, in the Cambridge context, a tall building is *‘any structure that breaks the existing skyline and/or is significantly taller than the surrounding built form.’*
- 4.2.25 It goes on to say that within the suburbs (where the Site is located) *‘buildings of four storeys and above (assuming a flat roof with no rooftop plant and a height of 13m above ground level) will automatically trigger the need to address the criteria set out within the guidance.’*
- 4.2.26 The key characteristics of Cambridge’s skyline identified in the Appendix include:
- *‘Trees form an important element in the modern Cambridge skyline, within both the historic core and the suburbs. Many of the elevated views of the city from the rural hinterland and from Castle Mound show a city of trees with scattered spires and towers emerging above an established tree line.’; and*
 - In the suburbs, the height of buildings is generally lower with some three-storey Victorian and Edwardian buildings on the main approach roads.
- 4.2.27 Figure 1 provides a list of ‘Strategic Viewpoints’, which include Castle Mound, Castle Hill, (32m AOD), the only vantage point affording significant panoramic views across the city (apart from the tops of tall buildings).

4.2.28

According to the Appendix, 'views of the historic core and the key buildings within the core are therefore particularly important to protect. In this case, distant views of the historic core from Red Meadow Hill, Lime Kiln Hill, and the Gogs are especially important, as are more localised views of the historic core from Castle Mound, The Backs, and open spaces within and around the historic core.' Where relevant the Strategic Viewpoints have been considered in this TVA (see Section 8).

Figure F.3 Topography and Strategic Viewpoints

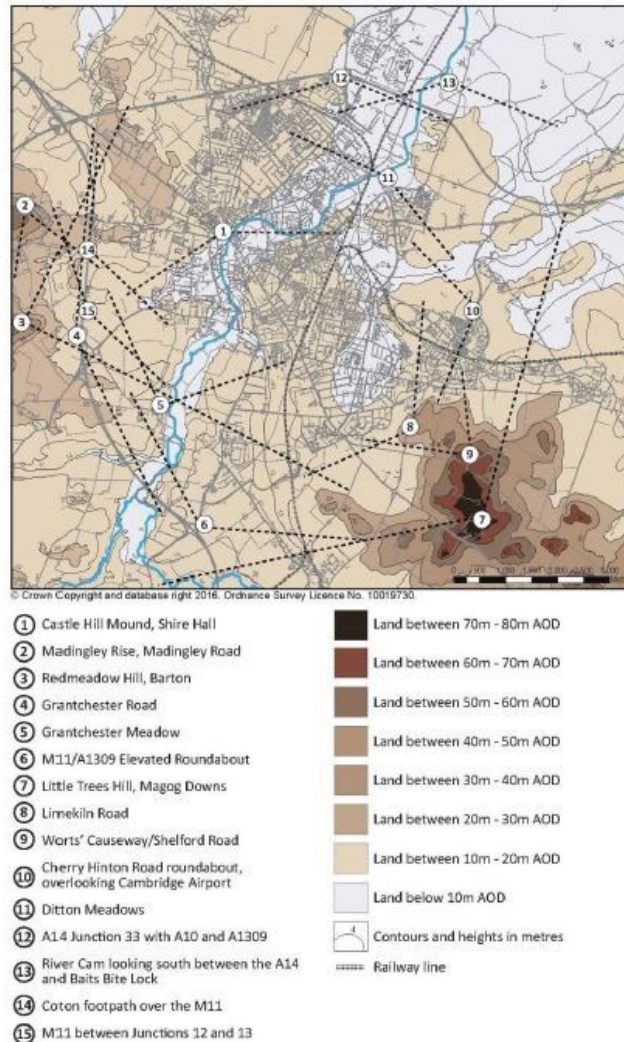


Figure 1 - Figure F.3 in Appendix F, Local Plan 2018

5.0 Landscape Baseline

5.1 Landscape Designations

5.1.1 Landscape designations and protection, within 2 km of the Site relevant to the appraisal of landscape and visual effects, are set out in Table 1. This should be read in conjunction with the Maps contained within Appendix 1.

Table 1 - Landscape Designations and Protection

DESIGNATION/PROTECTION	PRESENT WITHIN THE SITE	PRESENT WITHIN THE STUDY AREA (2KM)
National Parks	No	None within the study area.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	No	None within the study area.
Special Landscape Area (or similar local designation)	No	None within the Study Area
Green Belt	Yes	The Site lies within the Cambridge Green Belt.
World Heritage Sites	No	None within the study area.
Scheduled Monuments	No	There are Scheduled Monuments within the study area approximately 1.9km to the south-west of the Site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil War earthworks at the Castle; and • Cambridge Castle Mound
Conservation Areas	No	There is one Conservation Area in proximity to the Site: the Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area.
Listed Buildings	No.	There are a number of listed building within the study area. Please refer to Map 04 in Appendix 1.
Registered Parks and Gardens	No	There are Registered Parks and Gardens within the 2km study area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garden of 48 Storey's Way (Grade II),

DESIGNATION/PROTECTION	PRESENT WITHIN THE SITE	PRESENT WITHIN THE STUDY AREA (2KM)
		<p>approximately 1.14km from the Site; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Histon Road Cemetery (Grade II*), approximately 1.58km from the Site.
Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	Yes	There are Conservation Areas within the 2km study area.
Recreational Trail	No	An on-road section of the National Cycle Network is located along Huntingdon Road to the south of the Site.
Public Right-of-Way	No	There are several Public Rights of Way within the study area, including 39/48, a footpath which runs adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Site, which continues to the north east (as 99/10).

5.2 Landscape Character

5.2.1 To help identify the key characteristics and sensitivity of the landscape within which the Site is located, reference is made to the previously-published Landscape Character Assessments. Those applicable to the study area are set out below.

- National Scale Assessment

National Character Area (NCA) Profile 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands

5.2.2 The NCA Profile describes the key characteristic and environmental opportunities of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, describing the natural and cultural features which shape this discrete landscape character area. Those most relevant to the Site and the study area are set out below.

5.2.3 The majority of the NCA is identified as sparsely populated, however a '*feeling of urbanisation*' is brought by numerous large towns and transport routes, including Cambridge and the M11 and A14 which fall within the study area. The character area exhibits a diverse building palette, including '*brick, render, thatch and stone.*'

5.2.4 Generally, this character area is '*a broad, gently undulating, lowland plateau dissected by shallow river valleys,*' underlain by Jurassic and Cretaceous clays. Above this substrate an arable landscape of '*planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows*' contrast with fields which are '*irregular and piecemeal*'. Woodland cover throughout the NCA are variable, scattered and comprise '*smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys.*'

- 5.2.5 A rich geological and archaeological history is '*evident in fossils, medieval earthworks, deserted villages and Roman roads*,' including Huntingdon Road which is on the alignment of a Roman Road.
- 5.2.6 Overall, tranquillity within the NCA has declined, '*affected by visual intrusion, noise and light pollution from agriculture, settlement expansion and improvements in road infrastructure*.'
- Regional Scale
- 5.2.7 Landscape East published in January 2009 an overview of the landscape typology of the region. This can be accessed through the website (<http://www.landscape-east.org.uk/>) where the interactive map aids identification of the relevant typologies for a wanted area. However, this resource is not currently functioning and therefore information on the landscape typology of the study area are not available.
- County Scale Assessment
- 5.2.8 Both the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (1991) and Appendix 9 of the Cambridge Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) provides evidence of the landscape character at county scale.
- 5.2.9 They locate the Site within the '*Western Claylands*' Character Area (see Figure 2), within which '*dense woodland and heavy soils deterred prehistoric farmers, and even Roman settlements are not commonly found in these regions. Population pressure and the use of improved ploughs, however, led to many medieval settlements which have since been deserted or have shrunk to tiny hamlets or single farms*.' The '*gentle, undulating landscape*' of this character area consists of '*large-scale arable farmland with open fields, sparse trimmed hedgerows and watercourses often cleared of bankside vegetation*.' There are scattered woodlands throughout the character area, with '*approximately half of these ... ancient semi-natural woodlands*.' Elsewhere in the character area individual woods '*are of importance in visual and nature conservation terms, but they tend to be isolated incidents in an area dominated by arable farmland*.'
- 5.2.10 It is of note that this character area is predominantly rural in nature, which is reflected in its identified characteristics. The proximity of the Site to the urbanising influence of Cambridge will exhibit an influence on the overall character of the Site.
- District Scale Assessment
- South Cambridgeshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2010)
- 5.2.11 Policy NH/2 mentions the SPD document to aid developments integration and respect of the surrounding contextual landscape. The SPD describes the district landscape as dominated by medium to large-medium arable farmland. These large landscapes and the lack of woodland and hedgerow enclosure results in a distinctive sense of openness and long views. Greater degree of enclosure is found with in settlements: '*Early enclosures of 'ancient countryside' give a distinctive character to some villages which are surrounded by small fields with hedgerows*.'
- 5.2.12 According with the SPD the Site is located in the Fen Edge landscape character area (Figure 3). Despite the largely low-lying landscape affording open views, '*scatterings of clumps of trees, poplar shelterbelts and occasional hedgerows sometimes merge together to give the sense of a more densely treed horizon*'.

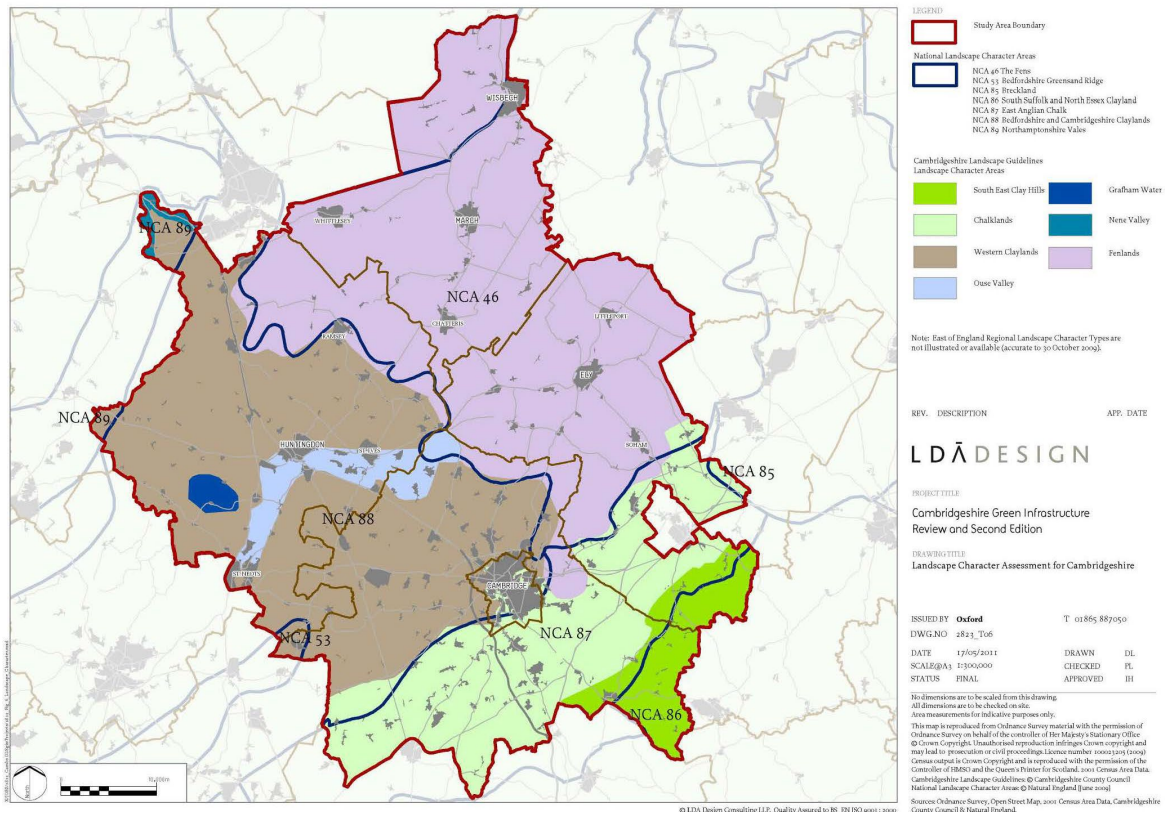


Figure 2 - Landscape Character Areas, Cambridge Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)



Figure 3 - Landscape Character Area, SPD 2010

5.2.13 Key characteristics of the Fen Edge include:

- ‘A low-lying, flat open landscape with extensive vistas.’
- ‘Large skies create drama.’
- ‘The rich and varied intensive agricultural land use includes a wide range of arable and horticultural crops and livestock.’
- ‘Small scale, irregular medieval field patterns are still visible around the edge of settlements.’
- ‘Church towers and spires create landmarks.’

5.2.14 In line with the SPD description, Girton settlement pattern is elongated and relatively well enclosed by woodland and hedgerow features. Typically, *‘on the village edges buildings are more often setback with low walls and hedges fronting the streets. Long back gardens are also a common feature.’*

5.2.15 Key characteristics of the Fen Edges settlement and built form include:

- ‘Settlements sit low in the landscape, often screened by thick hedgerows to paddocks, copses, groups of mature trees and orchards.’
- ‘Wall materials vary; yellow Gault clay brickwork predominates, but plastered timber-frame, dark stained weatherboarding and red brick are also present.’
- ‘Roofs are historically of thatch and plain clay tiles, with pantiles and Welsh slate being later introductions.’
- ‘Eighteenth and nineteenth century house details include; vertically sliding sash windows set in reveals over shallow stone cills and with gauged or segmental arched brick lintels over, four or six panelled doors in simple classical door cases incorporating fan lights and chimneys incorporated within the buildings or at gable ends.’

5.2.16 Finally, it is noted that the SPD provides the following design principles:

- ‘Ensure new developments on the edges of villages are integrated by thick hedgerows, copses and shelterbelt planting reflecting the local mixes.’
- ‘Ensure new developments reflect the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings of the area and pick up on the traditional building styles, materials, colours and textures of the locality.’

- Local Scale Assessment

Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2003

5.2.17 A principal term utilised in the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment is that of ‘Defining Character’. This term is described as referring to the *‘key resources that are essential to the special qualities of Cambridge and its setting. If these resources were jeopardised or removed Cambridge and its setting would be compromised.’*

5.2.18 Generally, Cambridge is defined as a collegiate city in a rural setting, with good accessibility to the countryside and green corridors. The Assessment considers that the city’s compactness and sense of arrival are important features and *‘where the edges are positive, and the City is anticipated by glimpsed and distinctive views to the skyline or landmarks, this is a Defining Character of views and setting.’* However, it is acknowledged that, although intrinsic to the quality of Cambridge, the notion of compactness and sense of arrival is difficult to define.

5.2.19 The Assessment identifies six physical features that are ‘Defining Character’ of Cambridge, the following are relevant to the understanding of the Site and study area:

- Views of the City Skyline: Due to the *‘particularly flat landscape,’* views of the city skyline from the south and west are *‘particularly evocative, and ... unusual.’*

- Separation: Separation is considered a defining character where '*separation between the City and necklace villages is much reduced.*' The character assessment requires that '*areas between communities should be assessed and the minimum amount of actual separation required to ensure there is no perception of one community merging with another should be evaluated.*' This evaluation should be based on factors such as '*topography and vegetation cover.*' This character requires that the '*minimum distance to ensure separation should remain sacrosanct.*'

5.2.20 Supporting character are elements which are important to Cambridge and its character, but not so important that their removal or development would completely change '*the distinctive character of Cambridge.*' The following are relevant to understanding the character of the Site:

- Ancient Woodland, Tree Cover, Hedgerows and Veteran Trees.

5.2.21 The description of the supporting character for Cambridge recognises that the city is '*essentially well-treed, with tree belts and avenues that are characteristic of many streets ... are an important part of the City's Character.*' Further, it is recognised that these characteristics contribution to the environment of the City is '*immeasurable.*'

5.2.22 The Landscape Character Assessment goes on to define a series of Character Types and Areas where a character type is '*a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.*' Whilst a Character Area is '*a discrete geographical area that is unique.*' The resulting characterisation has co-existing Character Types and Areas.

5.2.23 Of these Character Types, the Site is identified as being within a Residential Area (see Map 6 in Appendix 1). Each Character Type is then broken down into Character Areas, the Site being identified as being part of the '*Villas and Modern Movement*' which saw development from the 1880s into the early 20th century, particularly to the west of Cambridge. The document identifies that '*large plots with typically mature trees and shrubs; and individually designed houses*' are important features of this Character Area.

Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study 2015

5.2.24 The Site is located within Landscape Character Area 2A Western Fen Edge (Figure 4), as defined in the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study. This Character Area is located to the north and north-west of Cambridge, and as its name suggests is a '*relatively low-lying landscape..., slightly higher than the Fen proper. It is a flat and expansive landscape, where sky and horizons are dominant features.*'

5.2.25 '*Views to Cambridge are restricted by the low-lying topography and the A14. Therefore the only key views to Cambridge from the western fen edge are from the A14 itself. The A14 also acts as an artificial edge to the city, and undermines the gentle transition between the city and the fen edge.*'

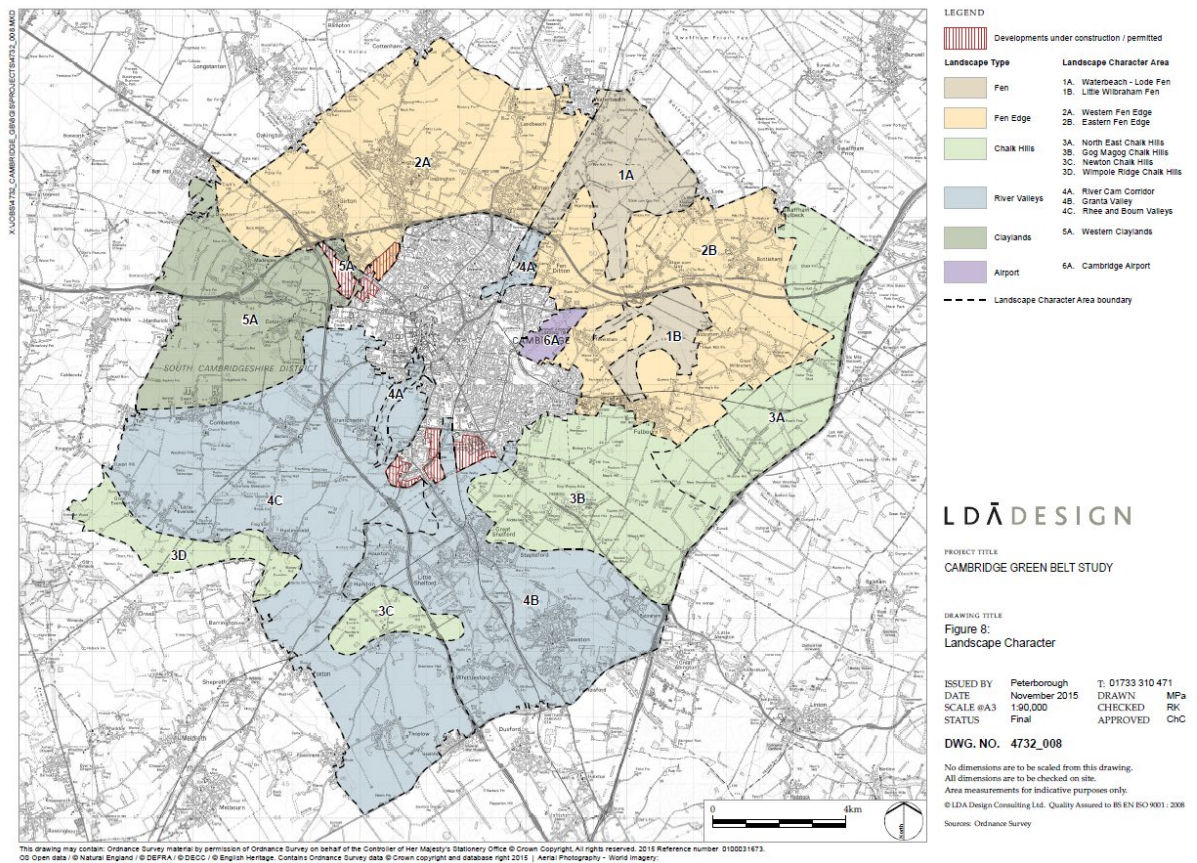


Figure 4 - Landscape Character Areas, Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study 2015

5.2.26 The villages closest to Cambridge, including Girton, are ‘often perilously close to being linked to Cambridge by suburban routes. However, each has retained its individual village character.’ Building materials in the edge villages ‘include gault brick, render, and thatch. Only the wealthiest buildings were constructed of stone.’

Cambridge Suburbs and Approaches: Huntingdon Road

5.2.27 The Cambridge Suburbs and Approaches, Huntingdon Road assessment was produced by the Architectural History Practice for Cambridge City Council in 2009.

5.2.28 The character of Huntingdon Road is identified as a ‘wide road with a linear character, reflecting its Roman origins. 20th century ribbon development along the road frontage, with much of the rural character and green space surviving in the backland, has accentuated this linear character.’

5.2.29 The Site is located to the north west of Character Area 2 where ‘spaces between the buildings afford glimpses of maturely planted out back gardens. Here the footpaths widen, and are provided with wide grass verges and planted with mature trees. These are highly important in framing the approach from Girton, lending the road a generous, leafy suburban character at this point.’ The assessment identifies that the road, despite its lack of open spaces, ‘has an open character which increases towards the City boundary to the northwest.’ The main threat to the character of Area 2 ‘is from the infilling and amalgamation of the generous spaces and landscaped setting that surround most of the properties.’

5.3 Local Landscape Context

5.3.1 The Site is located within the Green Belt, between Cambridge and Girton, approximately 2.5km from central Cambridge.

5.3.2 The Site, and the fields immediately to the north and south of Hotel Felix, form a green break between Girton and Cambridge. Residential areas define the context immediately adjacent to the

Site. These are of varying character, and are supplemented by new developments at Darwin Green and Eddington to the south. The Green Belt continues from the Site to the south into the development at Eddington, to protect Eddington and Girton from coalescing.

5.3.3 To the east of Whitehouse Lane, Darwin Green Phase 1 is under construction, with Phases 2 and 3 continuing to the north east. The Green Belt continues north from the Site, to preserve separation from Girton and Darwin Green.

5.3.4 This alignment of the Green Belt hosts a variety of uses, from public open space associated with Eddington to the south, through the enclosed fields immediately to the north and south of the Site (property of Anglia Ruskin University), and arable fields to the north of the Site.

5.3.5 The wider character of the Site's environs is limited by the alignment of the A14 to the north and M11 to the east, which act as barriers to visual connection with the wider landscape beyond these features.

Site's Layout

5.3.6 The Site currently consist of the Hotel Felix and its premises. The original 'country house' of the 1852 was home of Charles Lestourgeon who also laid out the gardens. The Victorian villa was extended in the 1960s/70s on the north-western side as it was converted to a Country Centre by Cambridge County Council. The property was converted as hotel in 2002, with the construction of the two lateral wings that form the existing U shape.

5.3.7 The main car park is located to the west of the Site and it is accessed directly from Whitehouse Lane. The car park surface is a buff loose gravel.

5.3.8 The Site is well enclosed by mature planting. A relatively consistent tree belt extends along whole perimeter. Although species are mostly deciduous. The car park is bounded by a low deciduous hedge (hornbeam). The central path that crosses the Site from the car park, east to west, is lined by matured trees, and ends at a tall, sculptured, evergreen hedge.

Landform

5.3.9 The Site is located within the 20-30m AOD band, on a local ridge which roughly aligns with Huntingdon Road, which is on the alignment of a Roman Road into Cambridge. Land gently slopes away to the north east and south west.

5.3.10 Refer to Map 02 in Appendix 1 for Topography of the Site and study area.

Vegetation Cover

5.3.11 The predominant vegetation cover in proximity to the Site is associated with rear gardens, field boundaries and Huntingdon Road. Fields immediately to the north and south of the Site are defined by generous mature treed boundaries, which contribute to the sylvan nature of the immediate context of the Site. This also filters direct views into the Site from Huntingdon Road immediately to the south, as can be seen in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5 - View towards the Site from Huntingdon Road.

- 5.3.12 Significant vegetation within the Study Area (please refer to Map 07 in Appendix 1) indicates a scattered, variable size woodland blocks, in line with the character as outlined within the NCA and Local Scale landscape assessments, however these are not in close proximity to the Site.
Flood Risk and drainage
- 5.3.13 There are no flood zones associated with the Site as by the Environment Agency, refer to Map 08 in Appendix 1 for further information.
Historic Context
- 5.3.14 Detailed presentation of the historic evolution of the Site is provided in the Heritage Statement (by Bidwells). For the purpose of the LVA, it is noted that the land which now forms the western edge of Cambridge has traditionally been agricultural in nature (Map 10a in Appendix 1), with development already evident on the Site on the 1889 OS Map which notes the Site as Howe House. Enclosed fields surround this feature, with Huntingdon Road evident. Girton College is extant; however, it is an isolated feature in an otherwise rural landscape.
- 5.3.15 By the time of the next Map in 1927 (Map 10b in Appendix 1) Cambridge has spread westwards, closer to the Site. With the Universities as dominant landowners, this reflects the removal in 1877 of the prohibition against dons being married, and the development of colleges for women, which saw the proliferation of large family house and new colleges. Additional development surrounding Girton College reflects this trend, whilst in the wider landscape nurseries and allotments for food production are evident.
- 5.3.16 By 1960 (Map 10c in Appendix 1), these trends have continued to consolidate, with the trend towards larger family homes for the middle classes evident, along with increasing facilities associated with the university, reflecting the ownership of the land.

5.4 Landscape Receptors

- 5.4.1 The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment guidance defines landscape receptors as 'overall character and key characteristic, individual elements or features, and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape'.
- 5.4.2 Based on the findings of the desk-top study, published landscape character assessments, and field observations key landscape receptors are considered to be:
- **The Local Landscape Character** - Landscape Character Area: 2A Western Fen
 - **The Local Townscape Character** - Villas and Modern Movement Character Area
 - **The Setting of Public Right of Way (PRoW)**
 - **The Cambridge Green Belt**
 - **The Skyline of Cambridge** – Especially the treed character of the city.
 - **The Green Character of Huntingdon Road** – A wide road with a linear character with wide grass verges and planted with mature trees.

6.0 Visual Baseline

6.1 Visual receptors

6.1.1 The Site is largely enclosed to the east and west by surrounding settlements. To the north and south of the Site, open space within the Green Belt are largely enclosed by mature boundary vegetation. Overall, the Site has a degree of enclosure due to existing vegetation associated with the curtilage of the existing building.

6.1.2 It is therefore considered that the following visual receptors will be considered for the assessment:

- Motorists and pedestrians on Huntingdon Road;
- Recreational users of PRowS 39/48, 99/13, 99/10 and 99/5;
- Pedestrians recreating on Castle Mound;
- Long distance views from Redmeadow Hill;
- Users of the Ascension Parish Burial Ground; and
- Motorists and pedestrians on the roads surrounding the Site, including the Girton Road Bridge over A14.

6.2 Representative Viewpoints

6.2.1 12 viewpoints were selected to represent 'typical views' from the identified receptors at varying distances and orientation from the Site. The viewpoints are located within 4km of the Site (please see the viewpoint locations map in Appendix 3).

6.2.2 For each viewpoint the following information is provided:

- Representative panorama or photograph;
- A description of the existing view; and
- A qualitative assessment of the predicted visual effect.

6.2.3 The viewpoints used in the assessment are:

Viewpoint 1: Access road into Eddington

This viewpoint represents views experienced by pedestrians and motorists travelling in along Eddington Avenue, towards Huntingdon Road. The view looks in a northerly direction towards the Site, which is generally screened by existing vegetation along Huntingdon Road, and by existing trees on the Site boundary. The roofline of the existing structure can be glimpsed through the vegetation, however, within the foreground the view is dominated by the verges associated with Eddington Avenue.

Viewpoint 2: Huntingdon Road - East

This viewpoint represents the views experienced by pedestrians and motorists travelling in a westerly direction along Huntingdon Road. The view is looking north-west towards the Site, which is blocked by intervening development fronting Huntingdon Road. The road infrastructure dominates the view, which is cluttered with road signs and furniture. The urban character prevails over the green qualities of Huntingdon Road.

Viewpoint 3: Huntingdon Road - West

This viewpoint represents the views experienced by pedestrians and motorists travelling along Huntingdon Road, with views glimpsed towards the north. The Site is at the centre of the view,

behind a boundary hedgerow with scrub and tree planting which limit views of the existing structure to glimpses of the roofline.

Viewpoint 4: Whitehouse Lane - PRow 39/48

This viewpoint represents the views of recreational users of PRow 29/48, looking west at the current Site entrance. This PRow runs roughly parallel to Whitehouse Lane, which dominates the foreground of the view. The Site boundary is defined by deciduous hedges and boundary trees, which continue through the Site, enclosing parking areas. In the rear ground, the existing building is clearly visible, albeit filtered by the branches of the intervening vegetation.

Viewpoint 5: Whitehouse Lane - PRow 29/48

This viewpoint represents the view from PRow 29/48 on Whitehouse Lane, looking south-east at the Site. The foreground of the view is dominated by the PRow, and direct views of the Site are filtered by existing boundary vegetation surrounding the field immediately to the north of the Site. This vegetation effectively prevents direct views of the Site. To the right of the view are office buildings that screen the new Darwin Green development.

Viewpoint 6: PRow 99/13

This viewpoint represents the view from PRow 99/13, looking south at the Site. Vegetation along the PRow and a boundary fence dominates the foreground of the view. This vegetation effectively filters views of the Site in the background, however through this vegetation, and the vegetation along the Site boundary, the upper level of the existing building and its roofline is visible through gaps in the vegetation. In the middle ground are Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) playing fields.

Viewpoint 7: PRow 99/10

This viewpoint represents the view from PRow 99/10, looking south at the Site. The right-hand sides of the PRow is allocated within the South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Local Plans as part of the development known as 'Darwin Green'. However, the current agricultural use dominates the fore and mid ground of the view. Within the distance, views of the Site are filtered by existing vegetation on both the Site and field boundaries.

Viewpoint 8: Castle Hill Mound

This viewpoint represents views of the Site from Castle Hill Mound, looking north-west towards the Site. The foreground of the view is dominated by car parking and landscaping associated with Shire Hall, with Castle Court and existing buildings located along Castle Street visible behind this. Views of the Site are effectively prevented by the presence of intervening development and vegetation.

Viewpoint 9: Redmeadow Hill

This viewpoint represents views of the Site from a vantage point identified on the OS map at Redmeadow Hill looking north-east towards the Site. Direct views of the Site are filtered by intervening vegetation, with the skyline of Cambridge not prominent through the treed character of the city.

Viewpoint 10: The Ascension Parish Burial Ground

This viewpoint represents the view from the Ascension Parish Burial Ground looking north-west towards the Site. Boundary vegetation obscures the foreground of the view, with the middle

ground dominated by fields which are allocated by Cambridge City Council as Major Development as part of the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan. Intervening vegetation associated with the properties along Huntingdon Road limit direct views of the Site.

Viewpoint 11: Girton Road bridge over the A14

This viewpoint represents the view from Girton Road bridge over A14, looking south towards the Site, which is also another route with public access. The foreground of the Site is dominated by the A14 and associated infrastructure, including acoustic fences on its southern boundary. Any distance views of the Site are obscured by dwellings located on Weavers Field, immediately to the south, and intervening vegetation.

Viewpoint 12: PRow 99/5, west of Huntingdon Road

This viewpoint represents the view from PRow 99/5, west of Huntingdon Road looking south-east towards the Site. The foreground of this view is dominated by fields; in the middle distance are the rear boundary of properties aligned along Huntingdon Road, which obscures direct views of the Site. The foreground fields within this view are part of the allocation for North East Cambridge (also known as Eddington), controlled by Policy NW/4 by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

7.0 Assessment of Landscape Effects

7.1 Landscape Sensitivity

- 7.1.1 Landscape sensitivity is the degree to which a landscape can accommodate the proposed development. It is calculated by combining the 'value' attributed the landscape with its 'susceptibility' to change.
- 7.1.2 The susceptibility to change is considered in relation to the specific proposed development and evaluates the landscape potential to accommodate the proposal. Given the nature and scale of the proposal, which reference the characteristics of the Site and its environs, and the existing developed qualities of the Site, it is believed that the study area could accommodate the proposed care home without undue consequences to the landscape baseline. Susceptibility to change is therefore low.
- 7.1.3 There are a number of factors that contribute to the definition of the value of a landscape. The landscape baseline findings revealed that the study area affords a discrete sense of place with a strong residential character, that references the university evolution of Cambridge, supported by a robust green structure. Distinctive is the green character of Huntington Road which reinforces the more natural, linear green features of the surrounding agricultural land.
- 7.1.4 It is noted that the new development at Edington and the ongoing Darwin Green project introduce modern qualities to the local townscape character. While this breaks the continuity of the older residential character, it also introduces innovative architectural models that enhance the historic qualities by means of contrast.
- 7.1.5 The combination of built form and strong green features provides a discreet sense of enclosure, which typically contrasts the wider openness of the Fens landscape.
- 7.1.6 The study area is a connection node between Cambridge city, Girton village and the countryside. The existing PRoWs network provides some connectivity and recreational opportunities, enhancing a multifunctional use of the Green Belt, albeit that the M11 and A14 corridors are detrimental to the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the landscape. Tranquillity is also scarce due to the influence of the road infrastructure.
- 7.1.7 Overall, it is considered that the strength of the distinctive qualities of the study area's landscape, including the vegetative cover, the historic settlement pattern and promising modern development, result in a high value. Therefore, the combination of the susceptibility to change and landscape value suggests that the landscape sensitivity of the study area is medium.

7.2 Predicted Landscape Effects

- 7.2.1 Table 2 below sets out the key landscape effects, which are likely to result from the proposed development (Visual effects are assessed separately in Section 8).

Table 2 - Predicted Landscape Effects

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS	PREDICTED LANDSCAPE EFFECTS
The Local Landscape Character	The proposal replaces existing built form and does not include substantial changes to the landscape character of the Site or the study area. The existing baseline would be largely untouched and there will not be noticeable changes to the landscape receptor
The Local Townscape Character	The proposal results in the loss of the Hotel Felix building. While this represents a fair example of the local townscape character of modern villas surrounded by large gardens, it is stated in the Heritage Statement that the building is a ' <i>modest example of its type which has been extensively altered</i> '

	<p><i>throughout. As a result, it is considered to hold a low level of significance overall'. Therefore its demolition will not cause the loss of a valuable heritage asset.</i></p> <p>On the other hand, the proposal is in keeping with the existing townscape character of historic villas and will not substantially alter the receptor's baseline.</p>
Setting of PRowS	<p>The proposal will not effect adversely the setting of the local PRowS network as it will not change the character of the baseline. The proposed building replaces the existing with one of similar scale and qualities. However, the proposal is located further north-west of the existing building and the car park is relocated along the northern boundary. These changes provide deeper buffer from the public footpath on Whitehouse Lane reducing the urban character of its setting.</p>
The Cambridge Green Belt	<p>The Site is located in the green gap between Cambridge and Girton; however, the existing built form of the Hotel Felix, including the car park, highlights the urban character over the Green Belt openness and green qualities. The proposed building does not change the baseline qualities of the receptor, instead the care home location further north-west of the existing hotel and the relocated car park along the northern boundary increase the distance from the emerging development of Darwin Green thereby reinforcing the gap between the two built forms. There is therefore an improvement to the Green Belt's openness.</p>
The skyline of Cambridge	<p>Overall, the proposal does not exceed the highest point of the existing hotel building, nor does it include the removal of substantial tree cover. Therefore, the baseline character of Cambridge's skyline will not be effected by the proposed development.</p>
The green character of Huntingdon Road	<p>The proposal includes the removal of one tree on the southern boundary (see the Arboricultural Impact Assessment), which contributes to the backdrop of planting to the green character of Huntingdon Road. Therefore, the character of the receptor will not be affected by the proposal.</p>

8.0 Assessment of Visual Effects

8.1.1 The visual assessment considers the effects on visual receptors who currently afford views towards the Site and, therefore, may be affected by the proposed development. The assessment is based on:

- Site observations made during the site visits undertaken in October and November 2020, and
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) analysis.

8.2 Site Visibility

8.2.1 A computer-generated zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) was produced showing the areas from which it would be theoretically possible to view the proposed development, based on the topography and taking into account major visual barriers in excess of 5 m high (Refer to drawing UDS61201-A3-0102 Appendix C). It does not take into account of the screening effects of woodlands, trees, buildings or any other vertical elements in the landscape, less than 4m high. Consequently, the ZTV analysis presents a 'worst case' scenario in terms of visibility and the actual extent of the envelope from which the proposals would be visible is likely to be much smaller when taking into account the screening effects of the lower level vegetation and buildings.

8.2.2 The ZTV was produced using 'OS Terrain 5' data at 5 m resolution and assumes the maximum proposed building height of 8m – 12m above existing ground level and a viewer height of 2 m. It is presented on a 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey base and the findings are verified by Site observations.

8.2.3 The visual envelope of the ZTV appears relatively vast, extending into the open countryside up to 2km from the Site. Public accessibility of the interested area was considered in locating the viewpoints and identified the most sensitive receptors. The site visit established that the fields enclosure through hedgerows provides substantial screening of the Site reducing the actual ZTV. The built edges of Girton and Cambridge also provides screening in some views. Notably, it was confirmed at the site visit that visibility of the Site from Huntington Road is very limited due to dense vegetation.

8.3 Predicted Visual Effects

8.3.1 The assessment of visual effects on each of the identified viewpoints is detailed in Appendix 3.

8.3.2 Table 3 below sets out the key visual effects as a result of the proposed development on the identified groups of visual receptors.

Table 3 - Predicted Visual Effects

VISUAL RECEPTORS	PREDICTED VISUAL EFFECTS
View from Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and open accessible land	As identified in viewpoints 4, 5 and 6, the character of the view experienced by receptors on PRoWs in proximity of the Site is largely unchanged, as the proposal substitutes an existing building of similar scale and qualities. The existing vegetation also provides substantial screening obscuring views of the proposal (viewpoint 7, 10 and 12) or limiting, in most instances, the view to glimpses. Viewpoint 4 represent an exceptional case as the proposed development is clearly visible within this view. However, the proposed built form is more compact than the existing and further away from the receptors. As a result, the view benefits of a reduction of visible built form and increased depth into the Site.

VISUAL RECEPTORS	PREDICTED VISUAL EFFECTS
Views from Roads	As confirmed by the ZTV, there are limited views into the Site available from Huntington Road. The characteristic tree belt along the road provides substantial screening, particularly during the summer months. However, glimpses of the proposal are available in closer proximity to the Site (viewpoints 2, 3 and 1). Nevertheless, the overall character of the view is unchanged and the slight increase in roof height is not sufficient to generate adverse effects.
Views from Vista Points	Although within the visual envelope of the ZTV, the view from Castle Hill Mound (viewpoint 8) resulted in no effects due to the intervening built form and planting. The other vista points at Redmeadow Hill (viewpoint 9), with the additional greater distance from the Site, also does not incur in noticeable effects. The skyline of Cambridge is therefore unchanged following the proposed development.

8.3.3 Finally, it is noted that the proposal includes a detailed lighting plan (refer to Foundry, Exterior & Landscape Lighting Concept). The lighting scheme includes external lighting on the building, car park and garden. While we would assume that building and car park lighting are comparable to the Hotel Felix's existing lighting, the garden includes additional lights that would result in higher visibility of the proposal at night.

8.3.4 Therefore, the lighting proposal will reinforce visual effects at night-time, particularly on receptors in proximity of the Site, principally road users on Huntington Road. However, it is believed that such effects are mitigated by the proposal of downwards lighting on the pathways and the use of a control system that will reduce unnecessary light during the night by integrating astronomical time clock, memory scene controller and control modules.

9.0 Green Belt Study

9.1 Policy context

9.1.1 The planning policies relevant to the regulation and protection of the Cambridge Green Belt are set out below:

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, South Cambridgeshire District Council, (September 2018)

- **Policy S/4: Green Belt**

9.1.2 This policy aims to preserve the Green Belt extent, as shown in the policy map (see Appendix C), by preventing development that is not in accordance with the NPPF Green Belt policy. Although the policy refers to the old NPPF (2012), it is noted that the new framework (2019) retains the same level of importance for Green Belt areas and the same description of the five Green Belt purposes. The established purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are also set out in this policy, namely to:

- *Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;*
- *Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; and*
- *Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.'*

9.1.3 The '*special character of Cambridge and it's setting*' is described through a series of factors which include:

- *'Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;*
- *A soft green edge to the city;*
- *A distinctive urban edge;*
- *Green corridors penetrating into the city;*
- *Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting;*
- *...; and*
- *A landscape that retains a strong rural character.'*

- **Policy NH/8: Mitigating the Impact of Development In and Adjoining the Green Belt**

9.1.4 This policy requires that:

- *'Any development proposals within the Green Belt must be located and designed so that they do not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.*
- *Where development is permitted, landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained, will be attached to any planning permission in order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.*
- *Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality.'*

9.1.5 This policy recognises that the Green Belt is a '*key designation in the district, which protects the setting and special character of Cambridge.*'

- **Policy NH/9: Redevelopment of Previously Developed Sites and Infilling in the Green Belt**

9.1.6 This policy defines development within the Green Belt as inappropriate, except for:

'c. The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use, and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

...

e. The partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.'

Cambridge Local Plan, Cambridge City Council (2018)

- **Policy 4: The Cambridge Green Belt**

9.1.7 This policy reiterates the importance of the Green Belt, as per NPPF's policies, stating that:

'New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in line with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).'

9.1.8 The supporting text for this policy recognises that the 'Green Belt preserves the unique setting and special character of the city and includes green corridors that penetrate deep into the urban and historic heart of Cambridge.' Significant land was removed from the Cambridge Green Belt in the 2006 Local Plan, which has resulted an increase to the value of the remaining Green Belt land, which functions as 'a critical environmental asset for Cambridge in forming the important setting for a compact, historic city and contributing to the high quality of life and place enjoyed here.'

9.2 Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (November 2015)

9.2.1 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council jointly commissioned LDA Design to undertake an assessment of the Inner Green Belt Boundary of the Cambridgeshire Green Belt following the suspension of their respective Local Plans in May 2015. This study, which is a background document for the Cambridge Local Plan 2018, assesses *'potential to release land for development without significant harm to Green Belt purposes.'*

9.2.2 This document identifies the particular qualities of Cambridge and its contextual landscape which contribute to the purposes of the Green Belt, taking account of previous studies and policy documents. The study notes the consistency of these qualities mentioned by several source documents.

9.2.3 The Site is located in Green Belt Sector 1, east of Huntingdon Road, sub-sector 1.2, Girton Gap. The sector is found to play *'a key role in the separation between the village of Girton and the existing and future edge of Cambridge.'* This sector prevents Cambridge from sprawling as far as Girton / A14, by retaining open countryside.

9.2.4 Within sub-sector 1.2, it is found that the *area 'comprises a hotel and sport fields and does not contribute significantly to the character or rural setting of Girton.'* However, vegetation within this sub-sector is identified as important, due to its contribution to *'the feeling of an undeveloped separation between Cambridge and Girton.'* Development within this sub-sector would *'compromise the separation between Cambridge and Girton, as well as Girton's identity as a separate entity.'*

9.3 Assessment of the Effects on the Cambridge Green Belt

9.3.1 The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is *'to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open'* (NPPF, 2019). The openness quality of the Green Belt is then linked to the five Green Belt's purposes identified in the NPPF:

- To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one other;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroaching;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land.

9.3.2 Furthermore, to ensure that the proposal is acceptable development in accordance with the NPPF Par 145, it has to be proved that the proposal has no greater impact on its 'openness'.

9.3.3 In first instance, it is noted that the NPPF does not provide any definition of 'openness' and its relation to landscape and visual characteristics. However, the following case of law are considered:

- **Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government 2015** shows that the concept of 'openness' is not '*narrowly limited to [a] volumetric approach*'; in this case it is considered that the '*visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of 'openness of the Green Belt'*' and it relates to the capacity of the Green Belt to full fill its purposes.
- More recently in the **Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others v North Yorkshire County Council 2020**, it was reiterated that visual effects should be given appropriate weight when these are a relevant consideration for the assessment of the impact on the Green Belt's openness.

9.3.4 It is, therefore, concluded that both volumetric and visual aspects of the proposal should be taken into consideration to define the effects on the Green Belt.

9.3.5 With regard to the visual aspects of Green Belt's openness, it is believed that Lord Justice Lindblom statement that '*the policy implicitly requires the decision-maker to consider how those visual effects bear on the question of whether the development would "preserve the openness of the Green Belt"*' substantially confirms the link between the assessment of the visual effects within the LVA with the effects of the development on the 'openness' of the Green Belt. Therefore, with reference to the findings of Section 8, it is believed that in visual terms the proposal would have no greater impact on the 'openness' of the Green Belt.

9.3.6 The proposal would result in a circa 13% increase in built footprint and circa 33% increase in associated volumes. Table 4 summarises the approximate dimensions extrapolated by the available architectural and survey sources.

Table 4 - Existing and Proposed Building Parameters

	EXISTING (APPROXIMATE)	PROPOSED (APPROXIMATE)	INCREASE / DECREASE
Perimeter (m)	298 m	249 m	- 16.44%
Footprint (m ²)	2,110 m ²	2,395 m ²	+ 13.5%
Volume (m ³)	14,120 m ³	18,790 m ³	+ 33.07%

9.3.7 The increased volume derives from the overall increase in building height. This is the result of modern architectural standards, which require greater floor-to-ceiling heights across the whole scheme, compared to the existing. However, as shown by the circa 16% decrease in perimeter, the proposed building is of a more compact form (see Figure 6 and 7). This not only mitigates the visual impact but also reduces the perception of built form within the Site, thereby enhancing the '*undeveloped*' qualities of the Green Belt.

9.3.8 The visual and landscape baseline analysis, in fact, suggests that Green Belt within the study area is characterised by an enclosed landscape due to the established green structure and the existing/emerging built form. Therefore, the quality of openness is more strongly associated with

a lack of development rather than visual aspects. With this in mind, the compact form of the proposal increases the undeveloped area of the Site, providing opportunities to enhance the characteristic green qualities of this Green Belt's area.

9.3.9 At a local scale, the Inner Green Belt Study (2015) indicates that the important role of the Green Belt area where the Site is located is to provide separation between Girton and Cambridge urban areas. The findings of the appraisal of landscape effects (see section 7.2) prove that the proposed development does not have an adverse effect on the Green Belt's function as urban gap - on the contrary, it is improved.

9.3.10 In conclusion, the proposal is considered appropriate development within the Green Belt as it preserves its purposes, namely that of gap between Girton and Cambridge, and does not have a greater impact on its essential quality of openness. Despite the increased volume, the perceived built form is less extensive than the existing and appreciation of the landscape context is enhanced with deeper views into the Site.



Figure 6 - Compared elevation - north (red as existing)



Figure 7 - Technical visualisation of the proposed development viewed from the east (Viewpoint 4)



Figure 8 - Outline footprint comparison highlighting compact form and increase gap between urban edges

10.0 Summary

10.1 Summary of Landscape Effects

10.1.1 The proposed development largely results in no adverse effects on the identified landscape receptors. The following considerations are a summary of the rationale for such result:

- The local landscape is already characterised by substantial built form that defines the edge of Cambridge and Girton. The Site itself includes the Hotel Felix and associated facilities. The proposal will not add new built form, but it replaces the existing with a building of similar scale and materiality. Overall, the local and contextual landscape character is unchanged, and the green character of Huntington Road is preserved.
- Similarly, there are no adverse effects on the Green Belt and its openness as the proposal is similar in character and scale to the replaced building. Furthermore, the relocation of the proposed building further north-west to the existing footprint and of the car park increases the gap between the edge of Cambridge (Darwin Green) and Girton. This not only preserves the sense of openness of the Green Belt but also improves the setting of the PRoW on Whitehouse Lane.

10.2 Summary of Visual Effects

10.2.1 The proposed development does not result in adverse effects on the identified groups of visual receptors. The following considerations are relevant to the understanding of the lack of adverse visual effects:

- Most of the selected viewpoints do not experience a substantial change in the character of the view as the proposal substitutes an existing building with one of similar scale and materiality. However, a beneficial effect is caused by the revised location of the proposed building and the more compact form compared with the existing Hotel Felix. As a result of these design choices, views from Whitehouse Lane experience a decrease in urban character and deeper views into the Site and its landscape.
- Similarly, the location and form of the proposed development mitigate effects on the receptors on Huntingdon Road, thereby reducing the extent of glimpses of built form visible through the existing vegetation.
- The character of the Cambridge skyline is also preserved as the proposal does not cause the loss of substantial tree cover and overall does not exceed the highest point of the current Hotel Felix; therefore, it is not visible from popular and valued vista points.

10.3 Summary of Green Belt Impact

10.3.1 As identified in the above paragraphs, the development impact on the Green Belt is extensively associated to the appraisal of landscape and visual effects. In both instances, the assessment's findings suggest that the proposed development does not result in adverse effects on the qualities of the Green Belt.

10.3.2 In relation to the openness of the Green Belt, it is also believed that the development proposal will improve the openness and qualities of the Green Belt because:

- The study area is characterised by a strong sense of enclosure due to the established hedgerows, tree belts and the existing/emerging built form. As a result the visual aspect of Green Belt openness is often compromised. However, where there is a visual appreciation of the proposed development (Viewpoint 4), its contained form improves the Green Belt's openness, allowing for deep views into the Site's landscape.

- The volumetric aspect of the impact on the Green Belt's openness is associated with the urban character of the study area and the undeveloped qualities of the Green Belt. Despite the increase in proposed volume, the perceived built form is less intrusive than the existing as a result of its compact form (decrease in overall perimeter) and relocation towards the north-west of the Site. Thereby, the gap between the urban edges is increased and the local quality of openness of the Green Belt related to undeveloped land is improved.

11.0 Conclusion

11.1 Design Recommendations

11.1.1 The lack of adverse effects resulting from the LVA suggests that proposal has efficiently mitigated possible visual and landscape effects. However, it is recommended that the following design principles are preserved throughout further planning and development phases:

- The re-location of the proposed development towards the north-west corner of the Site, and a compact built form within the existing footprint parameter would also be preferable;
- The proposed development should not, overall, exceed the height of the existing Hotel Felix building;
- Consider an architectural form and materiality for the proposed building that are sympathetic with the existing Hotel Felix and local townscape character; and
- Retain and enhance the robust landscape buffer on the south, east and north boundaries.

11.2 Conclusions

11.2.1 This LVA was conducted following approved guidance and professional judgment. The comprehensive review of available evidence against the on-site study, undertaken as per proposed methodology, resulted in the identification of no adverse effects associated with the proposed development.

APPENDIX 1

MAPPING

APPENDIX 2
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

APPENDIX 3

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX 4
TECHNICAL VISUALISATIONS



BIDWELLS

Bidwells is a trading name of Bidwells LLP,
a limited liability partnership, registered in
England and Wales with number OC344553.
Registered office: Bidwell House,
Trumpington Road, Cambridge CB2 9LD