



Land at BCA Estate, Burchett's  
Green Road, Maidenhead

## Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Prepared by  
CSA Environmental

on behalf of  
Berkshire College of Agriculture  
and Baycroft Care Homes &  
Senior Villages

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Background

- 1.1 CSA Environmental has been instructed by Berkshire College of Agriculture and Baycroft Care Homes & Senior Villages to provide a landscape and visual impact assessment of the land at BCA Estate (the 'Site'), Burchett's Green Road, within the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The findings of this assessment have informed the preparation of Full Planning Application for a Care Village comprising a 50 bed care home, Village Care Centre, Wellness Centre, and up to 108 assisted living and independent living units, and new associated access lane. A copy of the Layout Plans are contained in **Appendix G**.
- 1.2 The Site lies within the BCA College grounds at Hall Place Estate, to the west of the village of Burchett's Green, Maidenhead. Part of the Hall Place Estate, including the Site, is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, and the whole Estate and surrounding villages lie within the Green Belt.
- 1.3 This assessment describes the existing landscape character and quality of the Site and its visual characteristics. The report then goes on to discuss the development proposals and any potential landscape or visual impacts on the wider area.
- 1.4 A Heritage Assessment has been undertaken which considers the historic development of the Estate and the significance of the proposed development.

### Methodology

- 1.5 This appraisal is based on site visits undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced Landscape Architect between November 2015 and April 2016. Weather conditions at the time of the site visits varied, although visibility was good during the majority of the visits. The Site has been assessed while the trees were in leaf, as well as during the winter months, when vegetation was out of leaf and the Site was at its most visible in views from the surrounding area.
- 1.6 In landscape and visual impact assessments a distinction is drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape, principally from any residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with general public access). This report therefore considers the potential impact of development on both landscape character and visibility. The methodology utilised in this appraisal is contained in **Appendix J** at the rear of this document.
- 1.7 Photographs contained within this document (**Appendix C**) were taken using a digital camera with a lens focal length approximating to 50mm,

to give a similar depth of vision to the human eye. In some instances images have been combined to create a panorama.

## 2.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

### National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF')

2.1 National policy is set out in The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and those parts relevant to this appraisal are summarised below.

2.2 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which it states should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

2.3 Section 7 of the NPPF sets out the requirements of good design and Paragraph 56 states that:

*'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.'*

2.4 Paragraph 58 states that local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust policies which set out the quality of development which will be expected based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions among others should aim to ensure development:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation; and
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

2.5 Paragraph 61 notes that planning policies should address the connections between people and place and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

2.6 In Section 9 'Protecting Green Belt Land' (paragraphs 79 and 80) of the NPPF states that the essential character of Green Belts is their openness, their permanence and their ability to serve the following functions:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 2.7 Paragraph 87 and 88 deal with inappropriate development, which is by definition deemed to be harmful in the Green Belt. These paragraphs state that only in very special circumstances should inappropriate development be approved, and these circumstances will not be considered to exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 2.8 Paragraph 89 states that new buildings are considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt, but goes on to list some exceptions.
- 2.9 Section 11 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 109 of the document states that the planning system should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural and local environment through, among others protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- 2.10 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment is discussed in Section 12 of the NPPF, and paragraph 126 states that Local Planning Authorities should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. It should be recognised that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

### **Local Planning Policy**

#### The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan (June 2003)

- 2.11 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead ('RBWM') are in the early stages of preparing a new Borough Local Plan, but until such time as it is adopted, the Saved Policies from the RBWM Local Plan (June 2003) remain relevant, insofar as they are in accordance with the NPPF. The main policies relevant to this report are set out below.
- 2.12 **Policy GB1** deals with the Green Belt, and states that only certain types of development will be approved within the Green Belt, save where there are very special circumstances. The Site and the Estate are located within the Green Belt.
- 2.13 **Policy GB2** states that development in the Green Belt will not be allowed if:
- It will have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt or purposes of including land in it, than existing development on the site;
  - It would harm the character of the countryside because of :

- the scale, siting, design or materials used;
  - a material intensification in the level of activity on the site;
  - a material increase in the scale of development on the site;
  - the permanent loss of grade 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land or woodlands;
  - harm to residential amenities in the locality; or
  - conflict with other policies.
- 2.14 **Policy GB9** sets out that infilling, or complete or partial redevelopment may be permitted within Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt, within the defined development envelopes, and in accordance with specific requirements. The BCA College is highlighted as a major developed site in the Green Belt, however, the Site lies immediately to the south of the defined development boundary.
- 2.15 **Policy N6** requires applications for new development to include a detailed tree survey, together with measures of protection and a proposed landscape scheme.
- 2.16 **Policy N7** requires the retention of hedgerows within development proposals and replacement planting where unavoidable removal of hedgerow is required.
- 2.17 **Policy DG1** states that new development should use materials which are sympathetic to the traditional building materials in the area, and should recognise and retain public views of historic or scenic importance. It also states that harm should not be caused to the character of the surrounding area.
- 2.18 **Policy LB2** sets out that the Council will have special regard to the preservation of Listed Buildings and their setting.
- 2.19 **Policy HG1** states that development proposals which would have an adverse effect on the special historic interest, appearance or setting of Registered Park and Gardens will not be permitted.
- 2.20 **Policy R14** states that the Council will safeguard and enhance public rights of way and recreational cycle routes.

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Borough Local Plan:  
Preferred Options Consultation (2014)

- 2.21 A preferred Options version of the Borough Local Plan went to public consultation in January 2014 and is being revised ahead of a full draft plan expected to go to consultation in 2016. Relevant landscape policies from the Preferred Options Plan are set out below:
- 2.22 **Preferred Policy PLA 1** seeks to achieve high quality design in buildings and spaces, having regard to local character, views, appearance, public realm, materials, landscaping and amenity.

- 2.23 **Preferred Policy PLA 2** requires development proposals to use the Landscape Character Assessment to inform development proposals.
- 2.24 **Preferred Policy GBC 1** sets out that the Council will maintain and support the Green Belt in order to safeguard the open and rural character of the countryside and to protect it from inappropriate development. It also states that the existing major development sites in the Green Belt will be retained, together with the current approach to development within these.
- 2.25 **Preferred Policy GBC 2** states that development in the countryside will need to respect the character of the countryside by taking into account a number of principles, including:
- Locating development where it would be viewed against existing built form;
  - The scale of the development should be appropriate to its location;
  - The design and layout should respect the character and appearance of the landscape and countryside setting;
  - Development should not lead to a level of activity which is incompatible with the rural character;
  - The best agricultural land and woodland should be protected; and
  - It should not lead to unacceptable harm to residential amenity.
- 2.26 **Preferred Policy GBC 6** is similar to Saved Policy GB9, and deals with Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt, with the BCA College being designated as such.
- 2.27 **Preferred Policy HE 1** deals with the historic environment, and states the development will be required to conserve and enhance the features, character, appearance and function of the heritage assets and their settings.
- 2.28 **Preferred Policy HE 2** sets out that development should respect the significance of Listed Buildings and their setting and grounds.
- 2.29 **Preferred Policy HE 5** states that the setting, appearance of historic nature, fabric and significance of Registered Parks and Gardens should be conserved and enhanced by development proposals.
- 2.30 **Preferred Policy NE 1** seeks to maintain, protect and enhance habitats, with development taking opportunities to improve nature conservation, enhancing green corridors and networks.
- 2.31 **Preferred Policy NE 3** seeks to protect trees, woodland and hedgerows, with impact of proposals on these to be carefully considered, maximising opportunities for creation, restoration and enhancement of natural habitats,

2.32 **Preferred Policy NE 5** states the public rights of way and the recreational/amenity value of these, should be protected.

## 3.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Site is located within Hall Place Estate, which is used by BCA College as its campus. Hall Place is a Grade I Listed mansion, dating from the early 1700s, set within an approximately 400 acre estate, part of which is designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. It is located to the east of the village of Burchett's Green, to the north east of Maidenhead. A full description of the Hall Place Estate, including its history and significance, is set out within the Heritage Assessment which is submitted along with this assessment. The Site location and its immediate context are shown on the Location Plan and Aerial Photograph contained in **Appendices A** and **B**.

### **BCA College**

- 3.2 BCA College was previously known as the Berkshire College of Agriculture, and have been based at the estate since 1949. The College has changed over the years and now offer a variety of further and higher educational courses, including sport and leisure, public services, animal management, equestrian studies, art and design, motor vehicles, hair and beauty, horticulture, floristry, childcare, business, science, travel and tourism, and apprenticeships.

### **Hall Place Estate**

- 3.3 The Registered Park and Garden incorporates the remains of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century parkland which surrounds the mansion, with many important landscape features still evident. The estate has however undergone major changes as part of the development of the College, and now contains arable and pastoral fields, sports fields, equine arenas and paddocks, areas for growing willows for biomass, and the various buildings, parking areas, storage yards and barns associated with the teaching and accommodation needs of the College. The Land Use Plan in **Appendix E** shows the current uses of the various land parcels within the Estate.
- 3.4 Hall Place mansion lies at the heart of the Estate, and is located at the junction of three historic lime tree avenues, the eastern one of which is the most complete. Hall Place is accessed along the eastern lime avenue, off Burchett's Green Road to the east, and the mansion appears impressive when seen framed by the lime trees upon entering the Estate. This eastern avenue is complimented by northern and southern tree avenues which lead north and south from the semi-circular lawn at the frontage of the mansion, resulting in a strong, linear arrangement to the Estate here. The 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings associated with the College are arranged along this north-south axis, and are located to the north and south of the mansion.
- 3.5 College buildings and facilities occur on either side of the north avenue, while the south avenue is bounded by buildings along part of its western edge.

- 3.6 Much of the modern additions to the Estate, such as the 1970s accommodation buildings which are located to the south of the mansion, architecturally detract from the mansion and the historic grounds. More significantly, the new buildings have severed many of the original visual and physical connections between the mansion and the surrounding garden and estate. As such, the northern and southern connections between the mansion and the historic grounds are no longer evident, however, the vistas along the lime avenue to the east as well as the view across the garden to the fields beyond from the mansion's western façade, remain evident.

### **The Registered Park and Garden**

- 3.7 The Grade II Listed Registered Park and Garden at Hall Place encompasses the southern and eastern sections of the Estate, excluding some land in the far south, as well as the 1970s accommodation buildings and the reservoir within the north east of the grounds. Except for the public footpaths and permitted paths, there is no public access to the garden/parkland.
- 3.8 Historic OS Maps and an Aerial Photograph showing the development of the Estate are contained in **Appendix I**. The Listing describes the garden as a late 17<sup>th</sup> Century landscaped park with 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century modifications and additions, surrounding an early Georgian house on the site of a 13<sup>th</sup> Century manor house. It comprises around 180ha, within a rural, mostly agricultural setting. The land rises gently from the east to the west, and steeply in the south western corner towards the wooded Ashley Hill. To the north, the land drops steeply to a valley. There are views out towards the adjoining woodland from within the gardens.
- 3.9 The Estate is marked by the three strong avenues of lime trees, which are believed to have been first planted by Jacob Bancks in the late 1600s/early 1700s, who is also believed to have incorporated the statues, gate piers and the wrought-iron gates which once formed a clairvoyee located to the south of the mansion, much of which do not exist today.
- 3.10 The semi-circular green forecourt to the east of the mansion was first shown on a plan from 1761, which also showed a formal plantation to the south of the mansion and a rectangular kitchen garden to the west. A plan from 1843 shows the gardens to the west of the mansion, as well as two kitchen gardens here. The terrace is shown along the western façade of the mansion, terminating in two semicircles at each end. A ha-ha separates the western gardens from the parkland beyond.
- 3.11 In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, the land to the east and south of the mansion comprised 51ha of parkland with scattered trees, perimeter belts and small blocks of woodland, with the north avenue extending into arable farmland. The south avenue was shown terminating short of Honey Lane on an OS map from 1875, with the 1899 OS map showing the south avenue fully established and extending to Honey Lane. Maps from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century show a 51ha deer park within the south and south east of the Estate.

- 3.12 A knoll within the landscape, to the south west of the mansion, forms the location for the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century parkland elements believed to have been created to commemorate the Battle of the Nile of 1798. These included a formation of oak trees, planted to represent the location of the English and French fleets during the battle, as well as a statue of Lord Nelson located on the high point and focussing towards the mansion, and two brick pyramids located along the line of a spring, on either side of the axis between the statue and the mansion. The oak trees lie further north east along this axis.
- 3.13 These features have fallen into disrepair, with only the base and one foot of the statue remaining. The western brick pyramid is partially intact, while only the base of the eastern pyramid remains. The oak tree formation was replanted in the early 1990s along what is believed to be the original location, and the trees display the names of the ships which they represent. However, it is considered that only two of the original oak trees remain, and the northern or English line of the replacement trees are also now in decline, due to damage caused by grazing within the field, with several trees damaged or missing.
- 3.14 Similarly, the southern lime avenue is now gappy, with many trees missing or recently replaced with young trees of varying species. The park does however retain many of the historic trees, including a clump of cedars to the north of the east avenue, and a group of mature oak trees to the south of the east avenue. The park is now mostly used for grazing, although the south eastern part has been redeveloped to form the sports fields for the College.

### **Site Context**

- 3.15 The Site is located along the southern extent of the north-south built corridor on either side of the mansion, along the western side of the southern lime avenue. To the north of the Site lies the recently redeveloped sports centre, which was built in a contemporary style, with timber and silver/grey metal cladding along its facades. A concrete/gravel parking area serving the sports centre lies to the east of it, north of the Site, and vehicular access to it is via the south avenue. The Busy Bees Nursery, comprising a late 20<sup>th</sup> Century single storey brick building, lies to the west of the sports centre, north of the Site. It is screened from the Site by conifer trees which are located to the south and west of the nursery. North of the sports centre are several two storey accommodation blocks, dating from the 1970s, beyond which lies the mansion.
- 3.16 The College's sports fields, including a black timber sports pavilion, lie to the east of the Site, beyond the south avenue. To the north of the sports fields are two grassland/pasture fields, beyond which lie the main (east) lime avenue. The village of Burchett's Green bounds the Estate to the east of the sports fields, with the Burchett's Green Conservation Area boundary extending up to the edge of the Estate here. A hedgerow with scattered trees forms the boundary here.

- 3.17 A linear woodland belt runs in an east-west direction along the south of the sports fields, beyond which lies a cemetery which forms part of the College and is used for cemetery keeping courses. Further south, the land is used for willow biofuel crop production. Honey Lane forms the southern boundary of the Estate.
- 3.18 The land to the west of the south avenue, south of the sports centre (including the Site), was developed into a small golf course in 1996, in order to teach golf course green keeping. This course is no longer offered and the golf course had fallen into disrepair. Currently, a high ropes facility and archery area, which both lie within the Site, occur along the south avenue, with the land to the west of these being used as pasture fields, containing several scattered trees and tree groups, including several mature oak trees, as well as isolated areas of gorse. The land here contains various undulations, with bare patches of ground present.
- 3.19 A narrow woodland belt to the west of the Site forms the boundary of the former golf course, and is located along the foot of a knoll which lies to the west of it. A further field of pasture occurs on the higher ground between the woodland belt and Honey Lane beyond. The wooded Ashley Hill lies to the south west of the Estate.
- 3.20 To the south of the Site, the pasture fields along the former golf course continues, with a ditch and hedgerow with scattered trees forming the southern edge to this field. The Chiltern Way long distance footpath runs to the south of this hedgerow, along an east-west aligned public footpath which leads from Burchett's Green Road in the east, through the willow crop fields, across the south avenue and into the woodland block to the south west of the Site, before existing onto Honey Lane. A further grass field occurs south of this footpath on the western side of the south avenue, with Dellars Copse lying further south, between the field and Honey Lane.
- 3.21 Honey Lane skirts around the south western edge of the Estate, and to the north of the lane, west of the Site, are the four terraced Ladyeplace Cottages, with the Appletree Cottages located a short distance to the south.
- 3.22 The land to the east of Ladyeplace cottages, west of the former golf course, is in pastoral use, and lies along a local knoll within the Estate. To the north of the knoll is a large pond, with further fields of pasture occurring to the north, as well as to the west of the mansion and its garden.
- 3.23 The knoll and the land along its northern slope forms the location for the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century parkland elements believed to have been created to commemorate the Battle of the Nile of 1798, with only the remnants of the pyramids and sculpture, along with two of the original oak trees and the majority of the 1990s oak trees remaining.
- 3.24 Further north, to the north of the pond, the land is in pastoral use, with vistas occurring between the western façade of the mansion and the

fields and woodland to the west, focussed through the parkland trees on either side of the mansion's western garden.

- 3.25 As part of the proposals, a new access road is proposed between the east avenue and the Care Village, routing along the eastern and southern edge of the field known as 'Five Trees Field', which lies to the south of the junction of the east and south avenues. This field is currently in pastoral use, and contains five mature oak trees within the south of the field, surrounded by a timber post and rail fence.

### **National Landscape Character**

- 3.26 Natural England has produced profiles for England's National Character Areas ('NCA'), which divides England into 159 distinct natural areas, defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. This identifies the Site and its environs as lying within the southern extent of The Chilterns character area (Area 110).
- 3.27 The Chilterns is described as an outcrop of Chalk stretching from East Anglia to Dorset and to the South Downs. The character area includes branching valleys, sunken routeways and extensive woodland and hedgerow-enclosed fields. There are hidden, tranquil pockets along single track lanes and rights of way.
- 3.28 In terms of vegetative cover, the profile notes that the character area contains a mixture of arable, grassland and woodland. It notes that nucleated settlements of medieval origin and land farmed since prehistory are found alongside watercourses and springs in the through-valleys and are characteristic of the plateau.

### **County Landscape Character**

- 3.29 The Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment ('BLCA'), October 2003, was undertaken by Land Use Consultants on behalf of Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit, to broaden the understanding of the Berkshire landscape and aid in formulating development plan policies. The BLCA identifies 14 Landscape Character Types ('LCT') in the county which are divided into 55 Landscape Character Areas ('LCA'). The Site lies within LCT N: Elevated Wooded Chalk Slopes, and within LCA N3: Cookham Dean.
- 3.30 The key characteristics of the Elevated Wooded Chalk Slopes LCT are:
- Presence and influence of adjacent urban areas;
  - Mixed land use of deciduous and mixed woodland, arable fields, pasture and paddocks;
  - Wooded context created by distinctive wooded slopes and ghyll valleys and occasional hill top woodlands;
  - Presence of naturalistic open 'downland' sheep pastures within a wooded context with more angular medium sized formal paddocks and medium sized arable fields;

- Valley-edge country houses set within extensive historic parkland estates; and
  - Winding, sometimes sunken, rural lanes with intimate character.
- 3.31 The BLCA summary states that the condition of this landscape is considered to be good. It notes that the presence of recreational and visitor attractions in the area, including the National Trust, is a strong force for ongoing positive management. However, there is evidence of the condition declining due to the loss of field boundary features and the continued expansion of the urban fringe.
- 3.32 The Cookham Dean LCA is described as having a landscape which is topographically varied with a gently rising plateau top punctuated by some small hills that are extensively wooded. The character is fairly intimate, with deciduous and coniferous woodland interspersed with open pastoral landscapes. There are also large pastoral areas within this LCA, which results in a 'downland' appearance of grazed grassland divided by angular hedges and coniferous woodlands.
- 3.33 The LCA is further described as containing small-scale, well-spaced settlements, creating a pleasant, traditional character. It states that the vernacular is based on warm and mellow red brick with occasional tile hanging and pantiles.
- 3.34 The BLCA sets out that the condition of the landscape is good, but that there is some evidence of decline due to the replacement of field boundaries and pressure from recreation. It states that conservation and restoration are key to preserving the landscape, with emphasis on retaining the character of the traditional villages and restoration of key boundary hedgerows and distinctive wooded slopes.
- 3.35 Our own assessment of the landscape surrounding the Site would broadly concur with these findings. However, we would note that the Site comprises part of a designed landscape which differs in character from the surrounding rural landscape. It is also influenced by its proximity to the BCA College buildings and facilities, located immediately to the north of the Site.

### **Borough Landscape Character**

- 3.36 A Landscape Character Assessment for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead ('WMLCA'), September 2004, was undertaken by LDA Design on behalf of the Borough, as part of the supporting information for the emerging development plan. The WMLCA identifies 14 Landscape Character Types in the district which are divided into 32 Landscape Character Areas. The Site lies within LCT 11: Farmed Chalk Slopes and within Landscape Character Area LCA 11b: Burchett Green.
- 3.37 The key characteristics of the LCT include the flat, rolling chalk slopes, mixed land uses (including arable, pasture, woodland and commercial equine), Ancient Woodlands and woodland copses, large farmsteads/estates set within their farmland, and long distance open

views of the rural chalk landscapes, the Thames river floodplain and Chiltern Hills. It is described as a diverse, chalk lowland with a simple and open rural character, with horizons within this area are often contained by mature woodland.

3.38 The key characteristics (in addition to those of the Farmed Chalk Slopes LCT) of the Burchett Green LCA are:

- Predominance of large scale fields of arable cereal crops;
- Absence of field boundary vegetation;
- Linear woodland boundary vegetation at periphery of holdings;
- Gently undulating; and
- Greater incidence of settlement.

3.39 The LCA is described as being a rural managed landscape with contrasting elements where the expansive open arable landscape is contained by woodland areas and belts, resulting in distant, but wooded horizons. The WMLCA notes that three of the four historic lime tree avenues at Hall Place are still visible today.

3.40 Our own assessment of the landscape surrounding the Site would broadly concur with these findings. The Site is also influenced by its proximity to BCA College buildings, with the Estate being noted within the LCA for its lime tree avenues and the remnants of the parkland landscape from Hall Place.

### **Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations**

3.41 As shown on **Appendix D**, the southern and eastern part of Hall Place Estate is designated as a Grade II Listed Registered Park and Garden, and this area includes the Site.

3.42 Within the vicinity of the Site, the designation boundary follows the eastern boundary of the Estate along the edge of the sports fields, with the southern boundary formed along the woodland belt along the south of the sports fields, before turning south to incorporate the south avenue up to Honey Lane. To the west of the avenue, the southern boundary of the designation runs along the field boundary to the south of the Site, along the north of the Chiltern Way, west towards Honey Lane. The boundary then leads north along the College's boundary before leading east along the track from Honey Lane to the north avenue, north of the mansion. The 1970s accommodation buildings between the Site and Hall Place mansion are excluded from the designated area.

3.43 The woodland at Ashley Hill and Dodsley Copse to the south of Honey Lane is designated as Ancient Woodland, as is Pinnocks Wood to the south east of the Site, at the junction of Honey Lane and Burchett's Green Road.

## **Conservation Area and Listed Buildings**

- 3.44 Burchett's Green Conservation Area is located adjacent to the Estate's south eastern boundary, approximately 210 metres from the Site at its nearest point. It encompasses a large area within the centre of the village, including the properties along Hall Place Lane.
- 3.45 The Hall Place mansion is Grade I Listed. Six further Grade II Listed buildings and structures occur within the Estate. They are:
- Stable block to the north of the mansion;
  - Garden Cottage, to the north west of the Site;
  - Walls and gate piers, to the south of Hall Place mansion;
  - Bee House, within the garden to the north west of the mansion;
  - Statue plinth, to the west of the mansion; and
  - Statue of Diana the huntress, at the northern end of the north avenue.
- 3.46 The nearest Listed building/structure to the Site lies around 140m to the north, behind the 1970s accommodation buildings. A full assessment of the Listed structures is contained within the Heritage Assessment which is submitted as part of this application.

## **Public Rights of Way**

- 3.47 Two public footpaths occur within the vicinity of the Site. A public footpath forming part of the Chiltern Way, lies around 100m to the south of the Site, on the southern side of the field boundary here (footpath number 30). The path links Burchett's Green Road in the east with Honey Lane to the west, routing through the willow crop fields and the grass field to the south of the Site, before entering the copse to the south west of the Site. This path continues along Honey Lane to the south west of the Site, before re-entering the Estate along the north of the Ladyeplace Cottages. Several paths lead off into Ashley Wood to the west, from Honey Lane in the vicinity of the Ladyeplace and Appletree Cottages.
- 3.48 A public footpath leads north across the west of the Estate, running from Honey Lane in the south along the northern boundary of the Ladyeplace Cottages, across the fields of pasture to the west of Hall Place mansion, to High Wood within the northern extent of the Estate, and to Hurley beyond (footpath number 17).
- 3.49 To the east of the Site, a public footpath links Hall Place Lane to the main east avenue (footpath number 18). The path cuts diagonally across the grassland field to the north of the sports fields, towards the front of Hall Place mansion. The path then routes north west through the College buildings and grounds, to High Wood and Hurley beyond.

## **Tree Preservation Orders**

- 3.50 None of the trees on or in the vicinity of the Site within the southern half of the Estate, are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. This was confirmed by a member of the RBWM's Community Services, on a behalf of the Tree Team, via email on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2016.

## 4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

### Site Description

- 4.1 The Site comprises parts of four land parcels as well as areas of grass verges, located to the south of the sports centre and to the west of the south avenue.
- 4.2 In the north east, the Site comprises a grass verge to the south of the sports centre's car park, with semi-mature hornbeam and alder trees planted in a diagonal line running in a north west to south easterly direction, located within this area.
- 4.3 To the south of this grassy verge is a fenced-off area which houses a timber high ropes facility, set within a grassed area with areas of bark chip surfacing in places.
- 4.4 A small animal pen/paddock lies to the south of the high ropes facility, with a fenced-off archery area occurring further south. Further south is a broadleaf copse which includes two large mature oak trees.
- 4.5 The western part of the Site comprises pasture, with scattered clumps of young trees occurring within this area. Along the south west of the Site area, the land is undulating. Several scattered, mature trees occur to the south and south west of the Site within this area of pasture. There are also small patches of gorse present within the former golf course area, as well as areas of bare ground.
- 4.6 Little remains of the southern lime tree avenue along the eastern Site boundary and further south from here. Instead, the avenue here comprises a number of mature oak trees, as well as a variety of young – semi-mature oaks, ash trees and field maples.

### Topography

- 4.7 The Site slopes down gently from the north to the south, and from the east to the west, with the majority of the Site located between 79m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD') and 81m AOD. Towards the western side of the Site are several undulations up to around 2.5m deep.
- 4.8 The land to the east of the Site steps down a grassy bank along the east of the south avenue, to the sports fields, and then slopes down gently to Burchett's Green village, which lies around 70m AOD. To the south east of the Site, the land slopes down gently towards the village.
- 4.9 The land to the south of the Site slopes down gently to the ditch along the southern field boundary, and continues to fall away further beyond.
- 4.10 To the west and south west of the Site, the land rises up steeply from the woodland boundary along the west of the former golf course area, towards the wooded Ashley Hill which has a high point of 144m AOD,

with a local knoll occurring between the Ladyeplace Cottages and the former golf course's western boundary.

- 4.11 The land to the north and north west of the Site slopes down gently, before falling into a steeply sided north-south aligned valley to the north of the built-up area of the College.

### **Visibility**

- 4.12 The level topography around the Site, coupled with the existing built development and existing vegetation, mean that views of the Site from public vantage points are limited. Photographs from representative viewpoints are contained in **Appendix C**, and the viewpoint locations are shown on the plans in **Appendix A** and **B**.

- 4.13 The following section describes the existing views of the Site from within the Estate and from public vantage points in the vicinity, without the benefit of any landscape mitigation.

#### North

- 4.14 The Site is partially visible from the car park and track to the south of the sports centre and Busy Bees Nursery, through the intervening trees within the north of the Site and along the south of the sports centre parking area (Photographs 1 & 2). During the winter months when the trees are out of leaf, these views are more open. There are windows on the western section of the sports centre's first floor southern elevation, and there will be filtered views of the Site from inside the building through these windows. During the winter months, the Site is visible from inside the nursery building through the windows along the southern façade, although these views are screened during the summer months when the vegetation along the south of the nursery is in leaf.
- 4.15 From further north along the south avenue, in the vicinity of the tennis court, the Site is partially visible behind the intervening trees (Photograph 3). It is seen adjacent to the sports centre, set behind the centre's parking area, with the background formed by the mature woodland to the south and west of the Site.
- 4.16 As the viewer moves further north along the south avenue, the view towards the Site becomes narrower, with views curtailed by the beech hedging and the existing brick garage which lie adjacent to the accommodation buildings (Photograph 9). The easternmost part of the Site remains visible in filtered views through the intervening trees.
- 4.17 Views of the Site from the accommodation buildings are screened by the intervening sports centre and vegetation, with the accommodation buildings preventing views of the Site from Hall Place mansion and the Listed features to the south of it (Photograph 22). Similarly, there are no views of the Site from within the gardens to the west of Hall Place mansion, with the intervening buildings, walls and vegetation preventing views (Photographs 24 & 25). These features also screen middle and long

distance views of the Site from further north within the built up area of the College.

- 4.18 Views from the Listed Garden Cottage to the south west of Hall Place mansion are directed to the south and south west by a dense line of conifers and other vegetation which forms the western boundary to the southern built up area of the College. The Site's western boundary is formed along the extension of this line of vegetation, and there are thus no views of the Site from the Garden Cottage.

#### East

- 4.19 The Site is visible from the south avenue, with the high ropes equipment and the archery hut visible in the foreground (Photographs 4a & 4b). The woodland belt along the western edge of the former golf course forms the backdrop to the field of pasture, with the wooded Ashley Hill forming the background in these views.
- 4.20 In views from further east within the western sports fields, the ground level of the Site is screened by the slight embankment along the eastern edge of the south avenue, however, the timber high ropes equipment and archery hut are visible in filtered views through the intervening trees along the east and north east of the Site (Photograph 8). The Site is seen behind the single storey sports pavilion, and adjacent to the sports centre. The remnant mature lime and oak trees along the south avenue are visible in the foreground of the Site in views from the sports fields, and the wooded hill is visible in the background.
- 4.21 Views of the Site from the eastern sports fields are further filtered by the line of semi-mature trees which runs in a north-south alignment between the western and eastern sports fields. In summer views, the intervening tree canopies screen views of the timber high ropes equipment, as well as the first floor of the sports centre (Photograph 13a). However, during winter months, the high ropes equipment, sports centre and adjoining accommodation buildings are all visible in filtered views through the canopies of the deciduous trees which lie between the eastern and western sports fields, and the trees within the south avenue (Photograph 13b).
- 4.22 Views from the field to the east of the sports fields, outside the Estate but within the Burchett's Green Conservation Area, will be similar to those from the eastern edge of the sports fields, but filtered further by the existing hedgerow and scattered trees along the Estate's eastern boundary. The nearest house to the east of the Site is Lane End House, which lies around 380m from the Site. Views from Lane End House to the Site are screened by the intervening trees within the Estate, as well as by the dense vegetation along the house's garden boundary, as seen in the winter photographs from the Site towards the house, indicating reciprocal views (As seen in photograph 37).
- 4.23 In views from the north east, from the east avenue along the north eastern corner of Five Trees Field, the Site is visible in heavily filtered views through the intervening trees (Photograph 35). It views from here, the Site

is seen to the south of the sports centre, with the accommodation buildings and Hall Place mansion continuing the linear built form further north.

- 4.24 Upon entering the Estate along the east avenue from Burchett's Green Road, the land rises up slightly, obscuring views of Hall Place, but directing the view along the centre of the road, with the lime trees framing the view on either side (Photograph 33).
- 4.25 As the viewer moves further west along the avenue, upon reaching the gate posts at the western end of the Selways Wood, the view opens up and Hall Place mansion becomes the focal points within the centre of the framed vista created by the straight road and the adjoining lime avenue (Photograph 34a). To the south and north of the main vista, the open fields to the west of Hall Place mansion are visible in between the lime trees and underneath their canopies. In these views during the summer months, the Site, as well as the sports centre and accommodation buildings, are screened by the intervening lime trees in the east and south avenue, as well as the intervening trees along the field boundaries. During the winter months, views of the Site and the sports centre remain heavily filtered through the deciduous trees, however, the accommodation buildings are visible adjacent to Hall Place mansion (Photograph 34b).
- 4.26 From the public footpath to the north east of the Site (footpath number 18), south of the east avenue, winter views of the Site are filtered by the intervening tree cover, and it is seen adjacent to the sports centre and accommodation buildings, with Hall Place mansion seen further north within the view (Photograph 10b). During the summer months, the intervening tree canopies screen views of the Site, and heavily filter the views of the sports centre, accommodation buildings and Hall Place mansion (Photograph 10a).
- 4.27 During the winter months when the vegetation is out of leaf, middle distance views of the Site are available from several of the properties to the north east of the Site, located adjacent to the Estate's eastern boundary, south of the east avenue. Views from here will be similar to those from the public footpath to the north east of the Site, albeit more heavily filtered due to the additional two boundary hedges/vegetation lines which lie between the footpath and these houses. The intervening vegetation, however, prevents views during the summer months.
- 4.28 From the Chiltern Way and public footpath number 30 to the south of the sports fields, south east of the Site, the views of the Site are screened by the intervening willow crop which is grown within these south eastern fields (Photographs 14a & 14b). The mature trees adjacent to the Site within the south avenue are however visible over the willow crop, as is the cross bar of one of the timber high ropes facilities. The footpath slopes down gently to the east, with the intervening willows thus screening even more of the view. The land rises steeply up to Burchett's Green Road from the eastern Estate boundary, and a framed view of the top section of some of the timber high ropes equipment is available along the public footpath corridor located between Burchetts Place

and the Dairy Cottage (Photograph 31). This is seen in filtered views behind the intervening trees within the south avenue.

- 4.29 The Site is however visible in very limited views from the southern section of Burchett's Green Road in the vicinity of the Chiltern Way, through gaps in the vegetation within the gardens to the west (Photograph 32). These views, as well as views from the Site towards the houses along the south of Burchett's Green Road (which indicate reciprocal views), would indicate that there will be filtered views of parts of the Site from Burchetts Place and the Dairy and Bay Tree Cottages, through the intervening vegetation.
- 4.30 The intervening copse to the north of the Chiltern Way, between the Estate and Burchett's Green village, as well as the woodland belt along the south of the sports fields and the treed hedgerow along the Estate's eastern boundary, screen views of the Site from the other houses along the west of Burchett's Green Road and Hall Place Lane. However, there are filtered, partial views of the Site from The Bothy and the Dower House across their low garden boundary and through gaps in the Estate boundary vegetation in this location. Of the houses here that have views of the Site, except for Burchetts Place and The Bothy, they can be considered to have very limited, filtered views of the Site which will be significantly reduced during the summer months when the trees are in leaf.
- 4.31 Middle and long distance views from further east are prevented by the intervening trees and development within Burchett's Green.

#### South

- 4.32 The Site is partially visible from the Chiltern Way/public footpath (number 30) which runs along the south of the treed hedgerow which occurs to the south of the Site (Photographs 15, 16a & 16b). In these views, the existing hedgerow and trees along the north of the path filter and partially screen the Site, however, where there are larger gaps in the vegetation, the Site is more visible. Where it is seen, the Site is seen against the backdrop of the sport centre which lies to the north of it. From further west along this path, the views remain partially filtered, with greater visibility where there are larger gaps in the boundary vegetation (Photographs 17a & 17b). The views towards the Site are less filtered during the winter months when trees are out of leaf, and more of the Site will thus be visible from this footpath.
- 4.33 The public footpath enters Dellers Copse further west, with the woodland here screening views of the Site.
- 4.34 From further south along the south avenue, the Site is screened by the existing copse which lies along its southern boundary, at the southern end of the archery field.
- 4.35 Views from Honey Lane to the south are prevented by the woodland at Dellers Copse as well as the treed hedgerow and willow crop to the north of the lane, east of the south avenue. Similarly, middle and long

distance views from the south are prevented by the vegetation along Honey Lane here.

#### West

- 4.36 The Site falls gently to the west, and in views from within the field of pasture to the west of the Site, within the former golf course area, the Site is seen rising up to the south avenue, with the mature trees within the avenue visible on the low ridge (Photograph 6a & 6b). In the background, the tree line separating the eastern and western sports fields is seen. During the summer months, the nursery and sports centre are screened in views from here by the existing vegetation to the south of these buildings, however, during the winter, these buildings are visible in filtered views. There is currently no public access to the fields to the west of the Site.
- 4.37 From the higher ground to the west of the woodland belt along the western edge of the former golf course, the intervening woodland belt screens views of the Site during the summer, and filters views during the winter.
- 4.38 Views towards the Site from the Chiltern Way where it runs along Honey Lane are screened for the most part by the woodland and trees which bounds the lane (Photographs 30a & 30b). Where there are gaps in this vegetation, long distance views over the Estate (which lies along lower ground) towards the wooded hills to the east of the A404 are available, as are long distance views to the north east towards the Thames floodplain (Photograph 29). In these views, the Site is discernible in the middle distance in heavily filtered views through the woodland belt along the west of the former golf course areas. Similarly, the tops of Hall Place mansion and the sports centre are visible in filtered views from here, with the wooded high ground beyond visible over the intervening Hall Place Estate. During summer months, however, the woodland belt to the west of the Site as well as the many trees to the west of the Estate's built up edge screen the Site and existing buildings from view, although parts of Hall Place mansion and the timber high ropes equipment are visible within the wooded areas.
- 4.39 From the knoll to the west of the Site, in the vicinity of the plinth of Nelson's statue, the views are focused towards the pond, pyramid and parkland pasture fields to the west of Hall Place mansion (Photograph 18). In these views, the Site lies along the periphery of this vista, and except for the north western part, the Site is screened by the woodland belt along the foot of the knoll. During winter months, the sports centre is heavily filtered by the existing vegetation to the south of it, however, it is not visible from here when the vegetation is in leaf.
- 4.40 Further north from here, around mid-way down the knoll at the brick pyramid, the views are directed towards the Hall Place mansion, along the Battle of the Nile trees. The northern part of the Site is visible in filtered views to the south of the Battle of the Nile trees, through the intervening vegetation, while the southern part of the Site is screened by the intervening landform of the knoll (Photograph 19).

- 4.41 Views of the Site from the north west, in the vicinity of the Nile trees, are partially screened by the intervening trees within the parkland to the west and north of the Site, although the Site is more visible during winter months (Photographs 20 & 21).
- 4.42 The land falls away gently to the north west of the Site, and middle distance views from the public footpath (number 17) and surrounding land within the parkland pasture to the west of Hall Place mansion are obscured by the intervening landform and vegetation (Photographs 26a, 26b & 28). In vistas from the parkland to the west of Hall Place towards Hall Place mansion, the Site is screened by the intervening landform and trees (Photographs 26a & 26b).
- 4.43 Long distance views from the west are prevented by the intervening woodland and trees along Honey Lane and due to the landform.

### **Landscape Quality and Value**

- 4.44 The southern and eastern section of the Estate is designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, and the Hall Place mansion is Grade I Listed. However, public access to the Estate is limited to the public footpaths and a small number of permitted paths within the north of the Estate. Although many key historic features of the Estate still remain, many have been lost due to the development of the College and associated buildings in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 4.45 The visual and physical link which would have been present between the south wing of Hall Place mansion and the grounds to the south, through the gated clairvoyee which has since been removed, have been severed by the introduction of the accommodation buildings in the 1970s. The Site is further separated from Hall Place mansion by the sports centre and nursery. Similarly, additional buildings to the north of the mansion have affected the link between the mansion and its surrounding estate to the north.
- 4.46 However, visual links to the east and west of the mansion towards its grounds remain evident today, including the vista along the east lime avenue, as well as the view from the mansion across the west garden, which is framed by the parkland trees on either side. The setting of Hall Place mansion and the other Listed features within the Estate are considered fully within the Heritage Assessment which is submitted as part of this application.
- 4.47 The Site comprises an area of land which would have originally formed part of the parkland around Hall Place mansion. The land was developed into a small golf course during the 1990s, and this use has since lapsed. The eastern part of the Site currently comprises a fenced compound containing the timber high ropes facility as well as the archery area. The remainder of the former golf course to the west is now in pastoral use, although the land is roughly undulating due to the golf course formation. Overall, the former golf course area, which includes the Site, has a degraded appearance in comparison to the adjoining pastoral fields further north and west, due to the rough, undulating

ground and the large sandy patches which are bare and free from grass.

- 4.48 The trees within this area are however diverse in age and species, and are for the most part in good condition, as set out within the accompanying Tree Survey. The south avenue, when compared to the north and east avenues, has many trees missing and also contains many young trees which are not lime, resulting in a far less impressive avenue, which has got a slightly degraded or neglected character.
- 4.49 There is no public access to the Site, although it is visible from the public footpaths to the south and east. The high ropes facility is proposed to be relocated by the College to a site within the north of the Estate, and its use will thus remain.
- 4.50 The Site is likely to be valued for its openness, its trees and its historic interest. Overall, the landscape quality of the Site is assessed as medium due to the detracting features of the rough ground with bare soil patches, the high ropes facility and adjoining large sports centre.
- 4.51 The land to the east and west of the Site is however considered to have a high to very high landscape quality and value. The character and quality of the north western section of the Estate is again heavily affected by the College buildings, which include barns, workshops and animal enclosures, and is assessed as being of medium to high landscape quality.

## 5.0 SUITABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

5.1 This section provides a brief description of the development proposals for the Site and considers the suitability of the Site to accommodate the development, in terms of the main landscape and visual effects resulting from the proposals. A summary of the landscape and visual effects is contained in **Appendix J**.

5.2 This assessment has influenced the design of the layout for the Site, which is contained in **Appendix G**. An Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan has also been prepared for the development proposals, and is contained in **Appendix H**.

5.3 The Site is proposed to be developed as a Care Village, including up to 105 apartments and bungalows, a 50 bed Care Home, and associated parking and landscaping. The Care Village is proposed to be accessed via a new access lane which leads from the east avenue along the eastern and southern edge of Five Trees Field towards the Site. The key development and landscape principles which form part of the proposals are described below:

- The development includes up to 108 assisted and independent living units in apartments, maisonettes and bungalows. It also includes a 50 bed Care Home and a Village Care Centre, which will include a restaurant, gym, swimming pool, library and salon, amongst other services for the Care Village's residents;
- Building heights will range between one and three storeys in height. The majority of the buildings will be two storeys high. Two-and-a-half and three storeys will be limited;
- The layout of the buildings have been designed to be intricate and avoid flat facades, thus ensuring a varied, lively character along the façade, with areas of shadows and highlights breaking up the mass of the buildings;
- The architectural style of the buildings have been designed to reflect the local vernacular of the surrounding villages;
- The materials for the building have been chosen to be of darker colours and textured, as opposed to light coloured renders or facades, in order for the built form to visually recede in views, as opposed to stand out, thus limiting the visibility of the buildings in middle and long distance views. The materials include:
  - Predominantly red brick, with contrasting brick lintels.
  - Stone cills and some stone lintels.
  - Red plain tiles on roof.
  - Red tile hanging.
  - Dark stained timber weatherboarding.

- White windows, fascias and soffits.
- Black rainwater goods.
- A new access lane is proposed off the east avenue, and will route along the eastern and southern sides of the Five Trees Field. It will serve the Care Village and the existing nursery. It is proposed to be serviced in bonded grey gravel, to reflect the existing surfacing of lanes within the Estate. It has also been designed to be as narrow as practicable, with dedicated passing places provided;
- No-dig methods of construction are to be used within the Root Protection Areas of the existing trees, as shown on the Tree Survey. The new lane and parking areas will be constructed on a three-dimensional cellular confinement system, to protect the existing root structure of the trees.
- The reinstatement of the missing lime trees within the south avenue, and a program of replacement of the trees of other species with lime trees;
- Reinstatement of a section of hedgerow with scattered trees which is shown to have existed along the line of a ditch to the east of the Site, south of the cemetery;
- Restoration of the parkland within the former golf course area to the west and south of the Site, through the introduction of new, native parkland tree groups as well as new grassland seeding;
- Strengthening of the eastern Estate boundary along the edge of Burchett's Green village, through gapping up and additional planting along the existing hedgerows, and additional tree planting along the boundary;

5.4 In the following paragraphs, the effects of the proposed development are assessed against a series of landscape and visual criteria.

### **Relationship to Existing Development**

5.5 The proposed development continues the linear character of the existing built envelope of the College, which extends in a north-south aligned band along the north and south avenues. The Care Village's location ensures that the new buildings have no effect on the setting of Hall Place mansion, and ensures that the important vistas from the mansion are not affected by the Care Village buildings.

5.6 The built development at the Care Village will not extend further west than the existing western extent of the defined development envelope to the south of Hall Place mansion (as set out within the Local Plan 2003 Saved Policy GB9), nor will it extend further east than the existing eastern edge of the development envelope boundary. Development of the Care Village would extend this development envelope by approximately 220 metres to the south.

- 5.7 The Care Village is located to the south of the sports centre, which presents a large, mostly blank grey metal façade towards the Site. In addition, the accommodation buildings occur between the sports centre and the Listed Hall Place mansion, and the Care Village buildings will thus have no direct effects on the mansion or on views from it.
- 5.8 The Care Village has been designed to be sympathetic to the existing roof heights of the buildings within the south of the Estate. The exact storey heights and the location of these is set out within the Design and Access Statement, however, the tallest buildings will not exceed 12.2m in height. In comparison, the estimated height of the Hall Place mansion is between 15.1 and 17.2m, and the adjoining sports centre is 9.4m high. The Care Village has also been designed to step down in height towards the south and west, creating a transition in the buildings heights within the built development along the south avenue, which gradually reduces towards the southern, countryside edge.

### **Landscape Features**

- 5.9 Approximately 7.4 acres (3 hectares) of pasture land will be occupied by the Care Village and associated access drives, parking areas and gardens. Of this, around 3 acres is proposed to be soft landscaping/gardens.
- 5.10 The proposals will also require the removal of two Category B trees and 15 Category C trees to accommodate the development. However, as shown the Landscape Masterplan, the loss of these will be more than compensated for by the introduction of new trees within and around the development Site and by the restoration of the historic avenue. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment which is submitted as part of this application, sets out in detail the expected effects on the trees due to the development proposals. No-dig methods of construction will be employed where roads or surfacing occur within the Root Protection Area ('RPA') of the existing trees, in order to avoid disturbance to the tree roots, and thus the health of the trees.
- 5.11 The proposals do not require the removal of any Category A trees. In addition, 12 trees have been identified as Category U, which indicate that a tree's condition is such that any existing value would be lost within 10 years and which should, in the current context, be removed for reasons of sound arboricultural management. These will be replaced where they form part of the historic landscape.
- 5.12 The Landscape Strategy Plan shows how new tree and shrub planting will be incorporated within and around the proposed Care Village. In addition, tree planting will be incorporated along the new access lane, to reflect the existing line of cherry trees along the Five Trees Field as well as the tradition of tree avenues within the Estate.
- 5.13 Additional tree and thicket planting within the Estate is also proposed, in order to reinstate the southern lime avenue and to restore the former golf course area back to its historic parkland character. In addition, a line of trees and thicket will be reinstated along the route of a former

ditch and tree line which was present to the south of the cemetery and east of the south avenue (as seen on the plans and photographs in **Appendix I**). This new tree line will complement the character of the parkland, aid in screening the proposed development in views from the south east, and provide an additional habitat and tree resource within the Estate.

- 5.14 New tree planting and hedgerow/thicket planting is also proposed to be incorporated along the eastern boundary of the Estate, adjacent to the Burchett's Green Conservation Area, in order to strengthen the structure of these boundaries, as well as to screen views between the Site and the village.

### **Public Rights of Way**

- 5.15 RBWM's definitive public rights of way plan shows the public footpath (footpath number 18) which runs to the north east of the Site joining the east avenue just to the north east of the north eastern corner of the Five Trees Field. It then runs along the east avenue towards the mansion. The new access lane to the Care Village will lead south off the east avenue from a point just to the west of the junction of the public footpath with east avenue, and will then route along the eastern boundary of the Five Trees Field. The public footpath will thus cut across a small section of the access lane's eastern radius, but the new access lane will not have a material effect on the route of the footpath, or on its usability.
- 5.16 No public footpaths will be directly affected by the development proposals on the main Care Village site, although there may be indirect visual effects, which are set out later within the section.

### **Visibility**

- 5.17 The visual appraisal set out in Section 4 identifies that, where the Site is visible, views of it are most often filtered by the intervening vegetation, and the Site is mostly seen within the context of the adjoining sports centre and nursery, consistent with the principles of Preferred Policy GBC 2 which encourages new development to be located where it would be viewed against existing built form. A summary of the keys views is contained in **Appendix J** and these are briefly described below.

#### North

- 5.18 The Care Village buildings will be visible from the sports centre's car park to the north, and partially visible from inside the sports centre through the first floor windows. During the winter months, the new buildings will be visible from the nursery's south facing windows. The new buildings will be partially filtered by the existing trees along the south of the car parking area and the track that leads to the nursery. Additional tree planting is proposed between the Care Village and the sports centre and nursery, to further filter the views and to create a soft edge to the development.

- 5.19 The easternmost buildings within the Care Village will be partially visible from the south avenue adjacent to the sports centre, although the views will be filtered by the existing trees along the avenue and within the north east of the Site. Reinstatement of the trees with the south avenue as part of the enhancement of the heritage asset, will further filter views as the planting matures. The Care Village will be seen within the context of the modern sports centre in the foreground of the view, and the buildings will not appear out of context within the surrounding landscape.
- 5.20 Similarly, from further north along the south avenue, the north eastern section of the Care Village will be visible in filtered views through the intervening trees and over the sport centre's car parking area. In views from here, the realigned sports centre parking as well as the new access lane alignment will be seen in the foreground.
- 5.21 The buildings within the Care Village will not be visible from the Hall Place mansion or any of the Listed assets which occur to the south of it. It will also not be visible from the ornamental gardens to the west of the mansion, east of the ha-ha.
- 5.22 The built development at the Care Village will not be visible from the Garden Cottage. The vegetation along the western Site boundary may be partially visible behind the existing vegetation to the south and west of the nursery. In addition, the new trees within the parkland restoration area on the former golf course will be visible. These will not appear discordant within the surrounding parkland area which is visible from the Cottage, and should enhance the parkland landscape character of the Estate.

#### East

- 5.23 The Care Village will be visible from the south avenue adjacent to the Site, through the intervening avenue trees as well as the proposed vegetation along the Care Village's frontage. The architectural style of the buildings have been designed to reflect the local vernacular of the surrounding villages, and although the buildings will be visible from the avenue, they will not appear out of character within the surrounding environment, as they will be seen as an extension of the existing linear built form which continues along the avenue to the north.
- 5.24 The layout of the buildings have also been designed to retain view corridors from the south avenue towards the woodland on Ashley Hill to the west.
- 5.25 From further east within the sports fields, the new buildings will be seen as an extension to the line of built development which occurs to the west of the south avenue, and they will thus not appear out of context. Views of the buildings will be filtered by the intervening new and existing trees. The buildings have also been designed to respect and reflect the existing building heights within the built area to the south of the mansion, and will thus not appear out of character in terms of their height, in views from the east. Vistas over and between the new buildings towards the wooded Ashley Hill will be retained.

- 5.26 The Care Village buildings will be partially visible in heavily filtered views from the eastern sports fields, seen through the tree line between the sports fields as well as the vegetation along the south avenue, although the lowest parts of the buildings will be visible in places below the intervening tree canopies. During winter months when the trees are out of leaf, the new buildings will be visible in filtered views through the deciduous trees, however, these will be seen within the context of the existing sports centre and accommodation buildings which are also visible in filtered views from here.
- 5.27 There may be very limited opportunities for views of the new buildings from within the privately owned field to the south east of the playing fields, which has no public access and lies within the Burchett's Green Conservation Area. Any potential views will be heavily filtered by the intervening vegetation along the Estate boundary, between the playing fields and along the south avenue, with the new buildings seen adjacent to the existing sports centre and accommodation buildings. The additional planting proposed along the Estate's eastern boundary will filter views further, once established.
- 5.28 The new access lane off the east avenue will be visible in the immediate foreground in views from the north eastern corner of the Five Trees Field, along the east avenue. This access lane will however be designed to reflect the existing access track which leads north from here towards the College's drop-off area. It will therefore not appear out of character within the surroundings.
- 5.29 From this point, the new buildings within the Care Village will be partially visible in heavily filtered views through the intervening vegetation along the east and south avenues, as well as the trees along and within Five Trees Field. The new buildings will be seen adjacent to the existing sports centre and accommodation buildings, however, the Care Village will be set back further from the viewer. In these views the Hall Place mansion is also visible, but the new buildings will be visually separated from the mansion by the intervening sports centre and accommodation blocks.
- 5.30 Upon entering Hall Place Estate along the east avenue off Burchett's Green Road, existing built development and the new buildings may only come into partial view once the viewer moves past the gate posts at the edge of Selways Wood. This view is heavily filtered by the intervening lime trees and the trees along the field boundaries to the south of the avenue. The new buildings may be partially visible along the edge of this view, though heavily filtered by the intervening trees and by the regularly spaced stems of the lime trees, however, the view will remain dominated by the intervening trees in the immediate foreground and in the distance. Furthermore, the main vista is focussed straight ahead towards the mansion which will remain unaffected. The new access lane will be visible from the east avenue, however, it will not appear out of character and will be seen within the context of the existing access to the north towards the College's drop-off area.

- 5.31 During the summer months, the Care Village will be screened for the most part by the intervening trees within the fields to the east of the Site, in views from the public footpath to the north west (footpath number 18). There may be glimpsed views of the new buildings where there are gaps in the intervening vegetation, however, the new buildings will be seen within the context of the existing sports centre and accommodation buildings which are similarly glimpsed in views from here, and these will thus not appear discordant. In winter months when the intervening trees are out of leaf, the Care Village buildings will be visible in heavily filtered views through the deciduous trees, but will be seen to the south of the existing sports centre, accommodation buildings and the mansion, which are also similarly filtered by the existing trees, and will thus not appear out of character within the view.
- 5.32 The new access lane to the Care Village will be visible from here, however, it has been designed to be narrow and surfaced in a manner that is reflective of the existing lanes within the Estate. In addition, the existing line of trees along the eastern edge of Five Trees Field is proposed to be augmented by an additional line to the west of the new lane, to reflect the character of the existing access lane to the north of the east avenue, which leads to the College's drop-off area. The volume of traffic on the Care Village access lane will be very low, as set out within the Transport Assessment which is submitted as part of this application, and the character along the public footpath will thus not be materially affected by the vehicle movements along the new lane.
- 5.33 Potential views from the properties in the vicinity of Beynhurst Glade within the north west of Burchett's Green village, around 280 metres further east of the public footpath, will be even further filtered by the vegetation along the Estate's boundary as well as the vegetation along and within their rear gardens. Where any partial views of the new buildings are available, these will be seen in similarly heavily filtered views as the existing adjoining buildings, as well as within the context of these existing buildings, and will thus not appear discordant.
- 5.34 Views from the Chiltern Way to the south east are largely obscured by the intervening willow crop, but the tops of the taller buildings within the eastern part of the Care Village will be partially visible in filtered views, over the intervening willow crop and through gaps in the canopies of the mature trees within the south avenue. The views will become filtered during the winter when the mature trees are out of leaf. The parkland restoration in this location, including the reinstatement of the historic hedgerow and tree line to the south of the cemetery as well as the replanting of trees within the south avenue, will ensure that the views of the new buildings are filtered when the crop is harvested.
- 5.35 The new buildings will be partially visible in heavily filtered views through the intervening vegetation, in a limited number of glimpsed views from along the south of Burchett's Green Road, through gaps between the vegetation and properties along the west of the road. These views will reduce as the proposed planting along the Estate's eastern boundary and the reinstated historic hedge and tree line matures.

- 5.36 It can be assumed from these glimpsed views, as well by assuming reciprocal views between the Care Village and the properties along the south of Burchett's Green Road, that the new buildings within the Care Village will be visible in private, filtered views from the houses at Burchetts Place and the Dairy and Bay Cottages. The addition of the reinstated hedgerow and tree line south of the cemetery, as well as the reinstatement of the lime trees within the south avenue, will aid in filtering these views.
- 5.37 Similarly, the new buildings may be seen in private, heavily filtered views and within the context of the adjoining buildings, from the garden at The Bothy within Burchett's Green village, with very limited views possible from the garden at the Dower House. The proposed planting to strengthen the eastern boundary of the Estate along this area will further filter views.

### South

- 5.38 The Care Village buildings will be partially visible through gaps in the trees and hedgerow along the southern field boundary, in views from the Chiltern Way/public footpath number 30 to the south of the Site. The eastern part of the Care Village will be partially screened by the existing copse along the eastern end of the southern Site boundary. The layout has been designed to incorporate lower storey heights within the south of the development, and to have a varied, interesting façade towards the south, to reduce the visual appearance of the mass of the buildings in views from outside the Care Village. In addition, dark, textured materials reflective of the surrounding villages' vernacular, are employed along the outside facades to allow the buildings to visually recede and have an appearance which is not out of character with the residential properties in the vicinity.
- 5.39 In views from the footpath, the sports centre is visible, and the new Care Village buildings will thus screen the sports centre and transpose this southern built edge within the Estate approximately 250 meters closer to the viewer. The gap between the footpath and the built development will be approximately 110 metres deep, which will be retained as parkland. In addition, the area of the former golf course to the west and south of the Care Village will be enhanced with new blocks of standard, extra-heavy standard and semi-mature tree planting, which will, once established, ensure heavily filtered views of the new buildings from the public footpath to the south, and will also assimilate the new buildings into the surrounding landscape.
- 5.40 The new buildings will not be visible from Honey Lane to the south.

### West

- 5.41 There are no near distance public views from the west. The new buildings will be seen within the context of the adjoining sports centre and nursery, in views from the west. The incorporation of new copses of trees as part of the proposed restoration of the parkland to the west of the Site, will partially screen and filter the views of the new buildings.

- 5.42 The layout of the buildings within the Care Village have been designed to allow views into and through the development from the west, with the buildings along the western façade designed to project gables towards this side. This aids in visually breaking up the development into smaller areas of mass when viewed from the west, with the smaller areas of built form assimilated into the surrounding landscape by the existing and new tree planting.
- 5.43 The tops of the taller Care Village buildings will be visible over the intervening landform, woodland belt and trees, from places along the Chiltern Way along Honey Lane, through the limited gaps in the roadside vegetation. Views along this section of Honey Lane are however enclosed by the boundary trees and woodland and focused along the road, with limited opportunities for views towards the Site through the roadside vegetation. The additional woodland planting along the woodland belt to the west of the former golf course area will further screen the views during the summer, and ensure heavily filtered views during winter months. In addition, the new tree groups which are proposed to be planted within the land to the west of the Site as part of the parkland restoration, will add an additional layer of screening vegetation between the new buildings and Honey Lane. The long distance views from Honey Lane towards the wooded hills west and north west of Burchett's Green will remain, with the tops of the new buildings seen along the lower ground within middle distance, and adjacent to the existing buildings to the north of the Site. The character and user's experience along this section of the Chiltern Way will thus not change.
- 5.44 In views from the heritage assets along the knoll around 275 metres to the west of the Site, the buildings within the Care Village will be partially visible behind the existing trees, the woodland belt to the west of the Site, and the ridge of the knoll. These buildings will be perceived as an extension to the existing, linear built development along the south avenue, and will not appear discordant. In addition, the landscape around these assets has been designed to focus views towards the mansion, and the new buildings will thus be perceived along the outer edge of these views, beyond the intervening sports centre and nursery.
- 5.45 Views from further north west within the Estate and from along Honey Lane will not be affected by the proposed development.

### **Landscape Quality and Value**

- 5.46 The landscape character of the Site will inevitably change from its current open, although somewhat degraded, pasture land, to a character more reflective of the existing built up area within the Estate. However, as the new buildings are proposed to be located to continue the linear development form which exists to the north and the south of Hall Place mansion, the effect of the new buildings within the Estate is reduced. In addition, several buildings already occur to the south of the mansion along the south avenue, and the Care Village will be seen within this context, as an extension of this built character.

- 5.47 As set out in detail within the Design and Access Statement, the Care Village has been designed to reflect the residential vernacular of the surrounding villages, and to appear as a collection of residential-sized buildings within a courtyard setting. The building facades have been designed to be interesting and varied, with a varied building line that results in areas of shadow and highlight upon the facades. In addition, the existing mature trees and the proposed trees within the Care Village, along the south avenue and within the parkland restoration area to the west and south, ensure that the new buildings are assimilated within the surrounding landscape.
- 5.48 The considered design and landscaping of the Care Village, in combination with the reinstatement of the southern lime avenue and the restoration of the parkland within the former golf course area, will result in an increase in the landscape quality of the Site and its surroundings.
- 5.49 In terms of value, the Care Village will become home to a new community, and the value of the Site will thus be very high.

### **Registered Park and Garden and Listed Buildings**

- 5.50 A full assessment of the effect of the proposals in relation to the heritage assets is included within the Heritage Assessment which is submitted as part of this application. A plan setting out the primary heritage assets in relation to the proposed development is contained in **Appendix F**.
- 5.51 The Listing description for Hall Place garden sets out the aspects of the gardens and grounds which are considered of landscape or historical value. As set out in Sections 4 and 5, the development of the Care Village will not directly or indirectly affect the ornamental and kitchen gardens to the west of the mansion, or the north avenue, however, there will be direct effects on the parkland as well as the east and south avenues. There will also be minor indirect effects on the Battle of the Nile landscape elements within the parkland to the west of the Site.
- 5.52 The new access lane to the Care Village, which is proposed to lead off the east avenue along the eastern edge of the Five Trees Field, will change the layout of the original movement routes within the east of the Estate, and it will also be visible from the east avenue and from the eastern façade of the mansion. The design and layout of the new access lane will however ensure that there is no material landscape impact on the setting of the Hall Place mansion or the character of the eastern lime avenue, and we say this for the following reasons:
- The new access lane is located opposite the existing access lane to the north of the east avenue, which leads to the College's drop-off area, and will thus not appear out of character when appreciated from the east avenue or the mansion;
  - The lane has been routed along the far edge of the Five Trees Field in relation to the mansion, to ensure minimal visibility from it;

- The narrow design of the lane as well as the use of surfacing materials that are similar to those already in use along the lanes and avenues, will ensure the new lane's character is similar to that of the existing lanes and drives on the Estate; and
- The expected traffic volumes on the access lane will be very low, as set out within the Transport Assessment which accompanies this application, and it will thus not lead to any significant increases in vehicle movements along the east avenue or within the setting of the mansion to the east.

5.53 In terms of the south avenue, there will be minor direct impacts to it where the new access lane crosses it to the east of the sports centre. No additional vehicle movement are proposed along the south avenue, and in fact, vehicle movements along it are proposed to be reduced by routing traffic towards the nursery along the new access lane to the Care Village, as opposed to the current route along the south avenue. Its character in terms of its use as a rural track will thus not change.

5.54 The visual characteristics along the south avenue will be retained, with the new buildings appearing similar in character and as an extension to the existing linear built form along the west of the south avenue. The proposals include for the reinstatement of the missing lime trees within the south avenue, as well as a program of replacement of the trees of other species, which will result in an increase in the quality of this important landscape feature.

5.55 The character of the former golf course within which the Site is located is degraded and neglected, and although it contains several mature individual and groups of trees, it does not display the same high quality landscape character as the other areas of pasture further west and north within the Registered Park. Although part of this land will become built development associated with the Care Village, the remainder of the former golf course area is proposed to be restored by the addition of new trees and tree groups as well as management of the grassland fields, to increase the landscape quality and value of these fields.

5.56 The open character of this area of the parkland will reduce due to the proposed development, however, this loss is not considered significant in terms of the character of the parkland or its historic value, and we say this for the following reasons:

- The proposed built development has been located adjacent to the existing built development to the north, and will be seen as an extension to the linear band of buildings which is evident within the Estate;
- The historically planned use of the land within the Site has already been lost, with the Site comprising part of the former golf course as well as the current use of the east of the Site for the high ropes facility and archery area;

- The visual and physical link between the former parkland use and the mansion has already been severed in this location; and
- Views, pasture and physical links will be retained between the land to the east of the south avenue and the wooded high ground and parkland pasture to the west, thus ensuring that the built development on the Estate does not sever the parkland on either side of the south avenue.

5.57 Although the Care Village will be partially visible from the heritage assets within the parkland to the north west of the Site, the vistas from these, including the statue and pyramid, were designed to be focused towards Hall Place mansion, and the new buildings will thus only form a small element within the outer edge of this vista. In addition, the Care Village will be perceived adjacent to the sports centre, and will not appear as an incongruous or isolated feature within the landscape to the east of these heritage features. The new tree planting proposed as part of the parkland restoration on the land to the south and west of the Care Village, will filter views of the new buildings and help to assimilate them into the landscape in views from the vicinity of the Battle of the Nile elements.

5.58 The Care Village will not be visible from the Grade I Listed Hall Place mansion, and the visual and physical link which would have historically been present between the mansion and the parkland to the south, have already been severed. Although the Care Village will be discernible in views from the east avenue, its visibility will not affect the character of the immediate setting of the mansion or the east avenue, or the view between these two elements. The proposed Care Village will also not affect the setting of the important views between the mansion and the parkland to the west of it. The effect of the proposed access lane on the setting of the Hall Place mansion is not considered to be material.

5.59 Similarly, the Care Village buildings will not be visible from the Listed Garden Cottage to the north of the development, and the proposals will not impact on its setting.

5.60 The existing built development between the Care Village and the other Listed elements within the Estate, as well as the lack of intervisibility between these, ensures that the proposed development will not affect the other Listed elements or their setting.

### **Green Belt**

5.61 Section 9 of the NPPF, 'Protecting Green Belt Land' (paragraphs 79 and 80), set out the five functions of the Green Belt, which are:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;  
and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.62 The NPPF further sets out that inappropriate development, which is by definition deemed to be harmful in the Green Belt, should only be approved in very special circumstances, unless the potential harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The reasons for the need for the Care Village development within the College's grounds, as well as the very special circumstances which are deemed to outweigh the potential harm of this development within the Green Belt, are set out in detail in the accompanying Planning Statement.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Site is located within the Hall Place Estate, which currently forms the campus of the BCA College. The Estate is centred around the Grade I Listed Hall Place mansion, and the grounds within the south and east of the Estate are designated as a Grade II Listed Registered Park and Garden. The Estate and surrounding villages are located within the Green Belt.
- 6.2 The development proposals are for a new Care Village, comprising a central hub with services and facilities for the residents, as well as a 50-bed care home and up to 105 units comprising assisted living apartments, independent living apartments and bungalows. The proposals also include associated parking and gardens, a new access lane off the east avenue, and a program of landscape works off-site to reinstate the parkland to the south and west of the Site as well as the lime trees within the south avenue, amongst others.
- 6.3 Views of the new buildings will be limited to filtered, near and middle distance views, with the majority of views contained to within the Estate. Where the new buildings are seen, they will be seen within the context of the adjacent sports centre and nursery buildings, and will thus not appear out of context within the wider landscape. In addition, views of the buildings will be filtered by the existing and proposed trees around and within the Site, and these will aid in assimilating the development into the surrounding landscape.
- 6.4 The Care Village will not be visible from the Grade I Listed mansion, nor from any of the other Listed elements within the Estate. Its location is separated from the mansion by the intervening sports centre and accommodation buildings, and there is thus no direct impact or visual impact on the mansion.
- 6.5 The Site lies within an area of land which was developed into a golf course in the 1990s, but that use has since lapsed, and the former golf course is now in pastoral use. It has a somewhat degraded landscape character, especially in comparison to the wider areas of parkland pasture to the west and north of the Site. The proposals include for the restoration of the former golf course area by the introduction of new groups of parkland trees as well as grassland management.
- 6.6 The Site lies adjacent to the south avenue, which is the least intact of the three lime avenues within the Estate. The proposals include the reinstatement of the lime trees within the south avenue, to restore this important historical feature and to help filter views of the Care Village.
- 6.7 The Care Village is well related to the existing built up area of the College, and built development will not extend further east or west than the existing built form to the north of the Site, south of mansion.

- 6.8 The Care Village will have no material impact on the setting of the Listed mansion, or on any other Listed structures within the Estate, or the Burchett's Green Conservation Area.
- 6.9 In terms of the Registered Park and Garden, the proposed development will change the Site from a mostly pastoral field within the former parkland on the Estate, to a collection of new predominantly-residential buildings, reflective of the existing built form to the north as well as the character of the surrounding villages. Although a part of the parkland will change, the important heritage features mentioned in the Listing description, including the east and north avenues, the ornamental and kitchen gardens, and the Battle of the Nile features will not be affected. As confirmed in the Heritage Assessment, the proposals will result in less than substantial harm to the Registered Park.
- 6.10 The development proposals allow for the restoration of the parkland to the south and east of the Site, as well as the reinstatement of the southern lime avenue. These restorations will have a long-term beneficial effect on the Registered Park and Garden.
- 6.11 We conclude that the Site is capable of being developed as a Care Village, in line with the Masterplan and Illustrative Landscape Plan, without resulting in material landscape and visual effects, including in relation to the Grade I Listed mansion and the Registered Park and Garden.