Daventry Landscape Capacity Assessment Toolkit
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1.0 Introduction

Landscape is about the relationship between people and place, and is the setting for our lives. Some of Daventry District’s landscapes are unique, diverse, and a major asset providing:

- economic value - often becoming a central factor in attracting wider investment and tourism;
- social and community value as an important part of people’s lives, contributing to our sense of identity and well-being, and bringing enjoyment and inspiration; and
- environmental value for the natural beauty of the countryside perceived by people, and a home for wildlife.

It is crucial that we understand what makes up the character of the landscape so when we consider how it might change, that change is for the better. Through landscape character assessment we can gain an understanding of what elements of the character are important and have value to help in the decision making process in terms of planning policy.

Aim

This toolkit provides a framework for making decisions relating to specific development proposals, to help identify the landscape’s sensitivity to the proposed change and whether the landscape has the capacity to accept the change without adverse impact.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the toolkit are:

1. To help the reader interpret and apply the Daventry Landscape Character Assessment (2017) which the Council is adopting as evidence base for the Local Plan; and
2. To establish the landscape’s capacity to accommodate development and scope for mitigation;

Definition of landscape capacity

The degree to which a particular landscape type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of the change being proposed.

A site with a high landscape capacity is likely to be able to accommodate change with little or no impact on landscape character and views. Whereas a site with a low capacity to accommodate change would result in severe harm on landscape character and views.

Who should use this Toolkit?

The main audiences for this Toolkit are those individuals and organisations planning new development within Daventry District and Officers and Members from the Council.

Decision Makers and Landowners

The Toolkit will also be used as a point of reference by decision makers within Daventry District Council and its
partner organisations. Land owners and managers across the District are encouraged to use the information to guide land management activity.

Parish Councils/Community Groups/Neighbourhood Plan Steering Groups

In addition, this Toolkit also provides information to the local communities of Daventry. It advises them on the landscape’s capacity to accommodate change.

When is the Landscape Capacity Assessment required?

The assessment is required as part of the planning process for all proposed major developments. Major development is defined as involving more than 10 houses, all other development covering more than 1,000 m² or more than 0.5 ha for changes of use.

The assessment may also be required for non major development in sensitive locations, such as the setting to a Listed Building, Scheduled Monument or in a Special Landscape Area (SLA).

Landscape Capacity Assessment

Daventry District Council expects applicants to undertake a landscape capacity assessment as part of the proposals for any major development. To achieve this, applicants should prepare a landscape capacity assessment of a proposed site to accommodate change prior to any pre-application meeting. This includes interpreting the findings of the Daventry Landscape Character Assessment.

Initiating these steps early in the planning process makes it more likely that the Council’s requirements for planning proposals will be met and that the application process can be undertaken efficiently. An iterative approach to design should be adopted, where the built and natural elements of the scheme are developed in tandem, are well integrated and contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place. The method for undertaking the landscape capacity assessment is outlined on the subsequent pages. It involves two stages:

1. Indicative steps in interpreting the Daventry Landscape Character Assessment.
2. Assessing a site’s landscape capacity to accommodate change

A glossary of terms is provided in Annex A to assist the applicant.
2.0 The Assessment

Stage One
Indicative steps in interpreting the Daventry Landscape Character Assessment

1. Identify and map the site under consideration

2. Establish location of site in respect of the landscape character type (LCT) (see page 10 of Daventry LCA document)

3. Establish location of site in respect of the more specific landscape character area (LCA) (see page 11 of Daventry LCA document)

4. Review:
   • Key landscape character features
   • Description
   • Landscape strategy
   • Landscape guidelines

5. Summarise relevant information that relates to the site

Example. Site under consideration shown in context of Landscape Character Type map.
Visit site and surroundings

Describe and assess the site’s key characteristics:

• Topography and drainage – what is the nature of the landform and pattern of drainage?
• Land use – what is the existing land use?
• Land cover – describe what is present on the land, such as pastoral, arable or tree cover.
• Field pattern – what is the size and shape of the field(s) and how is it (are they) enclosed?
• Landscape condition – what is the site’s landscape condition?
• Settlement – Is the site near to a settlement? How does the site relate to the settlement?
• Historic features – are there any historic features associated with the site?
• Landmarks – are there any landmark buildings, structures or notable landscape features such as hills, woodland or copses near to the site?

How does the site description compare with the relevant information from the Daventry Landscape Character Assessment?
Landscape Capacity Assessment Criteria

The landscape capacity recommendations will identify where potential change would best be accommodated in the landscape to safeguard the distinctive characteristics from harm and to mitigate potential adverse effects. The outline approach for evaluating the landscape and visual quality of a potential site for change is illustrated on the following pages. The full method for undertaking the landscape capacity assessment is provided in Annex B and a worked example is included in Annex C.

4 EVALUATION OF LANDSCAPE QUALITY

Consistency of landscape character – is the site consistent with the landscape character area description?

This should be judged as:

‘highly consistent’, ‘mostly consistent’, ‘some key characteristics present’ or ‘not representative of wider character’

Consideration of levels of intactness (the landscape’s state of repair or condition) – do the site’s landscape features demonstrate a level of intactness?

This should be judged as:

‘highly intact’, ‘some level of intactness’, ‘limited intactness’ or ‘not intact’

Settlement edge and contribution to settlement setting – does the site contribute to the setting of an adjacent settlement?

This should be judged as:

‘integral part of settlement setting’, ‘some features contributing to settlement setting’, limited association with settlement setting’ or ‘not associated with settlement setting’.

Remoteness and tranquillity – how is the site perceived?

This should be judged as:

‘remote’, ‘peaceful’, ‘some interruption’ or ‘not tranquil’.

Example for intactness. Photo shows a landscape with ‘some level of intactness’. It shows series of small-scale fields enclosed by stockproof unclipped hedgerows.

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Example for intactness. Photo shows a landscape with ‘some level of intactness’. It shows series of small-scale fields enclosed by stockproof unclipped hedgerows.
5 EVALUATION OF VISUAL QUALITY

**Visual prominence of the site** – how prominent is the site in views from the surrounding area?

This should be judged as:

‘High’, ‘Moderate-high’, ‘Moderate-low’ or ‘Low’.

**Public accessibility within the site** – how prominent is the site in views from local recreational PRoW passing through a site routes?

This should be judged as:

‘many public views’, ‘some public views’, very limited public views’ or ‘no public views’.

**Views towards the settlement edge** – what is the nature of those views?

This should be judged as:

‘no visible urban edge’, ‘soft well vegetated urban edge with limited views of principally rooflines’, ‘partially visible urban edge’ and ‘hard urban edge with no screening’.

**Distinctive views towards the settlement from the outlying area** – does the site form part of a distinctive view?

This should be judged as:

‘highly distinctive features or views’, ‘some distinctive features or views’, ‘few distinctive features or views’ and ‘no distinctive features or views’.

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Example for visual prominence. Photograph shows a visually prominent ridge at the northern boundary of the District.

Example for nature of the settlement edge. Photograph shows a partially visible urban edge.
To what extent could the effects of the proposed change be mitigated?

This should be judged as:

'Low', 'Moderate-low', 'Moderate-high', 'High'

(A 'low' judgement, indicates that there would be limited potential for mitigation of any proposed change)

To what degree can the landscape accommodate change without detriment to its character?

This should be judged as:

'Low', 'Moderate-low', 'Moderate-high', 'High'

(A 'low' judgement, indicates that the landscape would have limited potential to accommodate change)
Presentation of Landscape Capacity Recommendations

For ease of communication the findings for each potential development site should be presented in a format to be agreed with the Council covering the following:

- key panoramic photographs of the site;
- a description and a summary of the key characteristics of the landscape character area that the site falls within;
- an evaluation of landscape and visual quality;
- a judgement of overall mitigation potential and supporting statement;
- a judgement of landscape capacity to accommodate change; and
- a plan of the site illustrating key landscape features.

Example: Plan showing site and key landscape features, including topography and field boundaries.
Annex A – Glossary of Terms

**Characteristics** – Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

**Elements** – Individual components which make up the landscape, such as trees and hedgerows.

**Features** - Particularly prominent or eye catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

**Landscape capacity** – The degree to which a particular landscape type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of the change being proposed.

**Landscape Character** – A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

**Landscape Character Type** – These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use and settlement pattern.

**Landscape Character Areas** – These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other types.

**Landscape Character Assessment** – This is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.

**Landscape Condition** – This is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual and functional perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements (trees, woodland, hedgerows) which make up the character in any one place.

**Landscape Sensitivity** – The extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character.

Source:

Annex B - Method for Assessing Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Change

Method
The method relates to parts 4-8 of Stage 2 of the Toolkit (see references below).

1. The landscape capacity recommendations will identify where change might best be accommodated in the landscape setting to safeguard the defined special qualities from harm and to mitigate potential adverse effects. The landscape and visual quality of the potential site for change is also considered and the method for evaluating this is outlined below.

Evaluation of Landscape Quality (Part 4)

2. Landscape quality is a judgement of the intactness and condition of a landscape. This is assessed by considering the representation of typical characteristics and the state of repair of individual features which contribute to those typical characteristics. This will be assessed with reference to the following aspects:

Consistency of landscape character

3. This includes a review of the landscape character area in which the potential development site (as identified in the Northamptonshire County Landscape Character Assessment (2005) and the findings of the LCA update (2017). This assesses the consistency of landscape character of the potential site for development and its immediate surroundings, with the landscape character of the wider area. This should be judged as ‘highly consistent’, ‘mostly consistent’, ‘some key characteristics present’ or ‘not representative of wider character’.

However, it should be noted that along urban or settlement fringes the landscape can display features that although not consistent with the wider character, combine to create an distinctive landscape. In such cases this will be reported. For example a landscape character area might be characterised by an expansive landscape with large agricultural fields. Whereas the fringes of a village might be distinguished by a series of smaller pastoral fields with large hedgerow boundaries creating a sense of enclosure.

Consideration of levels of intactness

4. Consideration of the ‘levels of intactness’ exhibited by the presence of landscape features such as hedgerows and woodland. This aspect is closely linked to consistency of landscape character. The presence, balance and interaction of typical and non-typical features on site and how they are perceived contributes to landscape ‘intactness’. The judgement to be recorded is ‘highly intact’, ‘some level of intactness’, ‘limited intactness’ or ‘not intact’.

Settlement edge and contribution to settlement setting

5. This will include a factual description of how the landscape of the site and wider area contributes to the setting of an adjacent settlement. It will identify the character of the settlement edge; inter-relationship between the area being considered and the adjacent settlement and any distinctive landscape or built form features which make an important contribution to the setting of the settlement. This will be judged as ‘integral part of settlement setting’, ‘some features contributing to settlement setting’, ‘limited association with settlement setting’ or ‘not associated with settlement setting’.

For example the parkland estate to Haselbech Hall influences the settlement setting and edge to Haselbech (on the boundary between LCA5a Naseby Plateau and LCA13d Cottesbrooke and Arthingworth).

Remoteness and tranquillity

6. This assesses the degree to which a landscape has been influenced by man and relates strongly to the perceptual experience of a landscape. Low noise level, low density of settlement and infrequent roads indicate a tranquil and often rural character, likely to be more sensitive and more affected by new development than one that is already disturbed or impinged by busy roads, industry and residential development. This may be judged as either being: ‘remote’, ‘peaceful’, ‘some interruption’ or ‘not tranquil’.

Evaluation of Visual Quality (Part 5)

7. Visual quality assesses the views, visibility of urban influences and setting for development within the wider landscape. This will be assessed with reference to the following aspects:

Visual prominence of the potential development site

8. This aspect assesses views and visual connections within the surrounding landscape and the prominence of the potential site allocation within these views, with consideration of nearby receptors. The distance from the site to the receptor is important as this influences the proportion of the view that would be affected. An area visually isolated from the wider landscape (low
visual prominence) is likely to have a higher capacity to accommodate change than one which forms a key component or has strong visual connectivity with the wider landscape (high visual prominence). This is judged as being either ‘High’, ‘Moderate-high’, ‘Moderate-low’ or ‘Low’.

9. For example, a judgement of high prominence could apply to an area which is on a hill, a flat exposed area or has few trees or woodland along its boundaries and is visible from roads, urban fringes or public rights of way at some considerable distance. A judgement of low prominence could apply to an area which may be within a shallow depression, narrow river valley or surrounded by mature wooded boundaries or by built development, which is not visible from surrounding publicly accessible routes and from few private residences and where change would potentially be less noticeable in the surrounding landscape.

Public accessibility within the site

10. The extent to which the site is currently used by the public can affect its sensitivity. Most land-use planning regimes consider that public views are of greater value than views from private property. An area with several recreational elements (e.g. footpaths, bridleways, sports grounds, parks) is likely to be more susceptible to change than an area which is currently little used by members of the public or has limited or no accessibility. This is judged as ‘many public views’, ‘some public views’, ‘very limited public views’ or ‘no public views’.

Views towards the settlement edge

11. This assesses views towards the existing settlement edge across the site and is based upon a judgement that a ‘soft’ edge mostly screened by mature vegetation is likely to be more susceptible to harm from new development than one which has a ‘hard’ urban edge where there is an abrupt building line. A softer edge would typically result in a more rural and remote character being present and creates a coherent transition between the urban and rural landscape. Soft edges could be harmed without careful planning and appropriate mitigation through any new development or expansion of the urban edge. This judgement may be recorded as ‘no visible urban edge’, ‘soft well vegetated urban edge with limited views of principally rooflines’, ‘partially visible urban edge’ and ‘hard urban edge with no screening’.

Distinctive views

12. This considers views from the outlying area across the site towards a distinctive feature. For example, a church spire surrounded by trees may be a key feature in a distinctive view from the outlying area. (Check any distinctive views highlighted in adopted Village Design Statements or Neighbourhood Plans). Development of a site may detract or interrupt an existing distinctive view from the outlying area. This element is judged as ‘highly distinctive features or views’, ‘some distinctive features or views’, ‘few distinctive features or views’ and ‘no distinctive features or views’.

Overall Mitigation Potential (Part 6)

13. The final aspect of the assessment are judgements regarding the overall mitigation potential and development capacity of a site which considers the degree to which a landscape can accommodate change without detrimental effects on its character and views. Any judgement will be influenced by the potential retention of existing landscape features and the scope for mitigation, which would be in keeping with the landscape character.

14. Examples of mitigation. Measures could include the provision of a range elements helping to articulate open space or a series of open spaces on a development site. These elements could include proposed areas of grass and meadow, shrub planting, hedgerow planting, individual trees, copses or woodland or a combination of these elements to help integrate any development into the landscape. The open space should have a role and function, including provision for recreation and biodiversity.

15. Judgements will be made on what type of mitigation might be required to minimise effects on the landscape and appearance within views and how achievable mitigation would be within the potential development site. Scope for mitigation will be assessed as being ‘low’, ‘moderate-low’, ‘moderate-high’ or ‘high’.

Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Change (Part 7)

16. Landscape capacity to accommodate change will be assessed either as being ‘low’, ‘moderate-low’, ‘moderate-high’ or ‘high’. Those locations where implementation of development, with appropriate mitigation appears most achievable (high or moderate-high) would be more favourable options to be taken forward in the development process in landscape terms than those which are less achievable with mitigation (moderate-low or low).
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17. Definitions of capacity:

**High capacity** - There will be little or no impact on the landscape character and views through the development. There is potential for the development to positively enhance the landscape.

**Moderate-High capacity** - There will be some negative change in landscape character and views. Through an iterative pre-planning application design process there is the potential for significant landscape and visual effects to be avoided or reduced. In the determination of a full planning application landscape and visual effects may be reduced by mitigation measures introduced as amendments to the proposal.

**Moderate-Low capacity** - The development will result in significant adverse effects on the landscape character and views with limited potential for mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or remedy the remaining identified effects.

**Low capacity** - The development will result in severe harm to landscape character and views which mitigation measures cannot prevent, reduce or remedy.

### Outputs (Part 8)

18. Presentation of Landscape Capacity Recommendations

For ease of communication the findings for each potential development site should be presented in a format to be agreed with the Council covering the following:

- key panoramic photographs of the site;
- a description and a summary of the key characteristics of the landscape character area that the site falls within;
- an evaluation of landscape and visual quality;
- a judgement of overall mitigation potential and supporting statement;
- a judgement of landscape capacity to accommodate change; and
- a plan of the site illustrating key landscape features.
Annex C – Assessing Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Change - Worked example
### Key features of landscape character area

The site is in LCT: Undulating Hills and Valleys and Character Area 13b Daventry (Northamptonshire CLCA, 2005 and Daventry District LCA 2017). The key features are described as:

- Extensive undulating and productive rural landscape;
- Cohesive and recognisable unity of character;
- Watercourses form part of three principal river catchments of the Cherwell, Nene and Welland;
- Reservoirs and man-made lakes are conspicuous features in the local landscape;
- Navigable canals are an important visual component of the landscape;
- Mixed farming predominates across the landscape although local land use and field patterns are strongly influenced by changes in landform;
- Numerous small deciduous woodlands, copses and shelterbelts;
- Hedgerow trees within the strong hedgerow network contribute to a perception of a well treed landscape;
- Strong historic character underlies this deeply rural landscape;
- Numerous villages linked by winding country landscape contributes to rural character; and
- Communication routes and urban influences and infrastructure have eroded local rural character.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Landscape Condition (from published documents)</strong></th>
<th>Moderate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National/Local Designations</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Site description**

The site is close to the northern edge of Daventry on high ground (approx. 155m AOD) it has a triangular shape and in terms of landform the land gradually slopes down from north to south. The current land use is arable and the site occupies 8.8ha. The site’s western edge is next to the A361 (Ashby Road), the principal northern approach into Daventry. The western boundary is defined by a low hedgerow, with occasional hedgerow trees. The northern boundary of the site is not defined as the site forms part of a larger arable field that continues north of the site boundary. The southern boundary is defined by an unclipped hedgerow with some hedgerow trees. In terms of the wider context, land to the north and east is occupied by agricultural land with some copses and shelterbelts of mixed woodland (including the Rookery and Mickle Well Spinney to the east). On the other side of the southern boundary there is a consented residential scheme known as Micklewell Park with associated infrastructure. (Some of the existing blocks of mature woodland in that site are to be retained). Beyond the A361 to the west there is rolling agricultural land.

This site is to be assessed for its landscape capacity to accommodate residential development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Evaluation of Landscape Quality</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistency with wider character judgement</td>
<td>Highly consistent/ Mostly consistent/ Some key characteristics present/ Not representative of wider character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape character “intactness”</td>
<td>Highly intact/ Some level of intactness/ Limited intactness/ Not intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement edge and contribution to settlement setting</td>
<td>Integral part of settlement setting/ Some features contributing to settlement setting/ Limited association with settlement setting/ Not associated with settlement setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remoteness and tranquillity judgement</td>
<td>Remote/ Peaceful/ Some interruption/ Not tranquil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation of landscape character of site and surrounding area**

The site and surrounding area is characterised by undulating landform with some well-defined hedgerow boundaries, although the immediate area has been subject to field amalgamation increasing openness and reduction in the sense of enclosure. There are some small deciduous copses and shelterbelts, outside the site, particularly to the east and west. Only the southern boundary of the site has a substantial hedgerow boundary which is unclipped with intermittent hedgerow trees. The western boundary has a low hedgerow boundary and there is no definition to the northern boundary. The lack of definition to the northern boundary and the fact that the site forms part of an amalgamated field means there is limited intactness. The site is on high ground at the northern edge of Daventry and there is a sense of the approach along the A361 towards the town located in a bowl. There is some interruption from the same road.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Evaluation of Visual Quality</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual prominence judgement</td>
<td>High/ Moderate-high/ Moderate-low/ Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public accessibility</td>
<td>High sensitivity/Moderate-high sensitivity/Moderate-low sensitivity/Low sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the urban edge</td>
<td>No visible urban edge/soft well vegetated urban edge with limited views of principally rootlines/partially visible urban edge/hard urban edge with no screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctive views of the settlement</td>
<td>Highly distinctive features or views/Some distinctive features or views/few distinctive features or views/No distinctive features or views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Evaluation of visual qualities of site and surrounding area | The site is on high ground and is highly visible from the A361 and the gently rolling landscape to the west. The more steeply sloping land to the east and south combined with the presence of wooded copses on those slopes do moderate the visual presence of the site from those directions. The site does not have public accessibility but there is a PRoW (ref. FH8) that is routed across the field to the west of the A361 and the Grand Union Canal recreational route follows the alignment of the Braunston Tunnel. Both these routes have views towards the site. There are also views towards the southern boundary of the site from the footpath linking the A361 and the northern edge of Daventry. There is currently no visible urban edge in the vicinity of the site but this could be subject to change with the implementation of the consented Micklewell Park development to the south. There are some highly distinctive views from the A361 across the site towards Borough Hill and panoramic views of the hills to the south of Daventry including Newnham Hill. |

| Mitigation | Low/Moderate-low/Moderate-high/High |
| Overall Mitigation Potential | In terms of mitigation, there would be opportunity to strengthen the site boundaries particularly to the north and south. However, development on the site would interrupt the distinctive southerly views along the A361. Views towards the site from the PRoW network to the west would also be difficult to mitigate as parts of the site are on higher ground compared with the site boundaries. There may also be intervisibility between the site and Welton to the east. Overall there would be a moderate-low mitigation potential. |

| Mitigation Measures and Capacity to Accommodate Change | Low/Moderate-low/Moderate-high/High |
| Capacity to Accommodate Change | The site’s capacity to accommodate change would be moderate-low as development would alter the characteristics from an existing open rural landscape by extending the northern edge of Daventry onto high ground. However, there would be opportunity to mitigate some of those adverse effects by creating a new hedgerow boundary with hedgerow trees along the northern site boundary. In keeping with local landscape characteristics, the highest ground on the site (near to the 165m AOD contour) should incorporate some woodland copse planting. The narrow easternmost part of the site would be difficult to develop and this could also be reserved for woodland, supplementing the wooded edge to the neighbouring Welton Place Farm. Woodland planting in these locations would provide a background to any proposed development, reducing the prominence of building form in views. It would also help maintain landscape characteristics on the site’s most prominent ground, mitigate for potential intervisibility with Welton and help integrate any proposed development. The existing southern and western hedgerow boundaries should also be enhanced to assist with mitigation of any proposed development and to |
integrate with the proposed landscape treatment to the consented scheme for Micklewell Park, as per the masterplan.

Viewpoint B – View south from A361 (Ashby Road) towards the site

Viewpoint C – View looking north from Grand Union recreational route towards the site