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CD6.18

**PROOF OF EVIDENCE
OF BRIAN JOHN DENNEY BA (HONS), DIPLA, FLI, CENV,
MIEMA**

**IN RELATION TO LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MATTERS
CONCERNING:**

**AN OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE
ERECTION OF UP TO 85 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS
(*REDUCED FROM 93 ORIGINALLY*) AND OPEN SPACE
(17/04673/OUT)**

ON

**LAND AT JUNCTION WITH CARR ROAD, HOLLIN BUSK
LANE, SHEFFIELD, S36 1GH**

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF HALLAM LAND MANAGEMENT LIMITED

Pegasus Group

Pavilion Court | Green Lane | Garforth | Leeds | LS25 2AF

T 0113 287 8200 | **W** www.pegasusgroup.co.uk

T 0113 287 8200 | **W** www.pegasusgroup.co.uk

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1. EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

- 1.1 My name is Brian John Denney. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect, a Fellow of the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment ("IEMA"). I am also a Chartered Environmentalist and registered with the Society of the Environment. I am registered with IEMA as a Principal Environmental Impact Assessment Practitioner.
- 1.2 I have practiced as a Chartered Landscape Architect since 1987 and have been a Chartered Environmentalist since the year 2000. I have over 35 years of experience in working within the development sector and in landscape consultancy.
- 1.3 I am employed as a Landscape and Environmental Planning Director, with Pegasus Planning Group Limited. Prior to joining Pegasus in August 2007, I was employed as the Operational Director of the Huddersfield Office of RPS Planning Transport and Environment. Prior to joining RPS, I was an Environmental Director with Chapman Warren (Town Planning Consultants) and previous to that, I held posts with Taylor Woodrow, Derek Lovejoy and Partners, and Christian Salvesen Properties Limited.
- 1.4 Pegasus undertakes all aspects of planning, urban design, environmental impact assessment, landscape assessment and visual assessment, including character assessment and landscape design.
- 1.5 I have presented evidence at public inquiries and appeals on more than 150 occasions, dealing with: the presentation of multi-disciplinary environmental statements; broad based environmental evidence including ecology (bats, badgers and otters); master planning; capacity studies; mitigation strategies and arboriculture; as well as landscape and visual assessments. I have worked on a wide range of development projects within the United Kingdom, including: residential developments; mixed use schemes; wind and solar energy proposals; employment sites and business parks; leisure and recreation schemes; education projects and sports facilities. I have previously presented landscape and visual evidence at a number of residential development public inquiries.

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- 1.6 I and the landscape architects within my team at Pegasus Group, undertake our work in compliance with the Landscape Institute's Code of Conduct.
- 1.7 I believe that in addressing the landscape and visual matters relating to this inquiry I have fulfilled my professional responsibilities. I understand my duty to the inquiry and have complied with, and will continue to comply with, that duty. I believe that the facts stated within this proof of evidence are true and that the opinions are correct.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY AND MY INVOLVEMENT

- 2.1 This Inquiry concerns an outline planning application submitted to Sheffield City Council ("the Council") on behalf of Hallam Land Management Limited (the "Applicant") in relation to a site at Hollin Busk Lane, Sheffield, S36 1GH (the "site").
- 2.2 The application is for the development of up to 85 dwellings (reduced from 93 originally) including open space with approval of points of access to (but not within the site) (the "proposed development").
- 2.3 I have been involved with the proposed development since September 2019 when the Applicant approached Pegasus Group regarding the potential to provide landscape and visual expert witness services, should the proposed development be subject to a planning appeal. FPCR have carried out the earlier appraisal work in relation to the application and it had been the Appellant's intention to appoint an expert witness at FPCR with whom they had an established working relationship. However, sadly, the individual passed away. Hallam Land Management have subsequently approached me to undertake this role on their behalf. In doing so, some aspects of appraisal work relating to the project have continued to be undertaken by FPCR, with other aspects prepared by the landscape team at Pegasus.
- 2.4 The planning application was submitted to the Council in November 2017 and was validated with the reference 17/04673/OUT. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal ("LVA") (CD1.11a-c), prepared by FPCR, dated November 2017, was included with the planning application submission. In turn, an email from the applicant, dated 9th February 2018 (CD2.10), provided further relevant information concerning landscape and visual matters raised during the application process. The LVA has been subsequently updated to reflect the reduced scheme for up to 85 dwellings. The updated LVA is included at **Appendix 1** of my Evidence.
- 2.5 Prior to my appointment, I familiarised myself with the development proposals and the site and its landscape and townscape context. In doing so, I also reviewed the LVA which formed part of the application submission. Following

my review, I was able to confirm the findings of the LVA which had been undertaken by landscape architects at FPCR and accept my appointment.

2.6 In the course of my review, I considered the various consultation responses that had been received in respect of the application relating to landscape matters and the relevant national and local policy framework including the 'Sheffield Preliminary Landscape Character Assessment'.

2.7 Having examined the relevant application documentation and the relevant policy context, I was satisfied that the proposals were appropriately located, and that the proposed development areas responded to their landscape and townscape context. Indeed, it was clear that the involvement of FPCR into the design of the proposals had led to a positive, Green Infrastructure led, scheme responsive to local landscape character and distinctiveness and with regard to local visual amenity. I consider the principle of the proposals within the site and the manner in which they have been developed to respond to the character and appearance of the local landscape further in Section 6 of my evidence.

2.8 The planning application was first put forward for consideration by the Council's Planning Committee on 4th June 2019 (CD1.5). The planning officer at that time considered that there was not a five year supply of housing land and concluded (*inter alia*): **'the dis-benefits of the loss of open space and harm to the character and views of open countryside would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal'**. The application was however subsequently withdrawn from the June committee. It is noted however, that the Officer did not make specific reference to the 'Open Space Area' as set out in Policy LR5, which I discuss further at section 5 of my evidence.

2.9 The application was then presented to committee on 14th July 2020, this time the council considered there was a 5.1 year supply of housing land and the Planning Officer concluded (*inter alia*):

'It is also acknowledged that the scheme will result in adverse landscape and visual effects in the immediate vicinity of the site; however these are localised and beyond private residential views, are limited to highway users and limited areas of the adjacent PROW. The site is not located in the green belt, it is not a Valued Landscape and landscape and visual impact on the wider area will be very minimal... there are no

adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme' (my underlining)(CD1.7)

2.10 This recommendation was not supported by the committee and the Application was refused by the Council's Planning Committee on the 20th July 2020, against the recommendation of its officer. The Reason for refusal included that (*inter alia*):

'The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed development would result in unreasonable harm to the established landscape and to visual amenity at both local and wider levels, creating unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, while also undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements. The resulting adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefits the scheme delivers. As such the proposal is considered to be contrary to Paragraphs 127(c) & 170(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies GE4 & LR5(i&j) within the adopted Sheffield Unitary Development Plan and Policies CS23, CS24 & CS72 within the adopted Sheffield Development Framework Core Strategy'. (CD1.9)

2.11 The key landscape and visual issues therefore are:

- *The effects of the development on the landscape and views.*
- *The role the appeal site plays in the visual separation of Deepcar and Stockbridge*

2.12 I am instructed to present evidence on behalf of the Applicant in respect of landscape and visual matters concerning the application at the Inquiry.

2.13 As already indicated above, as part of my review of the application proposals, I have (amongst other things) carried out a detailed inspection of the site and surrounding area, to inform my understanding of landscape and visual matters relating to the proposed development. I have also considered the properties where residents might experience visual effects (from the closest publicly accessible locations) and I have also walked the public rights of way in the vicinity of the site.

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- 2.14 Having reviewed the findings of the LVA and considered these in light of the July 2020 Committee Report, and the Council's Statement of Case, I set out my conclusions in Section 8 of my evidence.
- 2.15 I am satisfied that there are no grounds in relation to the nature and level the of landscape and visual effects upon which to withhold planning permission in respect of the proposed development. I reach that conclusion without relying upon any other benefits of the proposed development or a planning balance, which are dealt with by others, but on the basis of my conclusions concerning the limited nature of the effects. Whilst inevitably development of this type on an undeveloped site will involve some significant landscape and visual effects, for the reasons I cover in my evidence, I consider that the proposed development in this location would be appropriate to the scale and landscape and townscape context of this site and can be accommodated within, and relate sympathetically to, the landscape.
- 2.16 I have come to these conclusions, taking account of the relevant policy context relating to landscape and visual matters, and to all issues of acknowledged landscape importance and value and applying my considered understanding of the level and nature of the landscape and visual effects. I leave any further judgment about the effects and wider benefits of the development to be assessed in the context of an appropriate planning balance by others.

3. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

3.1 The reason for refusal sets out those landscape and visual matters which are in dispute. Specifically, it refers to **'unreasonable harm to the established landscape and to visual amenity at both local and wider levels'**, which it suggests would lead to **'unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'**. It also suggests that there would be **'undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements'**. (CD1.9)

3.2 In turn, the Council's Statement of Case addresses those landscape and visual matters which are in dispute suggesting that the Reason for Refusal has three relevant stands, as follows:

- a) The proposal results in unreasonable harm to the established landscape and visual amenity at a local and wider level:**
 - b) the development unacceptably impacts the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside:**
 - c) the development undermines the role the site plays in visually separating established settlements (Deepcar and Stocksbridge).**
- (CD6.4)

3.3 However, the Council provide no commentary or explanation of what constitutes unreasonable harm and in what sense it is considered to be unreasonable. It may be considered to be another way of saying unacceptable harm, but as this term is expressly used in relation to strand (b) with regard unacceptable impacts on character, then it can only be assumed that unreasonable harm has a distinct meaning to the Council, separate from unacceptable. However as all of the material impacts are required to be identified and taken into the planning balance, my evidence and the assessments in the LVA appropriately identifies those impacts in relation to landscape, character, visual amenity and the separation of settlements.

3.4 In addition, the Council also raises the following additional issues in its case regarding landscape and visual matters. Firstly, reference is given to non-compliance with Paragraph 117 of the NPPF, a paragraph which was not referenced in the Reason for Refusal. Secondly, it suggests that the LVA submitted with the application **'does not represent a robust and complete**

assessment of the impacts of the development in accordance with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013) [which we assume to mean 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, published by the Landscape institute in 2013 (CD7.5)]. No reason for this suggestion is advanced. Thirdly, it suggests that all assessments have been based on the summer period, with no regard given to the winter months when screening by vegetation would be reduced. Finally, it suggests that the absence of any visualisations of the proposals makes it **'hard to agree on the likely magnitude of change to assessed views with any degree of confidence'**.

- 3.5 These matters are therefore addressed within this Evidence along with a consideration of wider landscape character and visual amenity matters, where relevant.
- 3.6 I have also considered the comments of statutory consultees and other third parties and local residents, where these comments concern relevant landscape and visual issues.
- 3.7 The Evidence addresses specifically the landscape character of the site and its surroundings, visual amenity and the countryside. It also considers matters relating to the local townscape and urban form and the role of the site in relation to the separation of settlements.
- 3.8 The Evidence identifies that the proposed development has been the subject of a detailed Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)(as submitted with the application: CD1.11a-c) undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance and this assessment has informed the design process and submitted illustrative masterplan (CD1.3) and reported the likely effects that would arise. The areas of the site to be open space and the mitigation proposals associated with the proposed development have also been informed by the LVA. The LVA confirms that the adverse effects are limited and localised in extent and nature, with the major effects on both views and local landscape character being confined to the site itself and its immediate townscape and landscape context. The LVA identified that the Representative Visual Envelope extends to the areas shown at Figure 9 of the LVA. I believe that the areas from where a material change to views would be experienced for receptors in the locality, is even more constrained from that depicted by the RVE and when considering the assessed overall effect. An annotated version of Figure 9 is reproduced at my **Appendix 7** which conveys

the even more limited extent of effects (those assessed to be greater than Minor at completion).

- 3.9 As concluded by the submitted LVA which considered a proposal for 93 dwellings (CD1.11a-c), it was demonstrated that the site's landscape character and that of its local landscape and townscape context is able to accommodate a development of the type and scale proposed. It was also demonstrated that the development parameters respond appropriately to local landscape character and that the impacts on landscape and local visual receptors have been minimised. The May 2021 LVA (Appendix 1), updated to reflect the reduction in dwellings to 85, draws the same conclusions overall, although it should be acknowledged that there will be an improvement which is facilitated by the reduction in units of the appeal scheme whereby built development along the southern boundary increases north westerly views from the junction of Carr Road, Royd Lane, Cockshot Lane and Hollin Busk Lane, additional planting space is provided along the northern boundary and reduces built development around the Listed Buildings.
- 3.10 Evidence is also provided to confirm that the proposed development will have either no effect, or no more than a negligible effect, upon landscapes of acknowledged importance, such as landscapes designated for their National, Regional or local landscape value, including the Peak District National Park. At a local level, the Sheffield UDP includes Areas of High Landscape Value, and the Evidence confirms that proposed development does not fall within, or adversely affect, any of these designated landscapes. The location of the site in relation to these designated landscapes is shown at LVA Figure 3 (Appendix 1). The LVA viewpoints A and B (reproduced as full size at Appendix 5), are from locations at the edges of the Peak District National Park and supports the conclusions of the LVA. The UDP also includes an important views designation which it is also confirmed does not apply to this site, nor does the development proposals adversely affect any of those views of acknowledged importance.
- 3.11 Although planning policy and matters relating to the planning balance are addressed in more detail within the evidence of Mr Roland Bolton, I set out at Section 5 of my evidence a brief review of the relevant planning policy context for the proposal where this may have a bearing on the consideration of landscape character and visual amenity issues.

3.12 I set out below in the remainder of this section of my evidence firstly a summary of the landscape and visual matters set out in the consultee responses of the Council's Landscape Architect and Planning Officer's Report to Committee. I then summarise the agreed landscape and visual matters contained in the Statement of Common Ground. I also provide a summary of the responses from other relevant consultees concerning landscape and visual matters, which I also address subsequently within my evidence.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MATTERS SET OUT IN THE CONSULTEE RESPONSES OF THE COUNCIL'S LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND THE PLANNING OFFICER'S REPORT TO COMMITTEE

Sheffield City Council - Landscape Architect – No objection

3.13 The Council's Landscape Architect provided the following conclusions as part of their response dated 14th January 2020 (CD2.11) following review of both the amended Illustrative Masterplan submitted in January 2020 and an email response from the applicant on landscape issues, dated 9th February 2018 (CD2.10) their response was summarised in the Committee Report as follows:

'I am in agreement with the majority of the assessment of landscape impact presented in the LVA report. As discussed, this is broadly that some adverse landscape impact may be created, but would largely be limited to the site itself. Landscape impact at the wider and local level would be limited. Similarly, some adverse visual impact may result for a limited range of receptors adjacent to or close to the site. But visual impact overall would be limited by the restricted visibility of the site from the surrounding area.

There are some areas of disagreement in judgement on the severity of impact, but these are relatively minor, and apply only to the relatively limited range of impacts identified.

In summary, despite outstanding minor differences in judgement, and some significant impacts at the site level, I am in agreement with the conclusion in the LVA that landscape and visual impact overall is considered to be limited'. (CD1.7, page 51)

3.14 I am aware of those minor areas where the Council's Landscape Architect disagreed with the LVA. I set these out in tabular form, at my **Appendix 4**, and briefly address these below. Firstly, with regard to the impact on the landscape character of the site itself, the Council's Landscape Architect set out that their judgement of the susceptibility of the site, and of the magnitude of impact to the site, may be slightly greater than that of the LVA. However, they nonetheless reiterated that ***'a small number of relatively minor differences in***

judgement of the severity of some of the localised site impacts' was unlikely to affect their overall conclusion that ***'in the broader context of landscape impact taken as a whole in terms of surrounding landscape character, the impact of development on the wider landscape is likely to be limited'*** (CD1.7, page 66-67).

Secondly with regard to visual impacts, the Council's Landscape Architect confirmed that the email response from the applicant on landscape issues, dated 9th February 2018, ***'dealt adequately with queries relating to viewpoint selection, selection of the Representative Visual Envelope, and assessment of views from more distant locations'*** (CD1.7, page 48). However, they did note that they queried the conclusions of the LVA in relation to the effects on residents on Carr Road and Royd Lane; residents on Hollin Busk Lane and Bromfield Lane; Rights of Way users in Fox Glen; and Highways Users. These queries were nonetheless minor, and the Council's Landscape Architect went on to advise that they were ***'in agreement with the conclusions of the LVA that visibility of the site and the range and quantity of visual receptors is limited, with the main receptors being residents living on streets next to the site, users of public rights of way close to the site boundaries and highway users close to site boundaries'*** (CD1.7, page 67). The queries related to the suggestion that the level of visual effect may be slightly greater than stated in the LVA for some residents and highway users adjacent to the site, and that the impact of the mitigation proposals may not serve to reduce the visual effect to quite the degree suggested. However, nonetheless, they reiterated that ***'visual impact overall is likely to be minimal due to the limited visibility of the site from visual receptors in the surrounding area'***, before confirming that ***'A small number of relatively minor differences in judgement of the severity of some of the localised visual impacts are unlikely to affect this overall conclusion'***(CD1.7, page 48).

- 3.15 It is therefore clear that the Council's Landscape Architect was in agreement with the majority of the findings of the LVA, and in agreement that both landscape and visual effects would be very limited in their extent and nature. The GLVIA sets out that ***"even with qualified and experienced professionals there can be differences in the judgements made"*** going on to set out that ***"this may result from using different approaches or different criteria, or from***

variation in judgement based on the same approach and criteria” (CD7.5, para 2.25). The Landscape Officer acknowledges the minor disparity in some judgements and does not identify this as any particular concern. In my experience it is not unusual for minor differences such as these. I consider them to be inconsequential to the Inspector’s ability to give consideration of the effects of the appeal proposals. In many respects the minor areas of disagreement help to underscore that the LVA came to broadly the right conclusions having been challenged and not merely accepted.

Planning Officer's Report – July 2020 Committee - Recommendation: Approve

3.16 Having fully considered the merits of the proposals, including agreeing with the specialist advice of the Council’s Landscape Architect, the Planning Officer concluded with regard to landscape and visual matters in their Report to Committee that (inter alia):

‘It is also acknowledged that the scheme will result in adverse landscape and visual effects in the immediate vicinity of the site; however these are localised and beyond private residential views, are limited to highway users and limited areas of the adjacent PROW. The site is not located in the green belt, it is not a Valued Landscape and landscape and visual impact on the wider area will be very minimal... there are no adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme’ (my underlining)(CD1.7), page 98)

3.17 This is a reasonable and informed conclusion, in line with the findings of both the LVA and the advice of the Council’s Landscape Architect. The matter of the overall planning balance is one which is discussed by Mr Roland Bolton, however it is clear that the extent and nature of the landscape and visual effects to be taken forward into that balance is one which both the Council’s Landscape Architect and the Planning Officer confirmed were highly limited and localised. Furthermore, that part of the landscape in which those limited effect would occur is one which would lie outside of the Green Belt, in a landscape which is not a Valued Landscape, as considered in the NPPF.

SUMMARY OF THE AGREED LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MATTERS SET OUT IN THE STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

3.18 A detailed Landscape and Visual Statement of Common Ground has been prepared between the appellant and the Council’s Landscape Witnesses (CD6.8). This confirms that the site is influenced to some degree by its relationship with

the modern residential area of Carr Road and Royd Lane that border and overlook the site, is not covered by any designation relating to landscape quality at either a national or local level and is not used for any formal recreation. It is also agreed that the site is not a 'valued landscape' in the context of the NPPF.

3.19 In relation to visual amenity, it is agreed that there would be no greater than a negligible effect upon the Peak District National Park. It is also agreed that the thirteen viewpoints within the LVA (Figure 9 of the LVA, Appendix 1), are representative of views towards the site from locations within the surrounding area and that, with the exception of some additional locations to the north of the valley, that within the Representative Visual Envelope (RVE) at Figure 9 of the LVA (Appendix 1), the number of receptors of high susceptibility (i.e., residents and right of way users) that have clear views of the site are comparatively limited. The Council agree that receptors 'G' and 'K' located to the north of the valley, would have no greater than a minor effect, in addition to receptors 'E' at Stocksbridge Golf Club.

3.20 Notwithstanding the above agreements relating to more distant receptors to the north of the site (receptors 'G' and 'K'), the Council have provided a plan showing a number of other viewpoint locations from the area characterised as Hunshelf Bank. The Council's plan is appended to the Statement of Common Ground (CD6.8, Appendix 3). It is clear from a review of Ordnance Survey mapping of the area, such as that at LVA Figure 9 (Appendix 1), that there are numerous Public Rights of Way, including the Barnsley Boundary Walk and areas of other land which is publicly accessible. Having walked within this landscape, I acknowledge that there will be visibility from locations other than those two representative locations which are assessed in the LVA. That is however the nature of a representative view point. The south facing and steeply sloping side of Hunshelf Bank is characterised by its relative openness and lack of development, although scattered farms and the inclusion of overhead electrical infrastructure mounted on timber poles and metal pylons are present crossing the foreground landscape. The A616 follows a route on the valley floor, and along with the broad expanse of developed areas which extends from the Underbank Reservoir in the west to the eastern edges of Deepcar, the experience of walking in these areas is one in which there are both apparent visual and aural associations with the urban land use and infrastructure which is a key feature of southerly views. It should also be noted, that from the most elevated

locations on Hunshelf Bank, views not only extend southwards, but there are far-reaching northerly and easterly views which render in these instances, the appearance of the settled Don Valley in this location, a smaller element within a more expansive and varied vista. In these instances, any appreciation of the appeal proposals would be further reduced from that assessed as being minor within the LVA for receptors represented by viewpoints 9 and 13 (receptors 'G' and 'K'), a judgement with which the Council agrees. The Council also agrees that these viewpoints are representative of views towards the site from locations within this part of the landscape. From my own understanding of this part of the landscape, the location of the appeal proposals and the existing context in which they would be set, the assessed effects for receptors G and K within the LVA, are also representative of other such locations where the baseline of views, distance from the site and degree of change are so similar that no different conclusion would be reached. Although some views of the site can be obtained from the elevated areas of Hunshelf Bank, the effect of the proposed development on those views is remarkably little.

- 3.21 The matters upon which the parties have not agreed relate to the landscape quality of the existing site and the immediate surrounding area, and the resulting impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area, the locations from which the proposals would be visible and the scale of harm on the wider visual amenity. A third matter of disagreement is in relation to two methodological points of the submitted LVA, namely the Council consider that the assessment did not allow for seasonal changes, and no photomontages were provided with the submission and which the Council consider to be standard practice, although acknowledging in the Statement of Common Ground, that 'this is not a fundamental requirement of the LVA as set out in GLVIA (Vol 3)' (CD6.8, para 6.2). I set out in more detail my considerations of some of these matters later in my evidence where I discuss matters raised in the Council's Statement of Case.

SUMMARY OF OTHER STATUTORY CONSULTEE RESPONSES

- 3.22 I also address landscape and visual matters raised by consultees and individual representations in my evidence. Comments about landscape character or visual amenity have been made by the following parties and I address their comments within my evidence:

Natural England

- 3.23 Natural England have not objected to the proposal. This includes with regard to relationship between the site and the Peak District National Park. In their consultee response dated 30th January 2018, they state that **"Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on designated sites The South Pennine Moors (Phase 1) Special Protection Area (SPA), Dark Peak Site of Special Scientist Interest (SSSI), and the designated landscape Peak District National Park, and has no objection."** Their response further adds, at their detailed consideration of the effects upon the Peak District National Park, that **"Based on the plans submitted, Natural England has no objection to the proposed development. We do not consider that the proposed development would compromise the purposes of designation or special qualities of the National Park."** (CD2.8). This position was reiterated within a further consultation response dated 29th March 2018 (CD2.9).

Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA)

- 3.24 It should also be noted that the PDNPA confirmed that **"we have no objections to this development as we consider it would not impact adversely upon the setting of the Peak District National Park"** (HRA s.7 CD2.25).

Stocksbridge Town Council

- 3.25 Stocksbridge Town Council set out that they object to the proposed development. A number of reasons were cited, however, in my evidence, I only address those issues raised which concern landscape and visual matters.
- 3.26 The Stocksbridge Council objection dated 13th February 2020, provides their description of the area of Hollin Busk, setting out that it is **"an area at the top of Carr Road that historically was mined and then laid to agriculture, it is regularly used by people who enjoy the outdoors, it has wonderful vistas from its elevated position, it is a significant piece of land in the local community in that it separates Deepcar and Stocksbridge allowing**

each town its own identity” (CD2.13). I have provided at my Appendix 3, further consideration to townscape and settlement pattern and how this has grown over time. It is of particular note that whilst STC refer to the area as Hollin Busk, ‘at the top of Carr Road’, my own observations and from interpretation of current and old OS mapping, is that Hollin Busk is a relatively small area of once isolated properties, now partially ensconced within and which could be said to denote the south eastern edges of Stocksbridge. I provide at Figure 2 of my Appendix 3, current OS mapping with key settlements within the area as taken from 1894 OS mapping. The area I consider to be Hollin Busk, is not that land ‘at the top of Carr Road’, but at the junction between Hollin Busk Road and Hollin Busk Lane approximately 400 m west of the parts of the site proposed for built development.

Individual Representations

- 3.27 I note that there have also been letters of objection received in relation to the application. I address those matters raised which relate to effects on landscape character, or visual amenity, where necessary, subsequently within my evidence.

4. THE SITE AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 4.1 A detailed description of the site is contained within the planning application submission documents and the Statement of Common Ground ("SOCG") and I do not repeat this in full here. However, I have set out below a brief description of the site and its surroundings.
- 4.2 The appeal site is located to the north of the junction of Carr Road and Hollin Busk Lane in Deepcar, Sheffield. The site is located on the southern edge of a built-up area which comprises a somewhat linear settled valley townscape with development stretching from east of the Underbank Reservoir in the west, to Deepcar in the east. A plan of the site can be found at CD1.1. The site covers an area of some 6.5ha of private agricultural land.
- 4.3 The site context can be seen at Figure 2 of the LVA (Appendix 1). Agricultural fields are located to the west of the application site and along part of the north western boundary. Fox Glenn, an Area of Natural History Interest (ANHI) and Local Wildlife Site (LWS) contains woods and runs along the remainder of the north western boundary, this contains Clough Dike and has a housing area, a southern expansion of an historical, smaller settlement area of Haywood Park, directly behind.
- 4.4 To the north, the site adjoins dwellings and the rear gardens of properties. Carr road with dwellings and a housing area beyond is located to the south east of the site.
- 4.5 A cluster of properties and a small field are also located along the eastern boundary between the site and Carr Road. Some of these properties are Grade II Listed (Royd Farmhouse and a barn and farm buildings) and are associated with the small settlement of Royd which, for its greater extent is located to the east of Carr Road and which has been incorporated within the expanded, modern residential development of Deepcar. The settlement growth of the local areas can be seen at Figures 1 and 2 of my Appendix 3.

- 4.6 To the south of the site is Hollin Busk Lane with green belt beyond, as can be seen at my Appendix 7. The site itself is not in the green belt. The south eastern corner of the site adjoins the junction of Hollin Busk Lane, Carr Road, Royd Lane and Cockshot Lane.
- 4.7 The site is located within the parish of Stocksbridge which extends across this settled valley approximately 10 miles from Sheffield City Centre.
- 4.8 The site is made up of private agricultural fields used for grazing. There is a shallow gradient across the site, and it generally falls from the high point at the south to the north of the site as shown at Figure 7 of the LVA (Appendix 1).
- 4.9 The site is allocated as an Open Space Area (OSA) on the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan Proposals Maps dated 1998 (CD3.5). The site forms the eastern part of a larger area of land with that designation, which extends to the west and north west.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.10 More detailed information on the proposed development is available within the application documents, but I set out here a brief summary of the principal elements of the proposals which have a bearing on a consideration of landscape and visual matters.
- 4.11 The appeal proposal is an outline application for up to 85 dwellings including the provision of open space and with details of access to the Site (but not within) for approval but all other matters reserved for approval at the reserved matters stage.
- 4.12 In summary, the proposal is as follows:
- *Development of up to 85 dwellings*
 - *Access from Carr Road via a new priority junction in the site's north eastern corner*
 - *open space and an equipped play area*

4.13 The proposal was reduced from 93 to 85 dwellings following submission of Combined Parameter Plans (December 2019) (CD1.4) and a Revised Illustrative Masterplan (December 2019) (CD1.3). This included for:

a) Reorienting three of the dwellings so these are now set further back from the listed buildings to the east;

b) Pulling back the southern development boundary to retain views to the north from the junction of Carr Road / Cockshot Lane / Hollin Busk Lane;

c) Pulling back the northern development boundary and including additional planting; and

d) Reducing the overall development density to provide 85 dwellings (reduced from the original 93).

4.14 As a result of ongoing work and a refinement of the potential scheme, in particular to address further the objections to the appeal from various parties and the outcome of further investigation, on 6th May 2021 a submission was made which included Parameter Plans (CD1.4 a to f) and an illustrative layout to show how more undeveloped (with houses) land can be achieved around the Listed Buildings (CD3.1a). It is to these plans which I shall refer in my evidence, as it is the Appellant's intent for the revised Parameter Plans (CD1.4 a to f) to be addressed by way of condition as was intended for the previous parameters plans.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

4.15 The masterplanning process was guided by the baseline studies of landscape character and visual amenity. It also evolved through engagement with Sheffield City Council through the pre-application stage.

4.16 Design principles and mitigation measures are adopted and imbedded within the scheme, which includes the provision of a Green Infrastructure (GI) framework. A purpose of which is to sensitively assimilate development into the landscape through the conservation of existing site features and the provision of new landscape habitats so that adverse impacts on landscape and visual receptors are minimised. This incorporates carefully considered design measures and landscape strategies. At the same time the Proposed Development explores opportunities for environmental improvements, such as new planting and the delivery of accessible greenspace.

4.17 The proposed GI was identified on the Concept Masterplan and the Green Infrastructure Indicative Principles Plan.

4.18 The Proposed Development is founded on the following landscape principles, as is set out at paragraph 6.4 in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (Appendix 1):

- i. To accord with the aspirations for good design and green infrastructure contained within the NPPF;***
- ii. To accord with the "priority" landscape guidelines of the Peak District Landscape Strategy;***
- iii. Minimising impacts on landscape and visual receptors by:***

a) Locating the built elements of the development close to the built edge of Carr Road and Royd Lane, so that new housing is observed within the existing context of the residential area.

b) Having regard to the development's relationship with the surrounding landscape. This includes, for example, the interface with the Listed Buildings on Carr Road and woodland at Fox Glen.

c) Using an appropriate scale, mass and height for new buildings that is comparable to existing buildings, and adopting a select palette of locally distinct materials and recessive colours that would assist in assimilating buildings within this landscape context;

d) Using a 'ground up' approach to masterplanning whereby the site's landscape features are conserved and enhanced. This includes the retention of the site's field pattern and the stone walls to inform the residential layout. Although the site's walls vary in age, condition and value, this approach would: "protect the historic field pattern" which is a "priority action" of the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands Landscape. Whilst the context of these walls would be different, i.e. they would be located within the setting of new housing as opposed to open grazing fields, they would form an integral part of the development. They would be located within corridors of open space providing informal recreational routes to and from the main areas of openspace,

as well as providing biodiversity opportunities through the planting of new species rich hedgerows and broadleaved trees

e) Acknowledging and responding to the Core Strategy Policy (CS72) by locating new housing alongside the existing built-up area and establishing broad areas of accessible open space within the southern and western parts of site. The westernmost field would be designed as a new recreational space that can connect with the accessible woodland at Fox Glen. This would accord with the aspiration of the "Green Network" (UDP Policy GE10). Furthermore, this can be designed and managed so that it delivers biodiversity benefits through the provision of new species rich grassland and broadleaved planting. This would meet a "priority action" of the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands which is to: "...conserve or restore the biodiversity of pastoral farmland" and the landscape guideline of: "manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands." New tree planting would connect with the established woodland of Fox Glen and help to filter and 'soften' views of new housing.

f) Delivering a range of new landscape habitats to maximise on-site biodiversity. To include, the planting of broadleaved woodland trees on the western boundary, species rich hedgerow planting along Hollins Busk Lane, and the creation of varied species diverse grassland to include appropriate mixes around the drainage feature.

g) Where there are losses in landscape features, such as part of the boundary wall and hedgerow on Carr Road to accommodate the proposed access, the GI proposals will provide compensatory new walls, trees and hedges.

h) To explore opportunities in which to further 'green' the residential layout with the use of street trees and native shrubs and hedges for front gardens;

i) The detailed design of the GI and the selection of species – which can be based upon locally occurring species common to this

landscape- would be developed through the reserved matters applications and can be agreed with the LPA; and

j) To ensure there is an appropriate mechanism in place that covers the long-term maintenance and management of the GI. This could be dealt with through a Landscape & Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), or similar, that can be addressed through a suitably worded planning condition.

- 4.19 The LVA confirms with regard to the proposed mitigation and enhancement proposals, that **"the Proposed Development of well-designed locally distinct new homes, attractive streets and a varied GI of open space and new broadleaved planting is considered to be an appropriate design approach within this landscape context"** (Appendix 1, para 9.1).
- 4.20 In undertaking my own consideration of the site and its context and the parameter plans (CD1.4 a to f) and Revised Illustrative Masterplan (CD1.3a), I believe that the appeal proposals achieve all of the above design principles, as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, or can be dealt with through liaison with SCC when resolving matters of detail, such as plant species and maintenance.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Matters of planning policy are addressed in more detail in the evidence of Mr Roland Bolton, but I have set out below a review of the policy context relevant to the appeal proposals where it may have a bearing on a consideration of landscape and visual issues.

5.2 My evidence below refers to those policies of the statutory Development Plan, national planning policy and other guidance documents where relevant to a discussion of landscape and visual matters, including those which were referred to in the reason for refusal.

THE STATUTORY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.3 The Development Plan currently comprises the 2009 Sheffield Core Strategy (CD3.1) which covers the period 2004 - 2026 (although policy CS22 states that sufficient sites will be allocated to meet the housing requirement to at least 2020/21) as well as the saved policies from the 1998 Unitary Development Plan ("UDP") (CD3.2-3.4) and the Proposals Map that forms part of the Sheffield UDP.

Sheffield Core Strategy (2009)

5.4 The reason for refusal refers to three policies from the Core Strategy with regard to landscape and visual matters:

- *CS23 – Locations for New Housing*
- *CS24 – Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land for New Housing*
- *CS72 – Protecting Countryside not in the Green Belt*

5.5 Both Policies CS23 and CS24 of the Core Strategy concern matters of housing policy more generally, which are addressed in the evidence of Mr Roland Bolton, rather than landscape and visual issues specifically. These two policies are therefore not discussed further in this evidence, which concentrates on Policy CS72, as addressed below.

CS72– Protecting Countryside not in the Green Belt

5.6 The introductory text within the policy wording provides the overarching purpose of the policy which is that **"there are areas of countryside around the city that are safeguarded in the spatial strategy as much as the majority of land that is in the Green Belt"** and which goes on to describe that **"these areas are greatly valued for the way in which they contribute to Core**

- Strategy objectives for the natural environment, rural settings and opportunities for peaceful enjoyment of the countryside***” (CD3.1). I note the reference to CS72 land being safeguarded as much as if it were Green Belt. I also note that Mr Bolton explains that this is an approach that is fundamentally inconsistent with NPPF.
- 5.7 Supporting paragraph 12.8 to the policy sets out the localised purpose of land at Hollin Busk, that is not identified with clarity on a map:
- 5.8 ***“The land at Hollin Busk is a large and integral part of the countryside south of Stocksbridge, prominent in local views and providing an important visual break between the settlements of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. Its rural character is greatly valued locally and there is no need to develop it as new housing can be provided on previously developed land within the urban area. Indeed, protection of the area makes a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge”.*** (CD3.1)
- 5.9 Policy CS72 of the Core Strategy is set out as follows:
- ‘The green, open and rural character of areas on the edge of the built-up areas but not in the Green Belt will be safeguarded through protection as open countryside, including the following locations:***
- a. to the east of Woodhouse***
 - b. to the south-west and north of Mosborough Village (at Mosborough Moor and Moor Valley)***
 - c. at the former Holbrook Colliery***
 - d. south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk)’. (CD3.1)***
- 5.10 I note that the Council’s position, as set out within their Statement of Case, is that this policy is one of the ***‘three most important policies in the determination of this appeal’*** (CD6.4, para 4.14). However, as discussed further in the evidence of Mr Roland Bolton, it is the appellant’s position that this policy seeks to protect the countryside for its own sake and as such is not in accordance with the Framework and therefore any conflict with this policy should only attract little weight.
- 5.11 Notwithstanding this, I briefly consider the development in the context of the matters raised in this policy below.
- 5.12 It is noted that the site could lie within the area d. identified in the policy, ‘south

of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk)', the purpose of which is confirmed in the supporting text to the policy to be to provide a visual break between Stocksbridge and Deepcar. However, there is no specific definition of where the 'land at Hollin Busk' extends. There is no plan which defines its boundaries given that the City Sites and SDF Proposals Map has not been produced, as set out in more detail within the evidence of Mr Bolton. It is acknowledged nonetheless, that the reason for refusal specifically cited '**undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements**', (CD1.9) with regard to this Policy.

- 5.13 It is not considered however that the proposed development would undermine the objective of retaining a visual break between established settlements. In this regard, it should firstly be noted that Stocksbridge and Deepcar are already connected, with the northern extent of both settlements running interchangeably into one another along the B6088 (Manchester Road), and Wood Royd Road. I have set out at my Appendix 3, further consideration to townscape and settlement pattern and how this has grown over time. In doing so, I describe that the perception of Deepcar and Stocksbridge as separate settlements is very limited. Any separation which does occur between the settlements relates solely to their southern extents and is not always clearly apparent in views from the wider landscape. Indeed, this is clearly seen by reference to the mapping and aerial photograph at Figures 1 to 4 of my Appendix 3, which show that this developed valley landscape /townscape, lying downstream of the Underbank Reservoir, has developed organically over time from a number of smaller settlements to what is now perceived as a settlement continuum, with its individual components not being distinct from each other when considered in townscape or visual terms. The site, and in particular the area within it which is proposed for built development, is a relatively modest area which has a degree of separation but which, for its greater parts, adjoins existing settlement edges.
- 5.14 Nonetheless, the primary concerns relative to the site and the area 'south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk)' could relate to the area of land between Carr Road to the east of the site and Hollin Busk Road to the west of the site, although, as set out above, there is no map denoting its location or extent. The 'Hollin Busk' land, as described in the policy text is clearly a large area and the proposed development site whilst possibly located in this area, only extends across part of the undeveloped land, to the eastern side. Furthermore, the proposed

development constrains built areas to those areas set back from Hollin Busk Lane to the south, with a clear separation remaining between the two existing areas of the settlement. In addition to considerations of settlement pattern, at my Appendix 3, I provide a record of the sequential experience of the landscape / townscape when moving east-west and vice versa and the extent to which the appeal proposals would alter the perceived 'visual break' between these two areas at the southern end of the already joined up settlements. The appeal proposals would not cause a joining in physical terms and would continue to allow the apparent separation of the urban areas at this southern edge of the settlement, retaining a clear break between the residential areas which surround Royd in the east and those which adjoin Hollin Busk in the west as seen from the local landscape and townscape. Settlement edges are already a consistent element of views when travelling in either direction along Hollin Busk Lane and the introduction of the appeal proposals will neither cause a joining in physical terms, nor change the perception of leaving or arriving at either area of settlement.

- 5.15 I conclude that the objective of retaining a visual break between these two areas of settlement would not be undermined by the appeal proposals and would be retained in any event.
- 5.16 It is therefore understood that irrespective of the weight to be attached to the policy, it is clear that should the proposals be granted consent there would continue to be a visual break between Stocksbridge and Deepcar.
- 5.17 I consider other aspects of the policy which relate to character and visual amenity within subsequent sections of my evidence. I also include considerations of the degree to which land ***d. south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk) 'makes a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge'*** within section 7. The aspect of the policy wording which relates to housing need in 2009, is identified to no longer be the case, as is set out within the evidence of Mr Bolton.

Sheffield Unitary Development Plan (1998)

- 5.18 The reason for refusal refers to two policies from the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) with regard to landscape and visual matters:
- *GE4 - Development and the Green Belt Environment*
 - *LR5(I and J) - Development in Open Space Areas*

GE4 - Development and the Green Belt Environment

5.19 Policy GE4 of the UDP is set out as follows:

"The scale and character of any development which is permitted in the Green Belt, or would be conspicuous from it, should be in keeping with the area and, wherever possible, conserve and enhance the landscape and natural environment" (CD3.2a)

5.20 The Council states that in relation to the reasons for refusal that the appeal proposal is contrary to policy GE4. I am not sure on what basis the Council considers the proposal to be contrary to this policy, as the proposal is not within the Green Belt, nor does it harm any of the purposes of Green Belt including openness.

5.21 It is set out within the Council's Statement of Case, that the Council's position is that this policy is not out of date. The basis for this policy when it was prepared in 1998 was the national guidance at the time (PPG2: Green Belt), which set out that the visual amenity of the Green Belt should not be injured by development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt. There is however no such guidance in the NPPF which seeks to control development outside of the Green Belt and it is the appellant's position that there is no justification for this policy and that the policy is out of date and should carry no weight.

5.22 It is noted that this was also the position of the Council Officer in relation to this policy within their report to committee where he stated that it was policy LR5 below, which ***"is a key policy which is most important for determining the application in line with NPPF paragraph 11"*** (CD1.7, page 54). He does not go on to list policy GE4, amongst the other saved policies of the Sheffield UDP as being of relevance to the assessment of the application. However, despite this, the Council's Statement of Case sets out at paragraph 4.20, that, conversely, ***"policy GE4 is considered to carry substantial weight"*** (CD6.4) and references paragraphs 133, 143 and 144 of the NPPF, with which the Council believe the policy to be in alignment. Mr Bolton considers the arguments in relation to this in more detail.

5.23 In conclusion, the site is not located within the Green Belt and the reason for refusal does not refer to the effect of the appeal proposal upon the Green Belt. Although the reason for refusal includes matters of the visual separation of the

established settlements of Deepcar and Stocksbridge, the Green Belt in this location does not perform this function and it is not considered that the appeal proposals would give rise to any harm to the green belt.

LR5(I and J) - Development in Open Space Areas

5.24 I note that the Reason for Refusal also cites LR5(E), however that is a matter which relates to heritage and is therefore considered within the evidence of Mr Bourn (CD6.19).

5.25 Policy LR5(I and J) of the UDP is set out as follows:

"Development in Open Space Areas will not be permitted where:

(I) It would result in over-development or harm the character of an area;

(J) It would harm the rural character of a wedge of open countryside"

5.26 The appellant agrees with the Committee Report (CD1.7 page 55) that open space allocations in the UDP do not equate to Local Green Space as set out in paragraph 100 of the NPPF. Furthermore, the Council's current approach took that the UDP LR5 allocation does not equate to 'Open Space' as defined by the NPPF. For the reasons explained by Mr Bolton it is the appellant's position that policy LR5 carries little weight in the decision process due to conflict with the NPPF.

5.27 Notwithstanding the above, I briefly consider the development in the context of the matters raised in this policy concerning the impact on landscape character below. The matter of impacts on landscape character is also addressed further in Section 6 of my Evidence.

5.28 It was identified in the LVA that the impacts on landscape character would be highly limited and localised and this is depicted by the Representative Visual Envelope at Figure 9 of the LVA (Appendix 1). This was confirmed by both the Council's Landscape Architect and Planning Officer. Specifically, it was identified by the Council's Landscape Architect that ***'Landscape impact at the wider and local level would be limited'*** (CD1.7, page 63). Indeed, in my own consideration of landscape and visual effects, I provide at Appendix 7, a further plan which denotes the even more limited areas within which I consider there

would be greater than a Minor landscape or visual effect. With regard to this limited extent and nature of landscape character effects, it is not considered that there would be the potential for harm to the character of the local area as a whole. The matter of the weight to be attributed to this policy is considered in the evidence of Mr Roland Bolton, however, notwithstanding this it is considered that there would no conflict with the overarching principles of this policy.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK ('NPPF')

- 5.29 The most recently updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') was published in June 2019. The purpose of National Planning Policy is to guide and inform Local Planning Authorities in the publication of their own policies that will be used to make planning decisions at a local level.
- 5.30 The reason for refusal refers to two paragraphs from the NPPF: Paragraph 127(c) from Section 12 '*Achieving well-designed places*' and Paragraph 170(b) from Section 15 '*Concerning and Enhancing the Natural Environment*'. These are discussed in turn below.
- 5.31 Paragraph 127(c) of the NPPF sets out that: '***Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)***' [my emphasis] (CD4.1).
- 5.32 It is considered that the proposed development is sympathetic to local character and history and has appropriate regard to its surrounding built environment and landscape and townscape setting. In this respect, the proposals accord fully with the aspirations expressed in the NPPF with regard to '*Achieving well-designed places*'. Mr Bourn deals with heritage matters.
- 5.33 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF sets out the manner in which planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment. Criteria (b) states they should do this through:

'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most

versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland'. [my emphasis]
(CD4.1).

- 5.34 The proposals do recognise and respect the site's intrinsic character and that of the wider landscape. Recognising character when development proceeds is not the same as refusal of permission because it causes change. The paragraph of the NPPF in question does not seek to protect countryside for its own sake. The proposals seek to maintain local character, retain important landscape features and seek to improve and enhance local biodiversity and have been derived from appropriate and professional judgement and evaluation. In this respect, the proposals accord fully with the aspirations expressed in the NPPF in relation to 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.
- 5.35 It is noted that the Council's Statement of Case also made reference in its case regarding landscape and visual matters to non-compliance with Paragraph 117 of the NPPF, a paragraph which was not referenced in the Reason for Refusal. This paragraph concerns the approach of making effective use of land for meeting housing needs, whilst safeguarding the environment; a balanced approach to decision making in principle. It doesn't deal with any landscape and visual matters specifically. I therefore defer to the evidence of Mr Roland Bolton who sets out the appellant's position in relation to this paragraph of the NPPF.

6. EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND CHARACTER

6.1 In this section of my evidence I consider the effects of the proposed development on landscape features, and the character of the site and its surroundings. In doing so, I analyse the sensitivity of the receiving landscape and its capacity to accommodate residential development of the type and scale proposed.

6.2 I begin this section of my evidence by considering the matters raised in the Council's Statement of Case regarding the appropriateness of the LVA. I briefly then summarise the effects of the proposals on landscape features, having regard to the findings of both the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) which was prepared for the original 93 dwelling scheme (CD1.11a-c) and the updated LVA set out at Appendix 1 for the revised 85 dwelling scheme. I then consider the potential for effects on landscape character, both at a local level and in the wider landscape surrounding the site, before providing conclusions as to why I consider the development is acceptable in terms of its effect on landscape features and character.

MATTERS RAISED IN THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF CASE REGARDING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE LVA

6.3 In their Statement of Case (CD6.4), the Council set out their case in relation to the second Reason for Refusal concerning landscape matters. In doing so, the Council set out that they do not consider the LVA submitted in support of the application, represented a robust or complete assessment of the impacts of the proposed development and was not in accordance with the GLVIA (2013) (CD7.5). I do not consider this is the case and I set out my reasoning below.

6.4 Although the LVA was undertaken during summer months, due regard was given to instances where winter views could differ, and the visual effects identified take this worst-case into account as is set out at LVA paragraph 5.43 whereby seasonal variations are considered within the assessment (Appendix 1). As noted by the Council at paragraph 5.18 of their Statement of Case that the site is '**characterised by open fields interrupted only by traditional field boundaries and scattered tree planting**' (CD6.4). There are few instances where the season makes any material difference to the visual effects of the appeal proposals. This can be seen within the viewpoint photography which has been collected and is presented at Appendix D of the LVA (May 2021) at my

Appendix 1. Summer photography is also contained at Appendix E of the LVA. My Appendix 5 also provides the respective winter and summer photography for each viewpoint so that they can be more easily compared. It should be noted that full size paper copies of LVA viewpoint photography is provided only at my Appendix 5. It is clear from a review of these, that even including the view from within woodland at Fox Glen (viewpoint 6), summer conditions make little difference to the extent of visibility into the site. While there may be some additional filtration during summer months, trees and vegetation is not sufficiently dense as to warrant a reduced visual effect.

- 6.5 The Council are critical of the original application in that it did not include any visualisations and although the Council acknowledge that **'these are not an essential requirement'** (CD6.4, para 5.23), they go on to state that without these it is **'hard to agree on the likely magnitude of change to assessed views with any degree of confidence'**. The GLVIA is clear that **'professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA'** (CD7.5, para 2.23) and that such judgements **'must be based on both training and experience'** (CD7.5, para 2.24). In coming to their conclusions on the effects of the proposed development, both the landscape architect who undertook the LVA and the Council's Landscape Officer reached broadly comparable judgements, with minor differences acknowledged by the Council's Landscape Officer, as described at my section 3 and the differences of which are contained at my Appendix 4. During the determination period, no visualisations were requested by the Landscape Officer to assist their consideration of the effects of the proposed development. Notwithstanding the above, visualisations have been prepared and these are contained at my Appendix 6. These have been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute Advice Note 06-19 (Visual Representation of Development Proposals, September 2019) (CD7.6).

EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES

- 6.6 The Reason for Refusal relates to the **'unreasonable harm to the established landscape'** (CD1.9). I take this to be the physical landscape i.e. the elements and features of the site which would be directly impacted by the proposed development. However, this can also be taken to mean the established character of the landscape and which I will discuss subsequently.

- 6.7 The LVA identified that there would be a loss of the agricultural fields in which the proposed development would be constructed. It was however identified that the westernmost field of the site would no longer be in agricultural use, but would not be developed and would instead be planted with species rich grassland and would form an open green field on the edge of the development, that would be managed for biodiversity benefit.
- 6.8 It was noted that there would also be the loss of some boundary features along Carr Road to facilitate the construction of a new vehicular access to the site. In addition, there would be the loss of some elements of the drystone walls which currently cross the site internally, whereby sections will require removal to allow roads to link within the development areas, as depicted on Parameter Plan 05 (Landscape and Open Space) (CD1.4e). Some of the walls within and to the sites periphery are assessed as being in '**relatively poor condition**' (Appendix 1, para 5.22) and can be seen at viewpoint 2 of the LVA (Appendix 1). The design of the proposals, however, has sought to retain the majority of the walls as integral elements of the scheme and these would be repaired as necessary. Matters of detail would be subject to further design and agreement with the highway authority, however in undertaking a broad review of the existing quantum of walls surrounding and within the site, and in reviewing the number and likely extent of removals needed for access, of the approximately 1.1 km of drystone wall located to the periphery of the site, approximately 40 linear metres could be expected to be removed / re-aligned to allow access. This is approximately 4 %. Internally, of the approximately 480 linear metres of drystone wall which provides internal division of fields, approximately 35 linear metres could be anticipated to be removed to allow three internal road access points. This is approximately 7 %. The proposals would also include the provision of new accessible greenspace for recreation and new vegetation as part of the landscape mitigation proposals, including woodland, trees, hedgerows and new/restored drystone walls, as depicted on Parameter Plan 05 (Landscape and Open Space) (CD1.4e).
- 6.9 The suggestion that there would be unreasonable harm to the established landscape is unclear there are no landscape features beyond the minor aspects identified above; small areas of walls, that would be altered by the development at all.

EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 6.10 The Reason for Refusal refers to the creation of **'unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'** (CDX1.9).
- 6.11 I also consider further within this section the suggestion from the Reason for Refusal that there would be, **'unreasonable harm to the established landscape'** such that the intended meaning applies to the landscape character as opposed to features (as addressed above). To be clear, it is noted that landscape character is of itself derived from those physical **'elements or combination of elements, which make a contribution to distinctive landscape character'** (CD7.5, page 155 (Glossary)) and that landscape character therefore is in part a function of the physical features of the landscape of a site and in part a function of the features of its surroundings.
- 6.12 The Sheffield Core Strategy Policy CS72 states that **'the green, open and rural character of areas on the edge of built-up areas but not in the Green Belt will be safeguarded through protection as open countryside'** and goes on to describe an area of land which is **'south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk)'** (CD3.1) but which is undefined on any plan or map. As I have previously set out, this policy is inconsistent with the NPPF and was adopted policy in an earlier planning context which is no longer applicable. This is dealt with fully within the evidence of Mr Roland Bolton, however, I set out within this section, the effects of the proposed development upon landscape character to be taken into an appropriate planning balance.
- 6.13 The Sheffield UDP Policy LR5 (I and J) prohibit development which would result in **'harm to the character of an area'** (CD3.4a,) LR5(I) and where development **'would harm the rural character of a wedge of open countryside'** (CD3.4a) LR5(J). These policies were also cited by Sheffield City Council within the Reason for Refusal. I describe below the existing landscape character baseline of the site and its local context and describe the manner by which the proposed development has regard to the maintenance of the aesthetic qualities of the landscape and landscape character.
- 6.14 National Character Area (NCA) profiles have prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCA`s defined across England. These NCA profiles include a description of

the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics. At this very broad landscape scale, the site lies within (NCA) 37 'Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe' (CD7.1) as shown at Figure 4 of the LVA (Appendix 1).

6.15 The Sheffield Preliminary Landscape Character Assessment (2011) (CD7.2) divided the Local Authority Area into four categories of Landscape Character Areas, of which the site lies within the 'UP2-Pastoral Hills and Ridges'¹ sub-area of the Upland Character Area as shown at Figure 5 of the LVA (Appendix 1). It is noted in the Preliminary Landscape Character Assessment that the report does not include an assessment of landscape sensitivity or condition, nor any landscape management guidelines for the areas.

6.16 The Peak District Landscape Character Assessment (2008) (CD7.3) also considered the site due to its location in the landscape beyond the boundaries of the National Park. The site lies within the 'Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe' Landscape Character Area which covers the landscape between Penistone and Sheffield to the east of the National Park. The Character Area is divided into a series of Landscape Types of which the site lies within the 'Enclosed Gritstone Upland' Landscape Type as shown at Figure 6 of the LVA (Appendix 1). The Peak District Landscape Strategy and Action Plan (2009) (CD7.4) went on to provide 'particular priorities' for the Enclosed Gritstone Upland. These include to protect and maintain historic drystone walls and to manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands and which are considered as being a '**priority throughout the landscape type**' (CD7.4, page 17). I have set out at section 5, that the appeal proposals both safeguard the majority of existing walling (approximately 89%) within the site and that those which are in a poor state will be repaired as a benefit of its development. Details on the existing ecological condition of the site are set out in detail in the Ecological Appraisal and Protected Species Report (CD1.14) and the evidence of Mr Kurt Goodman (CD6.21), however the proposal for the western field to be managed for biodiversity benefit, positively addresses this priority.

¹ This was incorrectly described within the LVA as 'UP3 – Upland Rolling Slopes and Valleys to the West'

6.17 The LVA set out that **'the site and the local landscape around it, is not subject to any landscape quality designation at a national or local level'** (Appendix 1, para 5.17) but does identify that the **'designated landscape of the Peak District National Park lies to the south and west'** (Appendix 1 para 5.18). The location of the site in relation to the Peak District National Park and areas of locally designated 'Areas of High Landscape Value' (AHLV) are illustrated at LVA Figure 3 (Appendix 1). The LVA describes that **'whilst there are some limited opportunities to view the Stocksbridge and Deepcar from more distant higher vantage points within the Peak District, such as to the west of the Salter Hills, the site is effectively hidden by a combination of vegetation and the intervening built-up area of Stocksbridge.'** (Appendix 1, para 5.18). The LVA assessed the effects upon the Peak District National Park to be 'negligible – none' (Appendix 1, Appendix B: Landscape Effects), a conclusion which concurred with by both Natural England (CD2.8) and the Peak District National Park Authority (CD2.25) within their respective consultee responses. In relation to the AHLV, it is identified that the nearest such designation is **'orientated away from Deepcar on the south facing slopes above the Ewden Valley'**. (Appendix 1, para 5.21). This is denoted at Figure 5 within the LVA which shows the local character areas and includes ridge lines which in turn can be seen to limit the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) contained at Figure 8 within the LVA (Appendix 1). The ZTV shows the limited theoretical visibility of development within the site and locations within these designated landscapes and although some **'long ranging panoramic views across the Don Valley landscape from the higher ridges and upland moors'** (Appendix 1, para 5.19) may exist, these areas generally have few sensitive receptors and in any event, even where there are exceptions to this, **'these are of some substantial distance away, such that views of the site are not perceptible'** (Appendix 1, para 5.19). As a result, by virtue of the lack of theoretical visibility or the distance of the designation from the site, further consideration of effects upon AHLV designations are not assessed in detail within the LVA.

6.18 The revised LVA, having considered the appeal proposals, assesses no differences in effects and draws the same overarching conclusions with regard to the limited and localised landscape and visual effects as were found in relation to the proposal for up to 93 dwellings. It should be noted however, that the reduction in units and adjusted development layout of the appeal scheme,

responds even more positively to the principles which I set out previously at section 4, bringing further benefits whereby built development along the southern boundary retains northerly views from the junction of Carr Road, Royd Lane, Cockshot Lane and Hollin Busk Lane and additional planting space is provided along the northern boundary.

6.19 I conclude from these findings therefore, that there would be no more than a negligible effect upon the character of these designated, 'valued', landscapes as a result of the proposed development due to a lack of, or limited visibility of the proposals from these areas and the townscape context within which the proposals would be set were they visible.

6.20 Moving on to consider other aspects which could contribute to landscape value, given that the site does not lie within or impact upon a designated landscape, the LVA describes the attributes of the site and its local landscape in relation to the headings of **'landscape quality (condition); scenic quality; rarity; representativeness; conservation interests; recreation value; perceptual aspect and associations'** included within Box 5.1 of the GLVIA (CD7.5, page 84), which are generally agreed to influence value, although these elements are not exhaustive. Whilst the LVA identifies that the site is of **'reasonable to moderate condition'** within a wider landscape that is **'pleasant and attractive'**, much of the scenic quality is comprised in **'the prominent escarpments of Hunshelf Bank and the Wharncliffe Crags that frame the valley landscape'** (Appendix 1, paras 5.22-5.23) which forms the backdrop to the existing settlements of Deepcar and Stocksbridge which are set within open fields which flank the north-facing valley sides as the landform rises towards the higher ground in the south. The site, comprising **'heavily grazed fields'** that are **'typical of this landscape'** (Appendix 1, paras 5.22) is not covered by any ecological designations, is not considered to be rare and is identified as being broadly representative of both the national and local landscape characteristics. It is acknowledged within the LVA, that the site will be of local value given **'the site's close relationship with the surrounding built-up area'** (Appendix 1, para 5.37), although there is no formal or informal recreational access to the site. In considering the combination of the key attributes, the LVA concludes that the site and its local landscape and townscape context are of Medium landscape value and that it is not a 'valued landscape' in the context of the NPPF paragraph 170. I agree with the conclusions of the LVA

in this regard, however I have set out at my Appendix 2, my own considerations of the landscape value of the site. It should be noted also that no concerns were raised by the Council's Landscape Officer within their consultee responses.

- 6.21 With regard for the potential for impacts to the character of the site itself, in the context that it is not a valued landscape, it was firstly identified in the LVA that the site was of medium susceptibility to change. In coming to a conclusion that the site is of Medium susceptibility to change, the LVA concluded that **'the landscape is tolerant of change in the form of well-planned built development'** and that **'new housing would lie alongside the settlement edge and would therefore be observed in the context of existing (and largely modern) housing that is an inherent part of this landscape.'** (Appendix 1, para 7.3). I concur with this judgement and also with the descriptions within the LVA which set out that a localised level of change associated with the alteration from agricultural use to built development would occur, and which is more pronounced than that assessed for the effects upon the local landscape character area within which the site is located.
- 6.22 The LVA assessed level of effect for both the local landscape character area and landscape character type is Moderate - Minor for construction phases and Minor adverse, reducing to Minor adverse – Negligible at 10 years post completion when new landscape has established (Appendix 1, Appendix B: Landscape Effects). Although there would be an inevitable direct effect upon some characteristics and features resulting from new built development, which the LVA identifies would be **'restricted to that of the site and some indirect effects on the immediate landscape around it'** (Appendix 1, para 7.11), impacts upon the wider landscape are contained by **'the combined elements of woodland at Fox Glen, the built up area of Broomfield Grove-Carr Road-Royd Lane- Hollin Busk Road, and rising and at Cockshot Hill'** (Appendix 1, para 7.11).
- 6.23 I have considered the location of the site within its landscape and townscape context and the settlement growth of this part of the valley at my Appendix 3. The wider settlement character is one whereby the more gently sloping valley sides to the south of the River Don, have been developed over time, with the former industrial areas set adjacent to the river, but with residential areas now extending to approximately 275 m AOD at Stone Moor Road and to

approximately 255 m AOD south of Royd Lane, as can be seen at Figure 7 of the LVA (Appendix 1). The appeal proposals occupy land between approximately 230 m and 255 m AOD, responding positively not only to the settlement pattern on plan, as depicted at Figure 4 of my Appendix 3, but appropriately located comparatively low down within this more developed valley side. It is this combination of location, local settlement context and topography which contributes significantly to conclusions of the LVA with regard to the limited nature of any impact that would occur to landscape character at both a local level and in the wider landscape and with which the Council's Landscape Officer agreed. In particular specifically noted in the summary provided by the Officer's Report that **'Landscape impact at the wider and local level would be limited'** (CD1.7, page 48).

- 6.24 Further to the limited effects upon wider character, as I have described at section 4 the development includes embedded Green Infrastructure elements which are also characteristic of the wider landscape. These are expressly included within the development parameter plans (CD1.4a-f). The embedded GI elements respond specifically to the priority landscape guidelines within the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands LCT of: *'Protect and maintain historic drystone walls'*, and *'manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands'* (CD7.4, page 17). Within the LVA, the existing drystone walls are described as being ***'in a relatively poor condition'*** (Appendix 1, para 5.22). This can be seen in particular along the site boundary with Carr Road at Figure 10 of the LVA (Appendix 1, Viewpoint 2). It is of note also, that this poor section of walling is that which would be altered by the proposed vehicular access into the site. The development utilises the field pattern to contain built form within parcels defined by their stone wall boundaries, removing only those sections (approximately 11%) required to facilitate infrastructure elements and access. Where these walls are dilapidated, the development will facilitate their repair. The parameter plans also include new species rich grassland to be within the site's westernmost field, and which is to be managed for biodiversity net gain, without public access. Within the Peak District Landscape Strategy and Action Plan the protection and maintenance of historic drystone walls and the management and enhancement of diversity of agricultural grasslands are considered as being a ***'priority throughout the landscape type'*** (CD7.4, page 17) and these are positively addressed by the appeal proposals.

- 6.25 The LVA assessed the effect of the proposed development upon the site as being Major – Moderate during construction, reducing to Moderate at completion and reducing further to Moderate – Minor at 10 years post completion when new landscape has established, identifying that the degree of change **'would be tempered by the fact that the Proposed Development would occur within a settlement edge landscape, that already exhibits similar built characteristics'** (Appendix 1, para 7.7). The Council's Landscape Officer is **'in agreement with the majority of the assessment of landscape effects presented in the appraisal report'**, agreeing that **'broadly, this is that the adverse impact of development on the wider and local landscape would be limited. Some more pronounced adverse effects may be created, but are largely confined to the landscape of the site itself.'** (CD1.7, page 46).
- 6.26 In this context, I do not consider the extent to which the changes which would occur as a result of the proposed development would amount to **'unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'** as purported within the reason for refusal. It is accepted that any development such as this, brings about direct effects upon the landscape of the site itself, as has been assessed within the LVA. However, it is clear that the inclusion of existing landscape features within the site as green infrastructure, in conjunction with the proposed enhancements, will offer a direct and positive response to the priority landscape guidelines within the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands LCT which provide different priorities for each of the landscape types in the Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe. Indeed, the proposed development embraces these guidelines, which includes amongst other things to 'Protect and maintain historic drystone walls', and 'manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands'.
- 6.27 The local landscape character has therefore been recognised and appropriately taken into consideration in terms of scale and location of development and the location of open space and the landscape structure and mitigation proposals. The appeal proposals accord fully with the aspirations expressed in the NPPF paragraph 127(c) 'Achieving well-designed places' and paragraph 170 with regard to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, in that they would maintain local character, retain important landscape features and seek to improve and enhance local biodiversity.

- 6.28 The Council's Landscape Architect was in agreement with the findings of the LVA (which as noted above, would be further reduced when the revised scheme is considered) and summarised that ***'in line with the conclusions in the LVA, there will be some significant localised adverse landscape impacts on the site itself. However, in the broader context of landscape impact taken as a whole in terms of surrounding landscape character, the impact of development on the wider landscape is likely to be limited. A small number of relatively minor differences in judgement of the severity of some of the localised site impacts are unlikely to affect this overall conclusion.'*** (CD1.7, page 47).
- 6.29 I agree with the conclusions of the LVA and the Council's Landscape Architect and with regard to the updated LVA and based upon my own assessment of the proposals in relation to their local context, I consider that the proposed development is sympathetic to local character and history and has paid appropriate regard to its surrounding built environment and the site's intrinsic character and that of the wider landscape and which has been derived from appropriate and professional judgement and evaluation. The proposals accord fully with the aspirations expressed in the NPPF in relation to 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment', in accordance with paragraphs 127(c) and 170(b) of the NPPF and accord fully with the aspirations expressed in the NPPF with regard to 'Achieving well-designed places', in that they would maintain local character, retain important landscape features and seek to improve and enhance local biodiversity.

7. EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

Introduction

7.1 In this section of my evidence, I consider the effects of the proposed development on visual amenity. I begin this section of my evidence by briefly summarising the visual effects of the proposals, having regard to the findings of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) which was prepared for the original 93 dwelling scheme (CD1.11a-c) and the updated LVA set out at Appendix 1 for the revised 85 dwelling scheme (Appendix 1). I then consider the matter of the potential for there to be **'unreasonable harm'** to **'visual amenity at both local and wider levels'**, as referred to within the Council's Reason for Refusal (CD1.9). Finally, I consider the matter of the impact of the site in relation to the visual break between Deepcar and Stocksbridge, with respect to the suggestion the proposals would lead to **'undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements'** (CD1.9).

Overview of Findings of the LVA and Revised LVA

7.2 The LVA included an analysis of the potential visibility of the proposed development, beginning with a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) plan (Appendix 1, Figure 8) and then refining this through site fieldwork in order to seek to identify the actual degree of site visibility. This resulted in the production of a Refined Visual Envelope (RVE) plan (Appendix 1, Figure 9). An annotated version of Figure 9 is reproduced at my Appendix 7 which conveys the even more limited extent of effects (those assessed to be greater than Minor at completion). It was acknowledged that some visibility may potentially occur outside the area shown on the RVE plan, for example along Hunshelf Bank, but that any such areas would not be the primary locations of relevance to a consideration of potential visual effects. The LVA was also supported by a series of photographs (LVA Figures 10–19), which were representative of receptors in the vicinity of the site. I provide these photographs, both winter and summer images, at my Appendix 5 with additional annotations that assist further in locating the site extents and in particular, the areas proposed for built form, and those parts of the site retained as open space.

7.3 I consider the effects identified in the LVA in relation to local settlements, public rights of way and the road network in turn below. Notwithstanding the minor areas of disagreement, which I set out at my Appendix 4 and addressed previously in Section 3, the Council's Landscape Architect was in agreement with the findings of the LVA, and that the visual effects would be very limited in their extent and nature.

Views from Residential Receptors in Deepcar and Stocksbridge

7.4 The LVA considered views from residential receptors to both the east of the site along Carr Road (viewpoints 1, 2 and 3 (Appendix 5, Figures 10 and 11)) and the western extent of Royd Lane (viewpoint 4 (Appendix 5, Figure 11)), and to the west of the site along Hollin Busk Lane (viewpoint 5 (Appendix 5, Figure 12)) and Broomfield Lane. It was identified that there would be a major-moderate effect on properties along Carr Road and the western extent of Royd Lane, reducing to a moderate effect in the longer term as the proposed vegetation planting matures. For properties along Hollin Busk Lane and Broomfield Lane effects were identified to be moderate, reducing to moderate-minor in the longer term (Appendix 1, Appendix C: Receptors A and B). Effects such as these are an inevitable consequence of development occurring in relative proximity to existing residences and is typical where existing views over undeveloped land at settlement edges are proposed for development such as the appeal scheme.

7.5 It was also set out in the LVA that for all of the surrounding residential receptors where the above effects were identified, views of existing built features form part of their context. Specifically, the residents on Carr Road and Royd Lane have existing views of housing on Hollin Busk Lane and Broomfield Lane and vice versa.

7.6 Beyond the close range, localised views from nearby residents, identified above, it was set out in the LVA that there were no views of the site from the vast majority of residential receptors.

Views from other Settlements

7.7 The village of Bolsterstone, lies in an elevated location around 0.75km to the south of the site. The LVA identified that there were some residential properties on the northern edge of the village which have long distance views to the north. However, it was set out that whilst these views would include some of the wider

built-up area of the settled valley, the site itself would be obscured by the intervening landform of Cockshot Hill and the associated raised landform along Cockshot Lane and Folderings Lane. The likely limited visibility is conveyed by the lack of coverage depicted on the ZTV at LVA Figure 8 (Appendix 1). Any views, therefore, would be from upper storey windows with a northerly aspect.

- 7.8 It was also identified in the LVA that there were a number of individual residential properties located on higher land at Hunshelf Bank, around 1.25km to the north of the site. These properties were noted to have wide ranging views within which the site would form no more than a minor component within the much wider expansive view of the existing built up area of the valley across which views extend. Views from Hunshelf Bank are represented by viewpoints 9 and 13 (Appendix 5, Figures 14 and 16) and which clearly show the settled valley townscape context within which the appeal proposals would be set.

Views from Public Rights of Way

- 7.9 The LVA identified that there was very limited visibility of the site from the circular public footpath that runs through Fox Glen, just to the north of the site. The footpath was noted to run mostly within woodland with mature trees screening views towards the site. However, from a small number of locations along the route it was set out that there would be a moderate effect on visual amenity, reducing to a minor effect on maturity of the proposed mitigation planting (Appendix 1, Appendix C: Receptor D). Views from within Fox Glen are depicted at LVA viewpoint 6 (Appendix 5, Figure 12).
- 7.10 For those using the public footpath which runs south from Royd Lane across Stocksbridge Golf Club, it was identified that for the most part views towards the site would be obscured or filtered by intervening vegetation, either within the golf course or along Cockshot Lane. Views were identified to be restricted to a limited section of the route in the vicinity of Round Hill near Walders Low (LVA viewpoint 7 (Appendix 5, Figure 13)). From this more elevated location, existing views were noted to include the wider extent of the settled valley area and the wider landscape of Hunshelf Bank and a minor effect was identified, reducing to negligible once the landscape mitigation becomes mature (Appendix 1, Appendix C: Receptor E). It is clear from a review of the winter photography for viewpoint 7 (Appendix 5), that in addition to vegetation which screens the site, proposed

areas of built development would, in fact, be set behind existing dwellings south of Royd Lane, with visibility of rooflines unlikely due to the falling topography.

7.11 The footpath which runs between Hollin Busk and Bolsterstone was also considered at paragraph 5.55 of the LVA (Appendix 1). It was noted that the site would be visible from sections of this route after an initial section where views of the site are obscured by landform. The route extends across farmland between the residential areas at the western extent of Hollin Busk Lane and the northern edges of Bolsterstone. Principal views in the respective directions of travel are those which incorporate these existing settlement edges whereby housing at Hollin Busk Lane, Broomfield Lane and Broomfield Grove is already visible. Where views become more open to the north and east, the site is located within views perpendicular to the direction of travel and set down below the level of the footpath and adjacent to other areas of housing at Carr Road and Royd Lane and Broomfield Grove. A moderate-minor effect was identified, reducing to minor as the vegetation proposals mature (Appendix 1, Appendix C: Receptor F) which reflects the context of views in the direction of the site for receptors using this footpath. However, the location of the site is peripheral to the direction of travel, set within an existing townscape context and that of the wider valley landscape which can be appreciated along the route, and not limited to those locations where the site is also visible. The existing views of the distant Hunshelf Bank escarpment were however noted to be unaffected, as can be seen at LVA viewpoint 8 (Appendix 5, Figure 13). A visualisation has been prepared from this location to illustrate how the view north eastwards would look post development. This visualisation is contained at Location 2 at my Appendix 6.

7.12 The elevated sections of the Barnsley Boundary Walk along Hunshelf Bank, which have long distance views towards the site, were also considered in the LVA and represented by viewpoints 9 and 13 (Appendix 5, Figures 14 and 16) and which clearly show the settled valley townscape context within which the appeal proposals would be set. A minor effect, reducing to negligible was identified for users of the route, from which it was noted that the proposed development would form a minor component in the much wider panoramic view of the urban area of the settled valley (Appendix 1, Appendix C: Receptors G and K).

Views from Roads

7.13 GLVIA describes at paragraphs 6.32, how visual receptor sensitivity should be assessed in terms of ***both their susceptibility to change in views and visual***

amenity and also the value attached to particular views' (CD7.5, para 6.31). Susceptibility is derived from the person's occupation or activity and the extent to which their attention is focussed on views. Value in visual sensitivity terms, is that, as described at paragraph 6.37 of GLVIA, which could be derived from heritage assets or other indicators of value attached to views (such as information boards, viewpoints or inclusion on tourist literature for example), rather than the value an individual might place upon a landscape they consider to be attractive. The LVA has set out at paragraph 2.18, that ***'travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of susceptibility to change'*** (Appendix 1) and appropriately sets out that for all highway receptors susceptibility is medium and value is medium, with the exception of receptors at Don Valley Height (Ref K) considered to be medium-low.

7.14 The principal roads from which the proposed development would be visible, were identified in the LVA to be Carr Road (LVA viewpoint 4 (Appendix 5, Figure 11)), Cockshot Lane (LVA viewpoint 12 (Appendix 5, Figure 15)) and Hollin Busk Lane (LVA viewpoints 5, 10 and 11 (Appendix 5, Figures 12, 14 and 15)). In addition, there would also be the potential for views from the western extent of Royd Lane as it joins Carr Road, and from Broomfield Lane to the west of the site. It was set out that highway users are inherently lower sensitivity, as described above, and their views towards the site would be more fleeting and transient than views from residential properties or users of public footpaths. In this context and with regard to the views of existing properties which are already available from these routes, the LVA set out there would be no more than a moderate-minor effect on the nearby highways network, reducing to minor once the landscape mitigation proposals mature (Appendix 1, Appendix C: Receptors J, I and H). A visualisation has been prepared from locations which reflect receptors H (people travelling east on Hollin Busk Lane), and I (people travelling north on Cockshot Lane), to illustrate how each view would look post development. These visualisations are contained at Locations 1 and 3 at my Appendix 6.

7.15 Table A3.2 at Appendix 3, sets out in detail the changes to views for receptors travelling east along Hollin Busk Lane. In summary, new built form would replicate the townscape pattern and character of a line of existing properties which already appear within this view, extending from the junction between Royd Lane and along Carr Road to the north.

7.16 Folderings Lane and Cockshot Lane connect Bolsterstone in the more elevated south, with the eastern end of Hollin Busk Lane at Royd. Leaving Bolsterstone, this road is winding and relatively narrow with no pavements. Views are initially enclosed by characteristic drystone walls and the winding nature and elevated position is such that views extend to the high ground at Hunshelf Bank, with the settled valley largely obscured by landform. It is not until a point approximately 230 m south west of the site, that wider views toward existing development at Broomfield Grove and Broomfield Lane to the north and to the west, houses at Hollin Busk Lane, appear within the middle ground of these wider valley views before the road bends facilitating views north eastwards towards the site. As the road turns to the north east, it descends more rapidly towards the junction with Hollin Busk Lane / Carr Road / Royd Lane. It is from a location in this relatively close proximity to the site and other housing, that the visualisation has been prepared to reflect one of the few locations from where clear views of the site are available.

7.17 Both the visualisations at Location 1 (Hollin Busk Lane) and Location 3 (Cockshot Lane) show how the proposed built form, although apparent within views, would not materially alter their composition. The experience of receptors travelling along these routes is already one where there is an awareness of the existing settled edges which appear within both direct and peripheral views. The position of road users at these locations is such that the larger scale landscape elements and features which are unique to this part of the Don Valley, such as the Wharnccliffe Craggs in the east and Hunshelf Bank to the north, also form key features and elements within views. Views of these key features are available from numerous locations when moving across and within the landscape to the south of the site and are not limited to those locations where the site is also visible. This is reflective of the initial moderate-minor effects which would reduce to minor as mitigation matures.

Views from the Peak District National Park

7.18 The LVA identified that the rising topography to the south of the site at Cockshot Hill, together with intervening vegetation, effectively prevent clear views of the site from the closest parts of Peak District. Furthermore, it was noted that whilst there are some opportunities to view the landscape from higher vantage points within the Peak District, such as to the west of Stocksbridge at Salter Hills, for

example, the site itself is effectively obscured by a combination of landform, intervening vegetation and by the built-up area of Stocksbridge. Any views of the Proposed Development would therefore be observed within the context of the built-up area.

7.19 On this basis it was concluded that the visual effect on the Peak District would be negligible to none (Appendix 1, Appendix B: Landscape Effects). It is again noted that Natural England and the National Park Authority do not object to the proposal, including with regard to relationship between the site and the Peak District National Park. As I have set out at my section 6, the Peak District National Park Authority set out that the proposed development **'would not impact adversely upon the setting of the Peak District National Park'** (CD2.25, s.7) and Natural England set out that they **'do not consider that the proposed development would compromise the purposes of designation or special qualities of the National Park.'** (CD2.8).

7.20 The LVA and my own assessment agrees with the consultee response of Natural England and the National Park Authority in that there will not be a significant effect upon the Peak District National Park, such that the proposals are at such a distance and scale that they will be de minimis.

Visual Impact on Areas of High Landscape Value or Important Views within the Open Space Area

7.21 At a local level, the Sheffield UDP includes Areas of High Landscape Value, and the proposed development does not fall within, or adversely affect, any of these designated landscapes. The LVA confirmed that the nearest designation is oriented away from Deepcar on the south facing slopes above the Ewden valley.

7.22 The UDP also includes for the protection of important views as part of the Open Space Area designation, under criterion (e) of UDP Policy LR5. I note that the Reason for Refusal also cites LR5(E), however that is a matter which relates to heritage and is therefore considered within the evidence of Mr Bourn (CD6.19). This also does not apply to this site, nor does the development proposals adversely affect any view of acknowledged importance. The part of the policy cited within the Reason for Refusal which relate to landscape and visual issues was limited solely to criteria (I) and (J).

Consideration of Additional Viewpoints to the North of the Site Provided by the Council

7.23 I have previously set out at section 3, that the Council have provided a plan showing a number of other viewpoint locations from the area characterised as Hunshelf Bank. The Council's plan is appended to the Statement of Common Ground (CD6.8, Appendix 3). Ordnance Survey mapping of the area, such as that at LVA Figure 9 (Appendix 1), show numerous Public Rights of Way, including the Barnsley Boundary Walk and areas of other land which is publicly accessible to the northern valley side. Having walked within this landscape, I acknowledge that there will be visibility from locations other than those two representative locations which are assessed in the LVA viewpoints 9 and 13 (receptors 'G' and 'K'). That is however the nature of a representative viewpoint. The south facing and steeply sloping side of Hunshelf Bank is characterised by its relative openness and lack of development, although scattered farms and the inclusion of overhead electrical infrastructure mounted on timber poles and metal pylons are present crossing the foreground landscape. The A616 follows a route on the valley floor, and along with the broad expanse of developed areas which extends from the Underbank Reservoir in the west to the eastern edges of Deepcar, the experience of walking in these areas is one in which there are both apparent visual and aural associations with the urban land use and infrastructure which is a key feature of southerly views. It should also be noted, that from the most elevated locations on Hunshelf Bank, views not only extend southwards, but there are far-reaching northerly and easterly views which render in these instances, the appearance of the settled Don Valley in this location, a smaller element within a more expansive and varied vista. In these instances, any appreciation of the appeal proposals would be further reduced from that assessed as being minor within the LVA for receptors represented by viewpoints 9 and 13 (receptors 'G' and 'K'), a judgement with which the Council agrees. The Council also agrees that these viewpoints are representative of views towards the site from locations within this part of the landscape.

7.24 From my own understanding of this part of the landscape, the location of the appeal proposals and the existing context in which they would be set, the assessed effects for receptors G and K within the LVA, are also representative of other such locations where the baseline of views, distance from the site and degree of change are so similar that no different conclusion would be reached. Although some views of the site can be obtained from the elevated areas of

Hunshelf Bank, the effect of the proposed development on those views is remarkably little.

Potential for 'unreasonable harm' to 'visual amenity at both local and wider levels'

7.25 The LVA clearly identified that any impact to visual amenity would be highly limited and localised to the immediate surroundings of the site. This was confirmed by the Council's Landscape Architect. Furthermore, the effects on visual amenity would be further reduced following the maturation of the mitigation proposals included as part of the development, as can be seen by review of the Year 15 visualisations at my Appendix 6, bearing also in mind that the photomontages depict winter views and that the matter of detailed landscape design will be subject to the submission of Reserved Matters, allowing input by the Council's Landscape Officer. The photomontages reflect the indicative landscape edge shown on the Illustrative Masterplan (CD1.3a) and I consider this to be an appropriate response which does not entirely close off the proposed development from the wider, open landscape, but provides a softened edge to this part of the settlement, much as can presently be seen within views towards the nearby existing homes to the east and west of Carr Road. It is also of note that those limited residual effects which would remain would not occur within the Green Belt, in a Valued Landscape, nor on designated landscapes at either a national or local level.

7.26 On this basis, there appears no logical justification for the conclusion that there would be 'unreasonable' harm to visual amenity, as suggested in Reason for Refusal. The scheme was designed to minimise visual effects and has succeeded in this regard. This was further reinforced following the revision of the scheme to the 85 dwellings proposal. The Planning Officer recognised this in their recommendation of the scheme for approval and I agree with the position they set out with regard to visual effects in their Report.

Potential for the proposals to undermine the role of the site in visually separating established settlements

- 7.27 It is suggested in the Reason for Refusal that the proposals would serve to undermine the role the site plays in providing a visual break between the settlements of Deepcar and Stocksbridge. I do not agree with this observation. The policy also describes the land as making a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge. I have at my Appendix 3, provided further consideration to both townscape pattern, character and the perception of the visual separation as experienced when leaving or arriving existing settlement areas to the east and west of the 'south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk)' land (as denoted within Sheffield UDP Policy CS72).
- 7.28 Stocksbridge and Deepcar are already connected, with the northern extent of both settlements running interchangeably into one another along the B6088 (Manchester Road), and Wood Royd Road. Overall, this developed valley landscape / townscape, lying downstream of the Underbank Reservoir, has developed organically over time from a number of smaller settlements to what is now perceived as a settlement continuum, with its individual components not being distinct from each other when considered in townscape or visual terms. Indeed, in local historical information for Stocksbridge set out on the Peniston Online Archive², it is stated that Stocksbridge ***"blends into the areas of Deepcar, Bolsterstone and the eastern end of Ewden Valley around Ewden village"*** [my emphasis].
- 7.29 By review of Figures 1 and 2 at my Appendix 3, it can be seen that the organic growth of the settlements over time has not been nuclear, nor has it happened in a way that has maintained any distinct separate identity. It should also be noted that in addition to the growth and development of Stocksbridge and Deepcar to the west and east of this part of the Don Valley respectively, the area of Haywood, located between the two, has also expanded southwards merging with the other settlements. This settlement area lies immediately to the west of Fox Glen and the appeal proposals have aligned built form with this nearby development, cognisant of maintaining a visual break and avoiding the suggested concerns of the text to policy CS72.

² <https://penistonearchive.co.uk/towns-and-villages/stocksbridge/>

- 7.30 Any separation which does occur between the settlements therefore relates solely to their southern extents and is not always clearly apparent in views from the wider landscape.
- 7.31 This issue therefore primarily relates to the area of land between Carr Road in the east and Hollin Busk Road in the west. This section of road, along a length no further than 500 m, despite passing through undeveloped land, is lit. Lighting columns, along with other vertical poles, are consistent with this settlement fringe area.
- 7.32 LVA photo viewpoint 5 illustrates the view from Hollin Busk Lane looking east to Carr Road (Appendix 5, Figure 12). This image aids with an understanding of the extent to which a visual break would be retained. The fields which would remain undeveloped are clearly prominent in the foreground of the view. A visualisation has been prepared, from this location to illustrate how the view eastwards would look post development from LVA viewpoint 5. This visualisation is contained at Location 1 at my Appendix 6.
- 7.33 This area which would remain undeveloped between the settlements can also be seen in LVA photo viewpoint 10 (Appendix 5, Figure 14) from further east along Hollin Busk Lane.
- 7.34 In the slightly longer distance view from Cockshot Lane (LVA photo viewpoint 12 (Appendix 5, Figure 15) to the south of the site, the extent of this undeveloped break which would be retained is further apparent. The proposals would appear to clearly relate to the adjacent settlement and appear well separated from that at Hollin Busk which would lie beyond the visible extent to the left-hand side of the photo.
- 7.35 It is clear from my analysis, that there would remain a physical gap between these two areas of the local townscape and that the perception of leaving Hollin Busk and travelling through an area of undeveloped land along the settlement edges would, nonetheless, be retained. The objective of retaining a visual break between these two areas would not be undermined by the appeal proposals and the proposals were carefully and sensitively constrained with this objective in mind.

- 7.36 I have set out at my Appendix 3, my analysis of the degree to which the area of land referred to in the policy, contributes to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge and also, the contribution made by the site in this regard. I have noted that the policy wording also sets out that **"The land at Hollin Busk is a large and integral part of the countryside south of Stocksbridge"**. Whether this land includes the appeal site is a matter for others. Nonetheless, as I have described within my appendix, and as can be seen on Figures 1 and 2 at Appendix 3, this area of land is in fact a remnant part of the former farmed valley side, around which development within the general Stocksbridge area (which I take to include Haywood Park, Deepcar and development around nucleated farming settlements such as Hollin Busk and Royd), has expanded. Having visited the site and the areas surrounding it, I do not consider that this land is anything more than ordinary countryside, not appearing particularly different to other undeveloped land at the edges of the settlement. I consider rather that the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge, is that which is derived from its unique valley landscape and historical townscape evolution, which is, importantly, not limited to only that of Stocksbridge, but also its adjoining settlements which read as a whole. I consider that it is the larger scale of landscape elements and features which are unique to this part of the Don Valley, such as the Wharnccliffe Craggs in the east, Hunshelf Bank to the north and the edges of the Peak District National Park to the south to be where the true distinctiveness and character of the place is derived.
- 7.37 Notwithstanding the lack of defined location or extent, even were one to consider 'land south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk)' to make the significant contribution, as is set out in the policy, the site is likely to comprise only a part of that land and the areas within which built development is proposed confined further still. I consider that as a result, the change arising from the proposed development, would not be to such a degree that it would affect the character and distinctiveness represented by this land. As can be seen from the annotated viewpoint 13 at my Appendix 5, the greater part of the land which may be referred to by this policy, will remain undeveloped.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Having reviewed the Proposed Development; the application submission documents; updated LVA at my Appendix 1; comments of the Council and consultees in relation to the scheme; and the Statement of Case of the Council and having considered these in the context of the Reason for Refusal, I provide the following summary and conclusions.

8.2 The reason for refusal sets out those landscape and visual matters which are in dispute. Specifically, it refers to **'unreasonable harm to the established landscape and to visual amenity at both local and wider levels'**, which it suggests would lead to **'unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'**. It also suggests that there would be **'undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements'**.

8.3 The Council provide no commentary or explanation of what constitutes unreasonable harm and in what sense it is considered to be unreasonable. It may be considered to be another way of saying unacceptable harm, but as this term is expressly used in relation to strand (b) with regard unacceptable impacts on character, then it can only be assumed that unreasonable harm has a distinct meaning to the Council, separate from unacceptable. However as all of the material impacts are required to be identified and taken into the planning balance, my evidence and the assessments in the LVA has appropriately identified those impacts in relation to landscape, character, visual amenity and the separation of settlements.

Effects on Landscape Character

8.4 It is accepted that any development such as this, brings about direct effects upon the landscape of the site itself, as has been assessed within the LVA. The LVA identified that there would be a loss of the agricultural fields in which the proposed development would be constructed. However, the inclusion of existing landscape features within the site as green infrastructure, in conjunction with the proposed enhancements, will offer a direct and positive response to the priority landscape guidelines within the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands LCT of the landscape types in the Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe (CD7.4, page 17). Indeed, the proposed development embraces these guidelines, which includes amongst

other things to 'Protect and maintain historic drystone walls', and 'manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands'.

- 8.5 I have considered the location of the site within its landscape and townscape context and the settlement growth of this part of the valley. The appeal proposals occupy land between approximately 230 m and 255 m AOD, responding positively not only to the settlement pattern, but appropriately located comparatively low down within this more developed valley side. It is this combination of location, local settlement context and topography which contributes significantly to conclusions of the LVA with regard to the limited nature of any impact that would occur to landscape character at both a local level and in the wider landscape and with which the Council's Landscape Officer agreed.
- 8.6 With regard for the potential for impacts to the character of the site itself and its local landscape, in the context that it is not a valued landscape, it was firstly identified in the LVA that the site was of medium susceptibility to change. The LVA concluded that **'the landscape is tolerant of change in the form of well-planned built development'** and that **'new housing would lie alongside the settlement edge and would therefore be observed in the context of existing (and largely modern) housing that is an inherent part of this landscape.'** (Appendix 1, para 7.3)
- 8.7 The local landscape character has therefore been recognised and appropriately taken into consideration in terms of scale and location of development and the location of open space and the landscape structure and mitigation proposals. The appeal proposals accord fully with the aspirations expressed in the NPPF paragraph 127(c) 'Achieving well-designed places' and paragraph 170 with regard to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, in that they would maintain local landscape and townscape character, retain important landscape features and seek to improve and enhance local biodiversity.

Effects on Visual Amenity

- 8.8 In their Statement of Case (CD6.4), the Council set out that they do not consider the LVA submitted in support of the application, represented a robust or complete assessment of the impacts of the proposed development and was not in accordance with the GLVIA (2013) (CD7.5). It was however set out in the Statement of Common Ground (CD6.8) that the matter of disagreement is in

relation to two methodological points of the submitted LVA, namely the Council consider that the assessment did not allow for seasonal changes, and that no photomontages were provided with the submission. I have set out that the visual effects identified take the worst-case into account as is set out at LVA paragraph 5.43 whereby seasonal variations are considered within the assessment (Appendix 1). Indeed, given that the site is '**characterised by open fields interrupted only by traditional field boundaries and scattered tree planting**' (CD6.4), there are few instances where the season makes any material difference to the visual effects of the appeal proposals. Winter and summer photography is now included within the revised LVA (May 2021) (Appendix 5) enabling comparison to be made. Visualisations have also been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute Advice Note 06-19 (Visual Representation of Development Proposals, September 2019) (CD7.6) and are contained at Appendix 6.

- 8.9 The LVA contains a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) plan (Appendix 1, Figure 8) and a Representative Visual Envelope (RVE) plan (Appendix 1, Figure 9) which refined the ZTV through site fieldwork in order to seek to identify the actual degree of site visibility. An annotated version of Figure 9 is reproduced at my Appendix 7 which conveys the even more limited extent of effects (those assessed to be greater than Minor at completion). It was acknowledged that some visibility may potentially occur outside the area shown on the RVE plan, for example along Hunshelf Bank, but that any such areas would not be the primary locations of relevance to a consideration of potential visual effects.
- 8.10 Beyond the close range, localised views from nearby residents, it was set out in the LVA that there were no views of the site from the vast majority of residential receptors. It was identified that there would be a major-moderate effect on properties along Carr Road and the western extent of Royd Lane, reducing to a moderate effect in the longer term as the proposed vegetation planting matures. For properties along Hollin Busk Lane and Broomfield Lane effects were identified to be moderate, reducing to moderate-minor in the longer term. Effects such as these are an inevitable consequence of development occurring in relative proximity to existing residences and is typical where existing views over undeveloped land at settlement edges are proposed for development such as the appeal scheme.

- 8.11 The LVA identified that there was very limited visibility of the site from the circular public footpath that runs through Fox Glen, just to the north of the site. The footpath was noted to run mostly within woodland with mature trees screening views towards the site. However, from a small number of locations along the route it was set out that there would be a moderate effect on visual amenity, reducing to a minor effect on maturity of the proposed mitigation planting.
- 8.12 The site would be visible from sections of the footpath which runs between Bolsterstone and Hollin Busk, after an initial section where views of the site are obscured by landform. A moderate-minor effect was identified, reducing to minor as the vegetation proposals mature. The site is located within views perpendicular to the direction of travel and set down below the level of the footpath and adjacent to other areas of housing at Carr Road and Royd Lane and Broomfield Grove, is peripheral to the direction of travel, set within an existing townscape context and that of the wider valley landscape which can be appreciated along the route, and not limited to those locations where the site is also visible.
- 8.13 Some views of the site can be obtained from the elevated areas of Hunshelf Bank, however, the effect of the proposed development on those views is remarkably little. The LVA assessed the effects for viewpoints representative of these locations (viewpoints 9 and 13 (receptors 'G' and 'K') as being minor and this reflects the baseline of views which includes a broad expanse of developed areas, the distance from the site and degree of change which would arise from the appeal proposals.
- 8.14 The principal roads from which the proposed development would be visible, were identified in the LVA to be Carr Road, Cockshot Lane and Hollin Busk Lane and from the western extent of Royd Lane as it joins Carr Road, and from Broomfield Lane to the west of the site. The experience of receptors travelling along these routes is already one where there is an awareness of the existing settled edges which appear within both direct and peripheral views. No more than a moderate-minor effect on the nearby highways network is assessed, reducing to minor once the landscape mitigation proposals mature.

- 7.38 It was concluded that the visual effect on the Peak District would be negligible to none and for the and the proposed development does not fall within, or adversely affect Areas of High Landscape Value.

Potential for the proposals to undermine the role of the site in visually separating established settlements

- 8.15 Stocksbridge and Deepcar are already connected, with the northern extent of both settlements running interchangeably into one another along the B6088 (Manchester Road), and Wood Royd Road. Overall, this developed valley landscape / townscape, lying downstream of the Underbank Reservoir, has developed organically over time from a number of smaller settlements to what is now perceived as a settlement continuum, with its individual components not being distinct from each other when considered in townscape or visual terms. Any separation which does occur between the settlements therefore relates solely to their southern extents and is not always clearly apparent in views from the wider landscape.
- 8.16 This issue therefore primarily relates to the area of land between Carr Road in the east and Hollin Busk Road in the west. The proposals would appear to clearly relate to the adjacent settlement and appear well separated from that at Hollin Busk. There would remain a physical gap between these two areas of the local townscape and that the perception of leaving Hollin Busk and travelling through an area of undeveloped land along the settlement edges would, nonetheless, be retained. The objective of retaining a visual break between these two areas would not be undermined by the appeal proposals and the proposals were carefully and sensitively constrained with this objective in mind.

Conclusions

- 8.17 Having examined the relevant application documentation and the relevant policy context, I was satisfied that the proposals were appropriately located, and that the proposed development areas responded to their landscape and townscape context. Indeed, it was clear that the involvement of FPCR into the design of the proposals had led to a positive, Green Infrastructure led, scheme responsive to local landscape character and distinctiveness and with regard to local visual amenity.
- 8.18 The matter of the overall planning balance is one which is discussed by Mr Roland Bolton, however it is clear that the extent and nature of the landscape and visual

effects to be taken forward into that balance is one which both the Council's Landscape Architect and the Planning Officer confirmed were highly limited and localised. Furthermore, that part of the landscape in which those limited effect would occur is one which would lie outside of the Green Belt, in a landscape which is not a Valued Landscape, as considered in the NPPF.

- 8.19 The proposed development will have either no effect, or no more than a negligible effect, upon landscapes of acknowledged importance, such as landscapes designated for their National, Regional or local landscape value, including the Peak District National Park. At a local level, the Sheffield UDP includes Areas of High Landscape Value, and the proposed development does not fall within, or adversely affect, any of these designated landscapes. The UDP also includes an important views designation which it is also confirmed does not apply to this site, nor does the development proposals adversely affect any of those views of acknowledged importance.
- 8.20 With regard to the highly limited and localised nature of the effects which would arise, it is not agreed that the proposals would give rise to unreasonable harm to landscape character or visual amenity, nor would they therefore give rise to unacceptable impacts on the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Furthermore, it is not considered that the proposals would result in an undermining of the role of the site in providing a visual separation between existing settlement areas. The proposals only extend across part of an undeveloped area, with a clear separation remaining between the proposals to the east and Hollin Busk to the west.
- 8.21 I do not therefore consider that the proposals are contrary to any of the landscape and visual policies from the Core Strategy or Unitary Development Plan, which were referenced in the reason for refusal. Nor do I consider that the proposals are contrary to the aims, purposes or requirements of paragraphs 127(c) or 170(b) of the NPPF. The proposed development has been designed in a manner which is sympathetic to local character and history and has appropriate regard to its surrounding built environment and landscape and townscape setting. It also recognises the site's intrinsic character and that of the wider landscape whilst seeking to maintain local character, retain important landscape features and to improve and enhance local biodiversity.

8.22 With regard to the agreed highly limited and localised nature of the effects, and the advice of the Council's Landscape Architect who did not object to the proposals, the Planning Officer had concluded that '**there are no adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme**'. This is a reasonable and informed conclusion, in line with the findings of the LVA and one with which I would agree.