PINS REF:
6013490

LPA REF:
25/01764/OUT

Land at Greenlands, Tattenhall, Chester

EVIDENCE OF LOUISE FITZGERALD MSci (HONS) PG DIP CMLI

FOR

GLADMAN DEVELOPMENTS LTD

ON LANDSCAPE AND VIEWS

MAIN PROOF

Contents

1.0 Introduction, Background and Scope	1
2.0 The Site and Context	2
3.0 Landscape Baseline	3
4.0 Visual Baseline	4
5.0 The Proposed Development and Landscape Strategy	5
6.0 Landscape and Visual Effects	7
7.0 Compliance with Landscape Related Planning Policies	12
8.0 Representations Relating to Landscape and Views	17
9.0 Conclusion	22

The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal, reference 6013490, in this proof of evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with guidance of my professional institution, the Landscape Institute, and I confirm the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

1.0 Introduction, Background and Scope

1.1 My name is Louise Fitzgerald. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) and Associate at The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd. I hold an Integrated Masters degree with Honours in Environmental Geography and Climate Change and a Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Landscape Architecture. I have extensive experience in the preparation and review of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and Appraisals for a range of residential, commercial, infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

1.2 TEP was appointed by Gladman Developments Ltd to prepare the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) which accompanied the planning application for the Proposed Development at Greenlands, Tattenhall. I reviewed the assessment, including its methodology, baseline analysis, viewpoint selection and conclusions, and have visited the Site and surrounding area.

Scope of Landscape Evidence

1.3 Landscape and visual matters do not form part of either the putative reasons for refusal or the Rule 6 Party's Statement of Case. I have been asked to provide evidence on these matters because landscape and visual matters have been considered in previous appeals relating to development at the Site and have been raised by third parties. My evidence is provided to assist the Inspector however I do not unnecessarily repeat matters which are addressed in more detail in the LVA.

2.0 The Site and Context

2.1 The Site and its context are described in detail in paragraphs 4.49 to 4.57 of the LVA (CD1.07).

2.2 The Site comprises approximately 6.3ha of agricultural land on the northern edge of Tattenhall. The Site is currently used for horse grazing and comprises gently rising land to the north of the treed corridor of the Keys Brook. The Site is free from built form save for a small area of hardstanding upon which sit a few small temporary structures adjacent to Tattenhall Road at the eastern boundary of the Site.

2.3 To the immediate south of the Site is Keys Brook, beyond which is the existing settlement edge of Tattenhall along Greenlands. The northern site boundary is relatively open, demarcated by post and rail fencing, beyond which is an access track to Greaves Meadow which provides access to Greaves Farm, Greaves Farm Cottage and Greaves Meadows Barns. To the east, the Site is enclosed by hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees along Tattenhall Road. The western site boundary comprises a field boundary hedgerow.

2.4 Tattenhall displays a clear distinction between its historic core and more recent expansion. The village centre is characterised by a relatively dense pattern of development focused on High Street, with a relatively dense and continuous street frontage within the Conservation Area, comprising predominantly traditional red brick buildings with a strong sense of enclosure. In contrast, development on the northern edge of the settlement, adjacent to the Site, exhibits a more suburban character, comprising predominantly two-storey dwellings set within gardens and defined by hedges and fencing.

3.0 Landscape Baseline

3.1 The landscape baseline is set out in Section 4 of the LVA (CD1.07).

3.2 The Site is not subject to any national, local or other statutory or non-statutory landscape designations.

3.3 The Site is in National Character Area (NCA) 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain. Key characteristics of the NCA are described in paragraph 4.11 of the LVA (CD1.07). The Site and its surroundings exhibit some of the characteristics of the NCA including its strong field patterns with hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, dairy farming dominating the plain with patches of mixed farming and settlement including dispersed hamlets and large farmsteads.

3.4 At the borough level, the Site is in Landscape Character Type 9: Cheshire Plain West and Landscape Character Area (LCA) 9b: Hargrave, Hoofield and Beeston Plain. Key characteristics of the LCA are described in paragraph 4.21 of the LVA (CD1.07). The Site is broadly characteristic of LCA 9b, comprising modified grassland with a gently sloping landform, enclosed by hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees. However, its character is also influenced by the adjoining settlement edge of Tattenhall and nearby roads.

4.0 Visual Baseline

4.1 The visual baseline is set out in Section 5 of the LVA (CD1.07).

LVA Viewpoints

4.2 The LVA identified 13 visual receptors comprising persons who may have a view of the Proposed Development and included seven representative viewpoints. The selection of viewpoints is not intended to cover every possible view of the Site, but rather they are representative of a range of receptor types at varying distances and orientations. A description of existing views is provided in paragraphs 5.12 to 5.28 of the LVA (CD1.07) with representative viewpoints presented at Appendix A.

4.3 I visited the Site in October 2026. During the site visit I did not identify any notable changes to any of the viewpoints described in the LVA.

4.4 I consider the views identified in the LVA as appropriate to be considered and representative of views experienced of the Site. The Landscape Officer also broadly agreed with the location of these viewpoints.

Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan Views

4.5 The 'made' Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan highlights that important green spaces and strategic views within the Parish and into and out of the village are protected. The emerging Tattenhall and District Modified Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2045 (eTDNP2) shows the location of these views at Appendix A.

4.6 Of the identified strategic views, only Views 7 (Views across the fields from Chester Road to Brook Hall), 15 (Views from the disused railway line to the village and the Peckforton Hills and Sandstone Ridge) and 16 (Views from Gatesheath & Newton to the Peckforton Hills and Sandstone Ridge) are potentially relevant to the Site. The Site does not form a component of View 7, visibility towards the Site from View 15 is extremely limited and does not appear to be subject to public access, and the development would not interrupt panoramic views towards the Sandstone Ridge and Peckforton Hills from View 16. I conclude on effects on these views at my paragraph 6.9.

5.0 The Proposed Development and Landscape Strategy

5.1 The Development Framework Plan (DFP) (CD1.03) submitted with the outline planning applications shows indicative built development and open space, as well as structural landscaping and community play space. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) sets out the design and access principles for the Proposed Development, provides an indication of housing density and describes the principles of the landscape strategy.

5.2 The principles of the DFP (CD1.03) were informed by the findings of the LVA as part of an iterative and integrated design process.

5.3 A description of the Proposed Development is provided in the DAS (CD1.06). In summary it consists of the following key elements:

- Residential development of up to 110 residential dwellings on approximately 3.11 hectares (ha) of land;
- Amenity Greenspace (including play) on approximately 0.35;
- Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace on approximately 2.81; and
- Allotments with parking provision on approximately 0.05ha.

5.4 The DAS sets out the design principles that have shaped the Proposed Development. Those of particular relevance to the LVA are summarised below:

- Development set back from the southern, western and northern boundaries to buffer the development, provide movement corridors for wildlife and people and form a new attractive settlement edge;
- A central green space and play area;
- Existing trees and hedgerows along the Site boundaries are retained where possible and strengthened to soften the development, add wildlife value and retain landscape character of the Site;
- The creation of a robust and appropriate development edge which provides a sensitive transition between the Proposed Development and the wider countryside setting with naturalistic open space and tree and woodland planting to screen the development;
- Provision of a variety of open space types including amenity open space, natural and semi natural green space, meadow grassland, native tree and hedgerow planting, woodland, allotments and drainage attenuation; and

- Street trees along the primary route through the development to help soften the development, break up built form and reinforce street hierarchy.

5.5 The Landscape Officer notes that the Illustrative Masterplan '*offers a well-considered approach to the site context'.*

5.6 The assessment of effects described in the LVA takes account of the embedded mitigation and the proposed planting as illustrated in the Development Framework Plan (CD1.03).

6.0 Landscape and Visual Effects

6.1 The landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development are described in Sections 7 and 8 of the LVA (CD1.07), which was undertaken in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3). Further details of the methodology are included in Appendix B to the LVA. There has been no criticism by the Council of the methodology adopted for the submitted LVA.

Landscape Effects

6.2 The scheme would bring about an inevitable change to the character of the Site although the physical change would be confined within the application site boundaries. The Site is well-contained by existing vegetation and built form and any effects on landscape would be limited to a localised geographical area. Characteristics outlined in the published landscape character assessments such as hedgerow boundaries are retained wherever possible and incorporated into the Proposed Development.

6.3 Keys Brook is a recognisable landscape feature and contributes to the present transition between the built edge of Tattenhall and wider landscape. The Proposed Development would retain the brook and its associated vegetation within a broad green infrastructure corridor, with built development set back and additional planting reinforcing its landscape function. Although the Proposed Development would extend the present settlement edge, the retained brook corridor and the robust landscaped boundary proposed along the northern edge would create a contained and well-integrated extension to Tattenhall, rather than an abrupt incursion into the wider countryside.

6.4 The development will bring biodiversity net gain which will include increases in biodiversity units, area-based habitats, watercourse units and hedgerow units. There will be more trees on the Site than at present and an increase in green infrastructure. These represent landscape benefits.

6.5 The greatest forecast effect is locally at the Site and its immediate environs although after 15 years this is anticipated to be no greater than Minor Adverse. This is a finding consistent with formerly undeveloped land changing to developed land.

Visual Effects

6.6 The visual effects of the Proposed Development would be localised and concentrated on a relatively small number of receptors close to the Site. The generally flat landform, together with existing buildings, hedgerows and trees, limits the extent of visibility across the wider landscape.

6.7 The greatest visual effects would be experienced by receptors closest to the Site, including residents of properties at Greaves Farm, along Tattenhall Road and Greenlands, users of Tattenhall Road and Greenlands, and users of PRoW Tattenhall FP8 and Golborne Bellow FP10. Effects on nearby residents would range from moderate to major adverse at Year 1, reducing to minor to moderate adverse as proposed planting establishes. Road users would experience up to moderate adverse effects initially, reducing to minor adverse by Year 15. Views from PRoW Tattenhall FP8 and Golborne Bellow FP10 would be localised and partly filtered by landform and intervening vegetation. The development would extend the visible settlement edge northwards but would occupy only a small proportion of wider views and would not interrupt views towards the Peckforton Hills. Retained vegetation and proposed woodland and tree planting along the western and northern boundaries would filter views as planting matures. Effects on users of both routes would be minor adverse at Years 1 and 15.

6.8 Effects on more distant receptors would be limited by distance, intervening built form and successive layers of hedgerow and tree cover.

6.9 Overall, the assessment demonstrates that adverse visual effects would be geographically contained. The Proposed Development would not materially affect the important views identified in the Tattenhall and District Neighbourhood Plan, views to or from Tattenhall Conservation Area, or wider views towards the Peckforton Hills and Sandstone Ridge.

Cumulative Effects

6.10 The eTDNP2 includes a draft allocation of land to the north and south of Frog Lane, for a phased, high-quality, mixed use, residential led development of up to 600 dwellings. Land to the south of Frog Lane is currently subject to outline planning application 26/00486/OUT.

6.11 Land to the immediate west of the Site (land at Chester Road) is currently subject to two outline planning applications. Application 26/02414/OUT seeks outline permission for up to 120 dwellings, public open space and landscaping on land north of Chester Road. Application 25/02070/FUL for the development of 110 dwellings is currently the subject of an appeal. Whilst neither of these schemes (nor the draft allocation) have received planning consent, I have considered the cumulative effects if these schemes were to obtain consent.

6.12 In landscape terms, the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with the Frog Lane and Chester Road developments would remain localised. Whilst the three proposals would extend built form northwards and westwards around Tattenhall, they would remain physically associated with the existing settlement. The combined change would be perceptible locally but would not alter the character of LCA 9b: Hargrave, Hoofield & Beeston Plain. Cumulative landscape effects would therefore remain localised, with the greatest effects arising within and immediately around the individual sites. Cumulative effects would reduce over time as proposed mitigation planting establishes. The cumulative effect on LCA 9b: Hargrave, Hoofield & Beeston Plain would be no greater than that for the Proposed Development alone, moderate adverse during construction and at Year 1 and minor adverse at Year 15.

6.13 Potential cumulative visual effects would be limited to a relatively small number of receptors due to the generally flat landform and the filtering provided by existing hedgerows, trees and built development. The greatest effects would occur on PRoW Tattenhall FP8 where the Proposed Development and Chester Road development will be experienced in succession or, in some instances, within the same broad field of view. Proposed planting associated with the Chester Road development would soften some views towards the Proposed Development. The provision of public open space to the north of Keys Brook in the Chester Road site, and along the western edge of the Proposed Development would provide a visual and physical break between the two schemes, ensuring that the developments are perceived as separate additions associated with the existing settlement rather than as a continuous or coalesced area of development. The Frog Lane site is on the opposite side of Tattenhall, beyond intervening built form and vegetation and would form a very minor part of the view. The Proposed Development, in combination with the Proposed Development and Chester Road development would not be perceived as forming part of a continuous area of development. The cumulative magnitude of effect on Tattenhall FP8 would be moderate adverse during construction and at Year 1 and minor adverse at Year 15.

6.14 From Newton Lane (Bishop Bennet Way), the three proposals would be seen at greater distance and in conjunction with the existing settlement edge. Views are filtered and intermittently screened by a combination of intervening hedgerows, mature trees and existing built form. Whilst more than one proposal may be perceptible from certain locations, they would be experienced as separate additions associated with the settlement rather than as a single continuous area of development. The cumulative magnitude of effect would be no greater than that for the Proposed Development alone, low negative in the short and medium-term and negligible in the long-term, resulting in a minor adverse overall effect during construction and at Year 1, and a negligible overall effect at Year 15.

6.15 Users of Chester Road will have varying views towards the proposed developments. The schemes generally would be experienced sequentially by users travelling along Chester Road rather than simultaneously within the same view. As a result, they would be perceived as distinct development parcels associated with different parts of the settlement edge.

6.16 The Proposed Development would form a minor part of views from Chester Road and would be partially screened by a combination of the roadside hedgerow, intervening tree cover, existing residential development along Rookery Drive and Greenlands. The Chester Road development will foreshorten views towards the Proposed Development and is closer in the view. Travelling west users of Chester Road will have views of the Frog Lane development beyond existing roadside hedgerows. The cumulative magnitude of effect would be medium negative in the short and medium-term and low negative in the long-term due to proximity to the Chester Road and Frog Lane sites. There will be a moderate adverse overall effect during construction and at Year 1, and a minor adverse overall effect at Year 15.

6.17 Residents of properties along Chester Road would experience varying degrees of cumulative change depending on their location and orientation. Properties to the east of Chester Road, including Brook Hall and North West House, are likely to experience views towards the Proposed Development and the Chester Road development, although these views would generally be filtered by garden vegetation, intervening hedgerows, mature trees and proposed structural planting. For residents of the property situated between Tilney Way and Ravensholme Lane, views of the proposals would be experienced from side-facing windows and rear garden areas, with both schemes seen in the context of the existing settlement edge. Existing and proposed vegetation would continue to provide substantial filtering and separation between the developments. The cumulative magnitude of change would be low negative in the short, medium and long-term, resulting in minor adverse overall effects. The Frog Lane site is unlikely to be visible from properties along Chester Road.

6.18 The three proposals would extend the perceived settlement edge but would remain associated with Tattenhall and would not obstruct the wider outlook towards the Peckforton Hills. Retained vegetation and the proposed landscape frameworks would increasingly separate and integrate the developments as planting matures.

6.19 Overall, whilst the schemes would contribute to a greater perception of growth around Tattenhall, cumulative landscape and visual effects would remain geographically contained and principally affect receptors close to the individual sites.

7.0 Compliance with Landscape Related Planning Policies

7.1 The LVA (CD1.07) was prepared having regard to December 2024 NPPF. Since submission of the planning application, the NPPF has been revised (August 2026). I consider compliance with the revised NPPF below.

National Planning Policy Framework 2026

7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in August 2026. The parts of Chapter 19 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment 'of particular relevance to my evidence are set out below.

7.2 NPPF Decision Making Policy N2(1) states that that development proposals should, amongst others:

a. *'Consider the environmental qualities of land proposed for development, including habitats, landscape character and the natural beauty of the countryside, and identify opportunities for those qualities to be conserved or enhanced…;*
d. *Conserve and enhance existing natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value (such as established trees and hedgerows) where possible; and use appropriate landscaping to help create a well- designed place and integrate the development into its surroundings…'.*

7.3 NPFP Policy DP3(1) sets out that development proposals *'should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings…'.*

7.4 The landscape character of the Site and its setting have been considered during the design process and in developing the DFP(CD1.03). Opportunities to retain and enhance existing vegetation were identified. The proposals include new areas of green infrastructure including a new wildlife pond with aquatic planting, native tree and woodland planting, hedgerow planting and areas of semi-natural open space.

7.5 The exact details of the landscaping scheme will be agreed with the Council at the reserved matters stage. The proposals accord with Policy N2(1).

7.6 Policy N3: Trees in New Development, recognises the benefits trees can provide for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the character and quality of the built environment, and states development proposals should:

a. *'Make new streets tree-lined …and incorporate trees in other suitable locations…'.*

7.7 The DFP (CD1.03) shows how trees can be incorporated along the new streets within the Proposed Development. The exact location, species, and management of these can be agreed with the Council at the reserved matters stage. The proposals accord with Policy N3.

Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) (2015) - Strategic Policies

7.8 Local Plan Part 1 Policy ENV2 states that 'Development should:

- *Take full account of the characteristics of the development site, its relationship with its surroundings and where appropriate views into, over and out of the site.*
- *Recognise, retain and incorporate features of landscape quality into the design.'*

7.9 Views of the Proposed Development would be localised. My evidence sets out how the new homes would be assimilated into the surrounding landscape and townscape, through design and the incorporation of new landscaping. Whilst the Proposed Development would be visible from a small part of the adjoining countryside, it would be seen within the context of the existing settlement edge of Tattenhall and will not appear out of character. Existing vegetation will be retained where possible.

7.10 The proposals accord with Policy ENV2.

Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) (2019) - Land Allocations and Detailed Policies

7.11 Local Plan Part 2 Policy GBC2 states that where a development proposal requires a countryside location, it must satisfy Local Plan (Part One) Policy ENV 2 and:

- *'protect and, wherever possible, enhance landscape character and distinctiveness;*
- *integrate into the landscape character of the area; and*

- *be designed to take account of guidance in the Landscape Strategy.'*

7.12 The Proposed Development responds positively to the established landscape character of the area, retaining existing landscape features where practicable and incorporating appropriate mitigation planting to reinforce local distinctiveness. Whilst there would be some adverse localised change to landscape character there would be no significant harmful effect on the wider landscape character of the area.

7.13 Built development guidelines of relevance to LCA 9b: Hargrave, Hoofield & Beeston Plain are outlined in paragraph 4.26 of the LVA. The majority of these relate to detailed design matters and can be secured via future reserved matters applications.

7.14 The proposals accord with Policy GBC2.

Tattenhall and District Neighbourhood Plan 2010 to 2030 ('made' June 2014)

7.15 Policy 1 outlines that all housing proposals should:

- *'…Respect and, where possible, enhance the natural, built and historic environment.*
- *Maintain Tattenhall village's strong and established sense of place.'*

7.16 The development has been carefully designed to respect the natural environment through the retention and reinforcement of existing landscape features, the incorporation of new planting and green infrastructure, and a layout that responds to the Site's surrounding character. The scheme also reflects the established settlement pattern and edge-of-village context, ensuring that it integrates successfully with the existing village form and maintains Tattenhall's strong and distinctive sense of place

7.17 The proposal accords with Policy 1.

7.18 Policy 2 states that development will be supported where it:

- *'Respects the local character and historic and natural assets of the surrounding area, and takes every opportunity, through design and materials, to reinforce local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place*
- *Incorporates, wherever possible, locally distinctive features such as Cheshire railings and fingerposts*
- *Does not unacceptably erode the important, predominantly undeveloped gaps between the three settlements of Tattenhall, Newton-by-Tattenhall and Gatesheath*

- *Fully accords with the Tattenhall Village Design Statement*
- *Respects local landscape quality ensuring that views and vistas are maintained wherever possible.'*

7.19 The Proposed Development accords with Local Character Policy 2 through a design-led approach that responds positively to the character, appearance and setting of the Site and its surroundings. The scheme respects the natural, built and historic assets of the area, retaining and reinforcing existing landscape features and incorporating new planting to strengthen local distinctiveness and contribute to a strong sense of place. The scale, layout and appearance of the Proposed Development have been informed by the prevailing character of Tattenhall and the guidance contained within the Tattenhall Design Code ensuring that the proposals integrate successfully with the existing settlement edge.

7.20 Newton-by-Tattenhall is a small hamlet approximately 800m north-east of Tattenhall, comprising scattered farms, cottages and rural properties. The Proposed Development would extend the existing settlement edge of Tattenhall approximately 165m north. Existing hedgerows, trees and agricultural land contribute strongly to the sense of separation between Tattenhall and Newton-by-Tattenhall. Substantial areas of intervening agricultural land would remain undeveloped and continue to provide a clear visual and spatial distinction between Tattenhall and Newton-by-Tattenhall. The Proposed Development would not unacceptably erode the gap between Newton-by-Tattenhall and Tattenhall and would maintain the separate identity and setting of the two settlements.

7.21 As explained in paragraph 4.6, the Proposed Development would not materially affect the important views identified in the Tattenhall and District Neighbourhood Plan.

7.2 Accordingly, the Proposed Development is consistent with Policy 2.

Tattenhall and District Modified Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2045 Submission Version (May 2026)

7.3 The Tattenhall and District Modified Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2045 is currently undergoing independent examination.

7.4 Part A of Policy 2: Local Character is broadly similar to the ‘made’ version, with the following minor amendments:

- Changes the requirement from '*Respects the local character and historic and natural assets of the surrounding area'* to '*Safeguards or enhances the local character and historic and natural assets of the surrounding area …'*
- Replaces references to the Tattenhall Village Design Statement with the Tattenhall and District Design Code (2023) (or any subsequent version).
- Clarifies that the views and vistas to be maintained are those identified in Appendix A.

7.5 Part B primarily relates to detailed design considerations which will be subject to a reserved matters application. Part C requires development to safeguard and enhance trees, woodland and hedgerows and Part D requires development to take account of natural features, including hedgerows, ensuring their retention and incorporation into the layout wherever possible. The majority trees and hedgerows will be retained and incorporated into the Proposed Development (see Arboricultural Impact Assessment (CD1.10)).

7.6 Policy 6: Landscape and the Environment states that *'New development, except householder applications, should: …Respect local landscape character by reference to the Tattenhall and District Design Code (2023) or subsequent edition….'.*

7.7 The Tattenhall Design Code is considered in paragraphs 4.29 – 4.45 of the LVA. The DAS confirms in section 6.6 that the main principles of the Development Framework Plan were informed by the Tattenhall Design Code.

7.8 The proposals accord with Policy 6.

8.0 Representations Relating to Landscape and Views

Landscape Officer Comments

8.1 The Cheshire West and Chester Council Landscape Officer provided a response (CD3.25) to outline planning application 25/01764/OUT, dated 28th August 2026.

8.2 The Landscape Officer confirms agreement with the following:

- The LVA accurately describes the Site and Landscape Character Area in relation to the CWAC Landscape Strategy.
- The development will generate adverse harm on the Site and its immediate surroundings including LCA 9b.
- The Site is of community value.
- The location of the seven viewpoints included in the LVA.
- The proposed embedded landscape mitigation will help to reduce visual effects and integrate the Site into the wider landscape over a period of time.
- Impacts will be largely contained to the Site and its immediate surroundings.
- The Proposed Development will result in adverse impacts from PRoW FP8.
- From other viewpoints visual impacts will be localised.

8.3 The Landscape Officer noted some disagreement with the reported sensitivity and magnitude of change on views from FP8 (Viewpoint 4) considering that these receptors should have a high sensitivity to change (rather than the medium sensitivity reported in the LVA) and that *'the LVA underplays the magnitude of harm, whereby it assesses the impacts at both year 1 and year 15 as minor adverse harm'.*

8.4 The dispute with the submitted assessment is primarily one of professional judgement. I consider the LVA's judgement to be robust because the Proposed Development would be visible only intermittently and beyond intervening vegetation, rather than as a continuous or dominant feature in the view. Where visible, it would be seen in conjunction with the existing settlement edge of Tattenhall, so it would read as an extension to the village rather than an isolated incursion into the wider countryside. The development would occupy only a limited part of the overall view and would not interrupt the wider outlook towards the Peckforton Hills. Retained vegetation and the proposed structural planting would provide further filtering and integration as planting establishes, reducing the prominence of built form over time.

8.5 The Landscape Officer considers that extending development north of Keys Brook would weaken its perceived role as the settlement boundary and that the access track forming the Site's northern edge is a less distinct boundary. Whilst the brook is a recognisable landscape feature and contributes to the present transition between the built edge of Tattenhall and the agricultural land to the north, a physical feature does not necessarily form a definitive or overriding settlement boundary in landscape character terms.

8.6 The Proposed Development would retain Keys Brook and its associated vegetation within a broad green infrastructure corridor. Built development would be set back from the brook, with new planting reinforcing the corridor and softening views of the new housing from the south side of the brook. Along the northern site boundary, the existing access track would be supplemented by naturalistic open space and structural tree, woodland and hedgerow planting, creating a robust and defensible landscaped boundary rather than relying on the track alone. The scheme would alter the present settlement edge, but it would not disregard Keys Brook or produce an abrupt or poorly integrated extension into the countryside.

8.7 This issue was considered in a previous appeal relating to the Site (LPA Ref 12/02352/OUT). The Inspector found that the Site is influenced by the existing settlement edge and that its position north of Keys Brook was not particularly influential in landscape character terms. The Inspector also concluded that satisfactory mitigation could be achieved and that the residual landscape effect would be minor adverse. These conclusions remain relevant to the consideration of the current appeal, and I agree with the Inspector's findings in this regard. This case is referenced in the Council's Officer Report at Appendix A of the Council's Appeal Statement which I consider below.

8.8 The Landscape Officer also suggests that cumulative effects should be considered. Cumulative effects are considered in Section 6.0 of this evidence.

8.9 The Landscape Officer recognises a number of positive design principles embedded within the scheme, including retention and enhancement of existing landscape features, outward-facing development, significant structural planting, provision of public open space, informal recreation routes, SuDS features and biodiversity enhancements. The officer confirms that, should the principle of development be accepted, the quality of the proposed built form and landscaping would be important mitigating factors capable of further reducing effects through the reserved matters process.

8.10 Given that the application is submitted in outline form, with landscaping, appearance, layout and scale reserved for future approval, substantial opportunities remain to secure additional landscape enhancements and refinement of the development framework. The extensive list of recommended conditions proposed by the Landscape Officer demonstrates that any identified effects can be appropriately managed through the detailed design process.

<u>Council's Officer Report</u>

8.11 Appendix A to the Council's Statement of Case comprises the Council's Officer Report which would have formed the basis of the Council's assessment had the application been determined by the Local Planning Authority. Paragraphs 6.97 to 6.109 consider impacts on landscape and visual amenity.

8.12 The Officer's Report places significant weight on the findings of the Inspector for a previous application and appeal for 137 dwellings on the same Site in 2016 (ref 12/02352/OUT). The Inspector found that the Site is influenced by the existing settlement edge, that its position north of Keys Brook was not particularly influential in landscape character terms, and that views towards Beeston Castle and the wider Sandstone Ridge would not be obscured by development. Importantly, the Inspector concluded that satisfactory mitigation could be achieved and that the overall landscape effect would be minor adverse. The Council accepts at paragraph 6.108 that the characteristics of the Site and its surroundings remain materially similar to those previously assessed. The Council's Officer concludes that paragraph by stating '*significant weight should be attributed to these findings with regards the impact of residential development this site'*. I take that as a clear endorsement of the judgement that the residual landscape harm would be minor adverse.

8.13 The Council accepts that the Site does not form part of the immediate setting of Viewpoint 15 identified within the Tattenhall and District Neighbourhood Plan from the disused railway line to the village and the Peckforton Hills and Sandstone Ridge.

8.14 While the Council identifies a degree of landscape harm, the report does not conclude that the effects would be significant. The Council's assessment indicates a level of harm that is limited, equivalent to the '*minor adverse*' finding of an Inspector considering a similar scheme on the Site and capable of being moderated through detailed landscape design secured at the reserved matters stage.

8.15 The Officer's Report concludes at paragraph 7.13 that whilst the Proposed Development would generate a degree of landscape harm, on the basis that the proposal would extend development beyond Keys Brook, would interrupt (but not obscure) some views towards Beeston Castle from Public Footpath FP8, and would have an adverse visual impact for pedestrians walking along Tattenhall Road. The paragraph confirms that the indicative layout demonstrates an acceptable scheme could be achieved at reserved matters stage.

8.16 The opening lines of paragraph 7.14 of the Officer's Report confirm that the application '*demonstrates that a good quality design and suitable levels of amenity for both future and existing residents could be safeguarded through the approval of reserved matters.*'

Other Representations

8.17 I have read the other representations received on the application. I have not seen any representations which raise specific additional matters on these issues to those which I have already addressed in my evidence.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 The planning application was accompanied by an LVA prepared by appropriately qualified and experienced expert professionals consistent with contemporary guidance. I reviewed that work and in preparing my evidence I have revisited the LVA and found it to be robust with sound evidenced judgements.

9.2 The Proposed Development would result in the loss of approximately 6.3 hectares of agricultural land and a change in land use from open countryside to residential development. An integral part of the scheme is to provide areas of green infrastructure; the DAS envisages that the majority of these would be managed areas of public open space with grassland areas punctuated with trees and shrubbery although detailed design would be resolved through submission of Reserved Matters. Whilst the overall change to the character of the Site would be adverse in character terms, there would be no significant harmful effect on the character of the countryside beyond the Site. The detailed design including layout, design, and landscaping of the development can be agreed with the Council through discharge of reserved matters to ensure the development reflects the local townscape and landscape character.

9.3 The Proposed Development would extend the settlement edge of Tattenhall to the north of Keys Brook. The Proposed Development has been designed to retain Keys Brook within a substantial green infrastructure corridor, reinforced by additional planting and open space. Together with the proposed structural landscaping along the northern boundary, this would create a strong and attractive settlement edge and ensure that the development is appropriately contained and integrated into its landscape setting.

9.4 Visual effects would similarly be localised and concentrated on receptors closest to the Site, including nearby residents, users of local roads and users of surrounding Public Rights of Way. Some receptors would experience adverse effects, particularly during the early years following construction. However, the visual envelope of the development would be restricted by existing vegetation, built form and the generally flat landform. As planting matures, visual effects would reduce substantially, with the majority of long-term effects assessed as minor adverse or negligible. Importantly, the development would not materially affect the important views identified within the Neighbourhood Plan, including wider views towards the Peckforton Hills and Sandstone Ridge.

9.5 I have also considered the potential for cumulative effects arising from other proposed developments around Tattenhall. Whilst these schemes would contribute to a perception of growth around the village, the evidence indicates that cumulative landscape and visual effects would remain geographically contained. The developments would continue to be perceived as separate additions associated with the existing settlement, rather than a continuous or coalesced area of development. Existing and proposed vegetation, intervening land and the individual landscape frameworks of each scheme would maintain separation and assist integration into the surrounding landscape.

9.6 The Proposed Development would give rise to a degree of localised landscape and visual change, as would be expected from a new housing development on the edge of a settlement. However, the effects would be limited in extent, would reduce over time as planting establishes, and would not result in substantial harm to landscape character or visual amenity. Overall, the Proposed Development would represent a well-designed and appropriately integrated extension to the village that responds positively to its landscape context.