

Welland Neighbourhood Plan

# Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment Review of Selected Sites



## **REPORT**

On behalf of Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council

**December 2019**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Objectives

- 1.1.1 In November 2019, chartered landscape architect Carly Tinkler was commissioned by Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council (LMWPC) to carry out assessments of five parcels of land in and around Welland village.
- 1.1.2 The aim of the exercise was to determine whether any of the parcels in question potentially had the capacity to accommodate new residential development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.
- 1.1.3 The results of the studies will form part of the evidence-base for Welland's emerging Neighbourhood Plan (NP), and will inform the future decision-making process.
- 1.1.4 All of the land parcels (the term 'Areas' is used in this report) were put forwards as candidates for residential development during the South Worcestershire Councils' (SWCs') 2018 'call for sites' (CFS) (as part of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) process, which is currently underway<sup>1</sup>).
- 1.1.5 The locations of the five Areas (Areas 1 - 5) are shown on Figure 1 in Appendix A.
- 1.1.6 One of the Areas (Area 2) was subsequently allocated for development in the draft SWDPR, the period of consultation for which ended in December 2019. Another is now the subject of a planning application, but was not allocated in the SWDPR.
- 1.1.7 Where relevant, these matters are explained further in the individual Area schedules which follow.
- 1.1.8 This commission included a review of the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (LSCA) which was carried out and published in 2015, forming an important part of the NP's evidence-base. That study assessed the sensitivity and capacity of forty-three parcels of land in and around the village, including the five which are the subject of this (2019) LSCA.
- 1.1.9 The 2015 LSCA established and analysed the existing baseline situation in terms of landscape character and visual / social amenity. However, since then, new information has come to light and there have been several changes, especially the construction of significant numbers of new houses in the local area.
- 1.1.10 It was therefore important to check, and where necessary, update the 2015 baseline information, and factor it into the 2019 sensitivity and capacity studies.
- 1.1.11 In certain cases, new developments have fundamentally altered the character of the landscapes within which they lie. As a result, this LSCA also had to determine what if any effect this may have had on the 2015 LSCA's judgements about levels of landscape and visual value, susceptibility to change, sensitivity and capacity.
- 1.1.12 The 2015 LSCA's findings were written up in a report with accompanying plans, and should be referred to for more detail about the landscapes of the area and views of them. This report summarises the most relevant aspects of the existing landscape context and visual / social amenity relating to the five Areas which are to be reassessed / reviewed, and notes the changes which are relevant to judgements about levels of sensitivity and capacity.
- 1.1.13 The 2015 report also explains the technical terms used in the studies, as well as the methods employed and processes followed a) in LSCA generally, and b) for Welland specifically. There are also several appendices, including the criteria used for drawing conclusions about levels of landscape and visual capacity, although these have since been slightly modified.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2018, the SWCs issued an 'Issues and Options' consultation document, which was followed by 'Preferred Options' consultation in November and December 2019. The latter set out the SWCs' draft policies, and identified the sites which the SWCs considered should be developed for housing, employment and / or mixed uses. It is currently envisaged that the draft revised SWDP will be published in October / November 2020, examined in April 2021, and adopted in November 2021.

- 1.1.14 The process for this assessment entailed desktop studies, data collection and reviews, on-the-ground surveys, and analysis and reporting of the information gathered.

## 1.2 Landscape and Social / Visual Amenity Baseline Overview

- 1.2.1 The individual Area schedules which follow are intended to be read as stand-alone documents if required, therefore some of the information may be repeated. However, the schedules should also be read alongside this introduction, as there are certain matters which are common / of relevance to all the Areas, and which are summarised below. It should also be noted that where acronyms are used, the expansion is given at the first occurrence.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 1.2.2 Three of the Areas (1, 4 and 5) lie within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), two lie within its setting, close to its eastern boundary along the B4208.
- 1.2.3 AONBs are of national importance (and indeed of international importance, being recognised as Category V protected landscapes by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature). They are designated solely for their special landscape qualities. They are considered to be of such outstanding natural (or 'scenic') beauty that they require, and enjoy, a high level of protection through European, national and local planning policies and plans, in order to '*secure their permanent protection against development that would damage their special qualities, thus conserving a number of the finest landscapes in England for the nation's benefit*'.
- 1.2.4 The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, and AONB partnerships have a statutory duty to conserve and enhance that natural beauty.
- 1.2.5 In terms of the designation, an area's 'natural beauty' is deemed to include its geology, climate, soils, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it (past and present) and the perceptions of those who visit it.
- 1.2.6 Public appreciation is a key component of natural beauty, and the secondary purposes of AONB designation include meeting the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside, and having regard for the interests of those who live and work there.
- 1.2.7 The natural beauty of these areas is recognised as contributing significantly to economic activities and well-being through tourism and inward investment. In Chapter 8, the Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan (2019 - 24) states that '*Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the AONB to enjoy its natural and cultural heritage. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy*'.
- 1.2.8 Furthermore, the importance of access to 'healthy' landscapes is now recognised as being vital to human health and wellbeing, and the AONB's landscapes make highly important contributions to both local and wider natural capital and ecosystem services.
- 1.2.9 Recently, the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership commissioned a 'Health Economic Assessment' of Malvern's Hills and Commons (published April 2019)<sup>2</sup>. The study identified the physical and mental health benefits derived by people from the use / experience of these areas, and estimated the associated economic value of the benefits. It concluded that '*the annual physical and mental health value is in the magnitude of £4.2 million and £1.6 million, respectively. It is estimated that the health benefits add 87 Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) to users each year. The total health economic value of the Malvern Hills and Commons is estimated to be in the region of £5.8 million annually*'.
- 1.2.10 However, it must be borne in mind that the nature of some of the activities which take place can also give rise to significant adverse effects on biodiversity, landscape character and visual / social amenity (see biodiversity section below).
- 1.2.11 The Management Plan sets out the vision of what the AONB will be like in 20 years' time (i.e. in 2040). In terms of the AONB's landscapes, the Plan notes the vision that '*Change in the landscape is accepted and its impacts accommodated through positive management. However, the landscape largely comprises broadleaved woodland and grassland, interconnected with*

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<sup>2</sup> Hölzinger, O. 2019: *Malvern Hills & Commons Health Economic Assessment*. Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

*hedgerows and hedgerow trees, all in good condition'. Another vision is that 'The distinctive character of villages, historic farmsteads and rural buildings is sustained by high standards of informed design and development'.*

- 1.2.12 The 'Special Qualities' of the Malvern Hills AONB are set out on page 9 of the Management Plan. Some of these qualities are evident in and around Welland, including on the Areas themselves. Where relevant, it is specified in the Area schedules; however, on a general note, amongst the AONB's Special Qualities are *Distinctive 'villagescapes', including conservation areas, listed buildings and local features, that define a 'spirit of place' in the settlements, and A strong 'spirit of place', landscapes that have inspired and continue to inspire and which have a deep cultural narrative.*
- 1.2.13 In Welland's case, unfortunately, its distinctiveness and 'spirit of place' is rapidly being lost. This is due to the fact that within the last few years the size of the settlement has increased significantly (by more than 60%). Furthermore, much of what has been built comprises ubiquitous, sprawling housing estates, planned and designed with very little consideration given to the inherent character of the receiving landscapes or their capacity to accommodate what is proposed.
- 1.2.14 Whilst development on land covered by the AONB designation is tightly controlled, so should development within an AONB's setting be.
- 1.2.15 In November 2019, the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee endorsed a Position Statement on development and land use change in the setting of the Malvern Hills AONB. The Position Statement provides guidance to local planning authorities, landowners, developers and so on, its aim being to clarify and expand upon issues raised in the Management Plan and to assist in its implementation. The Statement document provides examples of adverse impacts on the setting of the AONB, including the cumulative effect of several similar forms of development<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.2.16 Also of relevance is the July 2019 revision to National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) for the Natural Environment<sup>4</sup> (Paragraph: 042 Reference ID: 8-042-20190721), which is as follows:  
*'How should development within the setting of National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty be dealt with?*  
*Land within the setting of these areas often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.'*
- 1.2.17 This is an important change to NPPG, in which the government formally recognises the significance of the setting of protected landscapes.
- 1.2.18 In terms of landscape character, on a national basis, the majority of the landscapes within the wider study area are categorised as National Character Area (NCA) 106 Severn and Avon Vales. The Malvern Hills are covered by NCA 103. The boundary between them runs along the mid-slopes on the eastern side of the Hills, and in Welland, there is a high degree of interinfluence / association and intervisibility between the two.
- 1.2.19 Where an Area displays NCA 106's key characteristics and is a good representation of it, it is noted in the schedules, as are any relevant NCA 106 Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs).
- 1.2.20 The complexity and interest of the local landscapes is highlighted by the fact that they are categorised as three very different countywide Landscape Character Types (LCTs): Enclosed Commons (covers Areas 1, 3, 4 and 5), Unenclosed Commons, and Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use (covers Area 2).

<sup>3</sup>

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s23433/9%20Development%20and%20Land%20Use%20change%20in%20the%20MH%20AONB.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

- 1.2.21 Detailed descriptions of the LCTs can be found in the 2015 LSCA and the various guidance documents on which the LSCA was based, but extracts of relevance to this study are provided below for ease of reference:

Enclosed Commons LCT Summary (Areas 1, 3, 4 and 5)

These are planned landscapes characterised by an ordered pattern of medium to large geometric fields and straight roads. The historic land use pattern is also reflected in the pattern of settlement, which includes isolated, red brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings.

The overall landscape strategy for Enclosed Commons is to '*conserve and strengthen the simple, planned structure of the landscape and seek opportunities to enhance the underlying ecological character.*'

The objective for any new development proposed within this LCT is set out in the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership's *Landscape Strategy and Guidelines* (LS&G) as follows:

*This is a planned landscape with a settlement pattern of scattered, red brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings. There may be some limited opportunities for new development which upholds the existing settlement pattern. Alterations or additions to the existing settlements should respect and consider the landscape in terms of the appropriateness of new development, siting in relation to existing buildings and the materials used. New dwellings should be modest in size and seek to use materials, designs, rhythms and traditions which reflect the character of existing buildings. Traditional building materials in the Enclosed Commons include red brick and clay tiled roofs. Care should be taken around the boundaries of new development to ensure that they reinforce and link with the surrounding rural landscape. Where possible new buildings should seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the use of renewable energy.*

Worcestershire County Council (WCC)'s Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Supplementary Guidance (SG) states:

*The low density wayside settlement pattern of small cottages and occasional farmsteads is gradually being altered as cottages are enlarged and new dwellings built. In principal [sic], these landscapes can accept additional wayside dwellings if the proposals are in accordance with policy, but the density should remain low and any new building must respect the style, materials and the small scale of the traditional cottages.*

Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use (Area 2)

These are small-scale, rolling, lowland, settled agricultural landscapes with a dominant pastoral land use, defined by their hedged fields. Hedgerow and streamside trees together with those associated with settlement provide tree cover in a landscape with a notable network of winding lanes, scattered farms and clusters of wayside settlements. The historic, small scale, settled nature of this landscape imparts a strong strength of character.

The LS&G states that all of the characteristic features *need to be conserved and, where necessary, strengthened if the local distinctiveness of this landscape is to be retained... The pastoral character of this landscape is vulnerable to change as a result of agricultural intensification. Rural development may also threaten the character of the existing settlement pattern, eroding both the small scale and pastoral character of the landscape.*

The overall landscape strategy for the Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use LCT is to '*Conserve the diversity and function of this small scale, settled agricultural landscape and seek opportunities to restore/ enhance the character of degraded areas.*'

WCC's LCA SG notes that *the remaining areas of permanent pasture can often be of significant biodiversity interest and this can be threatened by the increasing change in land use... Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of permanent pasture should be strongly promoted.*

The objectives for the LCT include *Conserve and enhance the pattern of hedgerows and Retain the integrity of the dispersed pattern of settlement.*

## HERITAGE

- 1.2.22 The Enclosed Commons LCT tends to be characterised by a lack of historic buildings and features due to the widespread clearance and reorganisation of infrastructure and boundaries which occurred post-Enclosure, from the late-18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup> onwards. However, locally, even within the Enclosed Commons LCT there is considerable buried and visible time depth, including prehistoric trackways, ancient hedgerows, and precious evidence of medieval landuses, such as the mill on Marbank Brook, and possible ridge and furrow<sup>6</sup>.
- 1.2.23 Many of the Hills' and commons' ancient features are intact, and many are protected through national designation and planning policy.
- 1.2.24 The closest Scheduled Monuments to Welland village are mostly on the Malvern Hills' ridges and slopes (Bronze Age 'Shire Ditch' and round barrows, Iron Age British Camp, and 12<sup>th</sup> century Little Malvern Priory, respectively lying c. 3km, 3.4km and 2.7km from the village centre). There is a fairly high degree of interinfluence and association between these features and the village due to their elevated location overlooking the Severn plain on which Welland lies.
- 1.2.25 There is also a Medieval motte and bailey at Castlemorton, c. 2.8km from the village, but there is no evident association between the two.
- 1.2.26 There is a scatter of Grade II listed buildings / features in and around Welland village. The majority are along Drake Street, which was originally an ancient trackway, connecting a river crossing near Upton-on-Severn to British Camp<sup>7</sup>, possibly via what is now Malvern Wells; however, there are others further east, where the landscapes display older / pre-Enclosure features.
- 1.2.27 In fact, the 'heart' of Welland village was originally around Welland Court, some distance off the main road between Upton and the Hills, and c. 1.8km south east of the present Welland crossroads. The current Church of St James was built at the crossroads in 1875; however, the original (probably 13<sup>th</sup> century) Church of St James was situated at the end of Welland Court Lane. It was adjacent to Welland Court, which was the seat of the manor of Welland: the present building dates from c. 1450.
- 1.2.28 There is a degree of interinfluence between the present-day village and Grade I listed Church of St Giles / Grade II\* Little Malvern Court (associated with Little Malvern Priory).

## BIODIVERSITY

- 1.2.29 There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in close proximity to the village centre - Castlemorton Common and Mutlow's Orchard.
- 1.2.30 Both are publicly-accessible - Castlemorton Common is Open Access Land (see recreation below), and a public footpath runs along the eastern boundary of Mutlow's Orchard.
- 1.2.31 These SSSIs are highly vulnerable to change, and have very limited tolerance of the pressures arising a) directly from the increase in the numbers of people using them, and b) indirectly through factors such as pollutants reducing levels of soil, water and air quality, both of which are rising year-on-year.
- 1.2.32 Natural England has recently expressed concern about the resultant significant adverse effects on these nationally-designated habitats and the protected species of flora and fauna they support. The effects include erosion / loss of landcover and features (trampling, eutrophication from dog-fouling, pollution), noise, disturbance, lighting and so on.

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<sup>5</sup> The Enclosure Act for Welland was passed in 1847 and the Award was completed in 1853.

<sup>6</sup> Ridge and furrow is a relic of an obsolete type of agriculture. The pattern of ridges and furrows is often all that remains of the narrow strips (called 'selions') used in the 'open field system' of agriculture – a communal method of strip farming in large village fields which has its origins in the Early Medieval period (c. AD 800 - 1200) and which continued in some areas into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although ridge and furrow is not protected *per se*, its national importance is recognised by bodies such as Historic England <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/turning-the-plough-loss-of-a-landscape-legacy/turningplough.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Hurle, Pamela. *Beneath the Malvern Hills: A history of the village of Welland* (1973)

- 1.2.33 Unless alternative less sensitive but high quality places for people to roam and play are provided, the very qualities which attract people to the SSSIs (and other publicly-accessible designated habitats) could ultimately be lost.
- 1.2.34 There are several Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) in and around Welland, including Welland Cemetery; Mutlow's Farm Orchard; Castlemorton, Hollybed and Coombegreen Commons; Drake Street Meadow; and Pool and Mere Brooks.
- 1.2.35 A wide variety of protected / notable species of flora and fauna have been recorded in and around the village. European Protected Species identified include peregrine falcon, hobby, nine species of bat, otter, and great crested newt.
- 1.2.36 Some areas are designated Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI) sites, and / or are recorded on the National Forest Inventory (NFI).
- 1.2.37 Many of the hedgerows are species-rich, and as such are categorised as Habitats of Principal Biological Importance (HPBIs) (Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006). Some of the older hedges may be categorised as 'Important' under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997.
- 1.2.38 Where relevant, the presence of ecological designations / features is noted in the Area schedules.

#### SOCIAL / VISUAL AMENITY

- 1.2.39 Castlemorton Common is Open Access (Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act, Section 15) Land. On Open Access Land, walking, horse-riding, running, watching wildlife and climbing are permitted, but activities such as camping are not allowed.
- 1.2.40 The area known as 'Spitalfields' is an important community recreational facility. It lies at, and articulates, the junction between the B4208 and the A4104 at the village centre crossroads. It comprises grassed sports pitches, recreational / play facilities, a sports pavilion, and a surfaced parking area. Welland Village Hall lies opposite, with associated outdoor recreational facilities ('Welland Park') to the south, the latter also being a popular and important community resource.
- 1.2.41 Most parts of the village are well-served by a network of public footpaths which connect to the wider area, some of which are ancient trackways to and from the Malvern Hills. The footpaths are a very valuable community asset, contributing to the health and well-being of local people, allowing access to several places and features of historic interest and nature conservation importance. The paths are also popular with tourists.
- 1.2.42 Unfortunately, the quality of the experience of walking along footpaths on the rural eastern outskirts of the village has now been significantly diminished through the construction of new housing estates on land through which the routes pass.
- 1.2.43 In terms of visual amenity, there are several different aspects which need to be considered in judgements about sensitivity and capacity.
- 1.2.44 The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership's study of views to and from the Malvern Hills and the associated publication '*Guidance on Identifying and Grading Views and Viewpoints*' is of material relevance to assessments such as this.
- 1.2.45 Welland village lies within the view corridors of several of the AONB's 'Exceptional' or 'Special' viewpoints. Views from hill summits such as British Camp are iconic and of national importance. They are enjoyed by over a million people every year, many being visitors for whom the sole purpose of the visit is to experience and enjoy the area's 'outstanding natural beauty': they are classified as 'very high' sensitivity receptors. But, local residents' visual amenity is also important: certain 'every day' views often contribute to health and wellbeing, and quality of life.
- 1.2.46 Another factor to be considered is the angle and elevation of the view. Welland's location on the Severn plain means that it is clearly visible from many parts of the Hills' ridges and upper slopes; it is also clearly visible from certain points on the lower slopes, for example approaching from the west via Little Malvern. However, the settlement itself acts as a screen to land at the edges of the village in certain views from the Hills.
- 1.2.47 In longer-distance views, the degree of visibility tends to reduce with distance, when clusters of built form are 'absorbed' into the wide and extensive panorama. However, disruption of



landscape patterns, colour contrast, glare and movement can draw the eye to very small features several kilometres away - in Welland's case, even individual white-roofed agricultural buildings and recently-built houses with non-matte roofing tiles are visible with the naked eye from the Worcestershire Beacon which lies c. 6km to the north west.

- 1.2.48 Unfortunately, the poorly-planned, significant expansion of Welland village in the last few years has given rise to high levels of adverse effects on its character, resulting in high levels of adverse effects on many views from within the AONB, and towards it from within its setting.
- 1.2.49 In certain views from the Malvern Hills' ridges and upper slopes, the more-than-doubling in size of the settlement is clearly evident, especially as much of it is on higher ground to the east of the village. In and around the village, fine, open views of the Hills gained from public footpaths which until recently ran through good quality open countryside have either been lost or interrupted by new houses of poor quality design, and the layout of which has not taken these nationally-important views<sup>8</sup> into proper consideration.
- 1.2.50 From many elevated viewpoints, even mature vegetation does not screen or filter views of the new buildings (although it does highlight the important role that significant vegetation plays in relation to effects on views - where relevant this is noted in the Area schedules). Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the materials and colours used - the resultant contrast in the landscape draws the eye to the 'bulk' of the urban extension, which itself appears visually disassociated from the village when viewed from certain angles.
- 1.2.51 The presence / absence of vegetation, the nature of the vegetation and seasonality are other highly important factors to consider in visual assessments. However, there is no certainty that vegetation will remain in place in the short-term, let alone the long-term future, and thus, neither existing nor proposed vegetation can be relied upon to screen views. Importantly, an area or site may be judged to have high visual capacity for development due to the presence of vegetation, but without it, visual capacity may be very low.
- 1.2.52 Most importantly, screening views of a development with planting - existing or proposed - does not alter effects on its character: just because one can't see something doesn't mean it's not there.

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<sup>8</sup> See the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership's guidance on views, which is a material consideration in planning decisions: [https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KEYVIEWSFinalreport-lowreswebsite\\_000.pdf](https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KEYVIEWSFinalreport-lowreswebsite_000.pdf)

## 2. Area 1

### 2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 Area 1 comprises the northern half of 2015 LSCA Parcel no. 41.
- 2.1.2 Its 'Call for Sites' (CFS) reference number is CFS 0323. It was not included in the SWDPR as a 'preferred option' for residential development, but part of the Area is currently the subject of planning application ref. 19/01170/FUL (14 no. units).

### 2.2 Area Location and Description

- 2.2.1 Area 1 lies in the West to North LSCA sector at the village's north-western edge, in open countryside within the Malvern Hills AONB, on land north of the junction between the B4208 (c. 90m east of the Area) and the A4104 Marlbank Road (c. 100m south of the Area).

- 2.2.2 It comprises an arable field and riparian woodland, occupying a total of c. 4ha.

*Area 1 looking north from eastern boundary*



- 2.2.3 The land is relatively flat, with a gentle fall to the north east; the Area's highest point is at its south-western corner (c. 42m AOD), and its lowest point is at its north-eastern corner (c. 37m AOD), a gradient of c. 1:50.
- 2.2.4 The Area's northern boundary is along Marlbank Brook. The brook is very well-wooded along its length including here, the vegetation characterised by some fine, mature broad-leaved native trees.
- 2.2.5 South of the watercourse and north of the arable field, a c. 40m wide belt of probably self-set 'wet' native woodland has established; it appears to be in good condition.
- 2.2.6 There is a small grassed field adjacent to the Area's north-eastern corner; a good native hedgerow with some fine escaped mature trees forms the boundary between the two.
- 2.2.7 The northern section of the Area's eastern boundary is a continuation of this hedgerow, which also has several escaped mature trees along its length. On the other side of the hedge is a small semi-circular hay meadow, also bounded by mature hedgerows. All of these hedges probably date from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (post-Enclosure).

- 2.2.8 South of the meadow is a house with outbuildings and an associated grassed paddock.
- 2.2.9 The southern section of the Area's eastern boundary is along Welland Brook (a tributary of Marlbank Brook, which discharges into the brook north east of the Area, on the east side of the B4208). Maturing trees and shrubby species form a relatively well-wooded corridor along both sides of the watercourse as far as the A4104 Marlbank Road. The Spitalfields recreation area lies on the eastern side of the watercourse.
- 2.2.10 The Area's southern boundary is along the edge of a recently-constructed housing estate (Cornfield Close), which is accessed off the A4104.
- 2.2.11 The estate was built on the southern half of LSCA Parcel 41 (judged to have Low to Moderate capacity for development in the 2015 LSCA. Planning permission refused by Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) but allowed at appeal).
- 2.2.12 The layout and design of the houses is ubiquitous, with no reflection of / response to sense of place or local distinctiveness. The materials and colours do not integrate well into the surrounding landscape palette; the white trim in particular draws the eye to the visual clutter.

*New houses at Cornfield Close*



- 2.2.13 The land adjacent to the Area's south-western corner is occupied by a large, Victorian Malvern stone building (plus extensions) which used to be a vicarage but is currently a care home for the elderly (Welland House). Access to this is off the A4104 via Lime Grove, along both sides of which there is also relatively recent residential development. The cemetery lies west of Lime Grove.
- 2.2.14 The Area's western boundary is along a hedgerow (probably mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) which runs northwards to join Marlbank Brook.
- 2.2.15 In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the land west of the hedge comprised the vicarage's gardens and an orchard to the north, with fields to the west which extended as far as Marlbank Brook and beyond. Today there appear to be garden, orchard and field remnants on the open land adjacent to the Area, but the majority of the fields east of the brook are now a housing estate (built from c. 1950s onwards).

## 2.3 Landscape Character Baseline: Key Features and Factors

### CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE & ASSOCIATIONS

- 2.3.1 Area 1 lies within the Malvern Hills AONB, c. 90m from its eastern boundary.
- 2.3.2 It forms a small but integral part of the AONB, and the area within which it lies displays several of the AONB's Special Qualities.
- 2.3.3 In particular, the Area forms part of the *Dramatic scenery and spectacular views arising from the juxtaposition of high and low ground*, and displays the *distinctive combination of landscape elements*. The Area is a hedgebound arable field with riparian / wet woodland on its northern edges, and is a relatively *unspoiled 'natural' environment* which supports a *wide variety of wildlife habitats and species*.
- 2.3.4 The Area displays several of its host NCA 106's key characteristics, especially *flat and gently undulating landscapes, a well wooded impression... provided by frequent hedgerow trees, regular pattern of parliamentary enclosure, and arable landuse*. In this regard, the Area is a good representation of the NCA.
- 2.3.5 Several NCA 106 SEOs are relevant here, including '*Seek to safeguard and enhance this area's distinctive patterns*', '*Reinforce the existing landscape structure as part of any identified growth of urban areas*', and '*maintain, restore and expand semi natural habitats throughout the agricultural landscape, linking them together to create a coherent and resilient habitat network enabling ecosystems to adapt to climate change.*'
- 2.3.6 The Area displays the majority of its Enclosed Commons LCT's key characteristics including *gently rolling, lowland landform, a planned enclosure pattern, arable farming, an open landscape with views through scattered hedgerow trees, and strips of linear tree cover along watercourses*.
- 2.3.7 It is a very good representation of the LCT, and the various landscape elements and features are healthy and in good condition, making a small but important contribution to both local and wider landscape character.
- 2.3.8 In the vicinity there is also evidence of *urban development and modern agricultural / industrial structures which have caused localised visual impacts and a degree of clutter in this open landscape*.
- 2.3.9 At the local landscape scale, the Area makes an important contribution to the rural setting and context of the northern side of Welland village, although it has little or no association with the landscapes north of the California Lane ridge line.
- 2.3.10 There is a fairly high degree of association with the undulating landscapes to the east and south east, but limited interinfluence between the Area and the village and wider landscapes to the south and south west, including the Hills south of British Camp, due to the fact that the bulk of the settlement west of the B4208 lies south and west of the Area.
- 2.3.11 There is a fairly high degree of interinfluence and association between the Area and the Malvern Hills' ridges and east-facing slopes to the west / north west. The summit of British Camp (Iron Age hillfort and Scheduled Monument) is a prominent and iconic feature on the skyline, and lies c. 3.5km west of the Area.
- 2.3.12 The degree of interinfluence / association reduces with distance, although the Area is intervisible with the Worcestershire Beacon which lies c. 5.5km to the north west (see visual baseline below).

### HERITAGE

- 2.3.13 In terms of Scheduled Monuments, the Area lies c. 3km from the Shire Ditch, c. 3.2km from British Camp, and c. 2.5km from Little Malvern Priory. There is a fairly high degree of interinfluence and association between these features and the Area.
- 2.3.14 There is also interinfluence between the Area and Grade I listed Church of St Giles / Grade II\* Little Malvern Court, both associated with Little Malvern Priory.
- 2.3.15 The degree of interinfluence / association between the Area and the local Grade II listed buildings is relatively small, although higher with the Church of St James which lies at the

crossroads c. 200m south east of the Area, and potentially Woodside Farmhouse which lies c. 620m to the north east.

- 2.3.16 In terms of historic landscape character, the Area is categorised as 1800 - 1914, and the existing field boundaries were probably created in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in the locality, evidence of medieval farming practices remains, and it is possible that the Area contains ridge and furrow. In comments made about the current application for development on the Area, Wychavon and MHDC's Archaeology and Planning Advisor said: '*The environs are rich with evidence of medieval agricultural activity in the form of ridge and furrow (R&F). Satellite images from 2007 show cropmarks which likely represent R&F, the 2006 image shows some rectilinear cropmarks.*'
- 2.3.17 An 1828 - 32 map shows 'Welland Race Course' at the southern end of 'Welland Common' (enclosed later than other parts of the area). The race course encircled the California Lane ridgeline, its southern section running just north of Marlbank Brook near the Area's northern boundary.

#### BIODIVERSITY

- 2.3.18 Mutlow's Orchard SSSI lies c. 280m south east of the Area, and Castlemorton Common SSSI is c. 700m to the south west.
- 2.3.19 The closest LWS to the Area is Welland Cemetery (c. 90m to the south west); the cemetery is also a PHI site (Lowland Meadows)<sup>9</sup>. Other LWSs which lie within 1km of the Area include Mutlow's Farm Orchard; Castlemorton, Hollybed and Coombegreen Commons; Drake Street Meadow; and Pool and Mere Brooks.
- 2.3.20 Many protected / notable species have been recorded within 500m of the Area, including several species of bat, and badger, otter and hare.
- 2.3.21 The woodland to the north of the area is a PHI site (Deciduous Woodland), and is recorded on the NFI (both categorised post-2015).
- 2.3.22 The hedgerows may be species rich and thus HPBIs, and could potentially be 'Important'.

### **2.4 Social / Visual Amenity Baseline**

#### RECREATION & ACCESS

- 2.4.1 Castlemorton Common Open Access Land lies c. 720m to the south west of the Area.
- 2.4.2 No public footpaths or bridleways cross or run adjacent to the Area, and in the vicinity of the village, there are none in the 2015 LSCA North to West sector.
- 2.4.3 It is likely that the public footpath which ends at the B4208 c. 120m north east of the Area is part of what was once a longer and probably ancient route between Hanley Castle and Castlemorton / the Malvern Hills / Little Malvern. The route may have crossed the Area or run nearby, but was probably closed or diverted post-Enclosure.
- 2.4.4 There are two other public footpaths east of the B4208. Both run north east / south west and merge where they cross Marlbank Brook, connecting to the A4104 (Drake Street).
- 2.4.5 Spitalfields recreation area lies adjacent to the Area, on the east side of Welland Brook. It is currently proposed as Local Green Space (LGS) in the draft NP.

#### VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY

- 2.4.6 There are several residential properties adjacent to / in the vicinity of the Area with views of it, including houses along California Lane c. 170m north of the Area, houses along the B4208 to the east, and the recently-constructed houses on Cornfield Close which are adjacent to the Area's southern boundary.
- 2.4.7 To the north, the Area's visual envelope is restricted by the California Lane ridgeline, which acts as a visual screen in views towards Welland from beyond it. The envelope opens up to the north east where the Marlbank Brook has incised, and closes again to the east and south east,

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<sup>9</sup> In the 2015 LSCA, the cemetery was noted as being a designated Site of Regional or Wildlife Importance, and thus the subject of Malvern Hills District Local Plan (2006) Policy QL17; this policy was replaced in the 2016 SWDP by SWDP Policy 22.

mainly due to localised topographical variations on the outskirts of the village, but also built form and mature vegetation (although the latter only filters in winter, and in any case, cannot be relied upon to screen in the longer term).

- 2.4.8 Dense built form south, south west and west of the Area, and the western end of the California Lane ridgeline north west of the Area (see photos above), result in the visual envelope being relatively tight in views from lower-lying land; however, as the land rises towards the Hills, the envelope extends accordingly, its outer edge being the Hills' ridgeline.
- 2.4.9 The Area is visible from the Worcestershire Beacon, which lies c. 5.5km to the north west. At this distance it only forms a small part of the overall panorama; however, the angle of view is such that it is seen as part of a green gap in between the densely-settled parts of the village, which if filled with built form would lose its function. It is also important to note that such green gaps perform a similar function at night, by preventing coalescence of lighting.
- 2.4.10 Travelling south along the ridgeline and upper hill slopes, the Area remains visible except where dense mature tree cover currently filters or screens views (generally, more so in summer than winter).
- 2.4.11 The Area is clearly visible from Jubilee Hill, Pinnacle Hill and Black Hill (c. 3.5km, 3.1km and 2.9km north west of the Area respectively). The degree of visibility is relatively high due to the fact that from these locations, it is seen along its long side (all the photographs below are zoomed-in).

*View of Area 1 from Jubilee Hill*



*View of Area 1 from Pinnacle Hill*



*View of Area 1 from Black Hill*



2.4.12 The Area is also visible from British Camp (c. 3.5km to the west), the summit of which is the location of 'Exceptional' AONB viewpoint no. 49. However, although clearly visible, from this angle of view it does not appear to extend so far into open countryside, given the visual context of the existing housing estate west of the Area.

- 2.4.13 The photograph below was taken in the spring of 2015, before the Cornfield Close and Lawn Farm developments were constructed. Note the glare from the non-matte roof tiles along the B4208 to the south.

*View of Area 1 from British Camp*



- 2.4.14 On the Hills' ridges and upper slopes south of British Camp, the degree of visibility is relatively low due to a) distance and b) the fact that the bulk of the settlement lying west of the B4208 visually 'intervenes' between the Hills and the Area.

## **2.5 Area 1 Conclusions**

- 2.5.1 The 2015 LSCA categorised the level of capacity of what was then a larger parcel of land (LSCA Parcel 41) as 'Low to Moderate'.
- 2.5.2 It concluded that there was some potential for new built form to be introduced, but only along a narrow strip contiguous with the existing settlement edge to the south of the parcel.
- 2.5.3 Since then, 24 no. residential properties have been built of the southern half of LSCA Parcel 41.
- 2.5.4 The baseline landscape and visual situation of the Area's wider landscape context has also changed, with the construction of housing estates on large swathes of land east of the village. This has adversely affected nationally-important views from the Malvern Hills' ridges and upper slopes, and locally-important views towards the Malvern Hills from the once-rural outskirts of the village.
- 2.5.5 In the light of these changes, the 2019 LSCA concluded that whilst the Area's level of landscape character sensitivity was still 'Moderate to High', its level of visual sensitivity was now higher (increased from 'Moderate' to 'Moderate to High').
- 2.5.6 This is mainly due to the adverse visual effects that would arise from the construction of new built form on the Area, including i) in views from the Hills, development would appear as a long urban extension into good quality open countryside; ii) the cumulative effects when seen in combination with the recently-constructed developments east of the village; and iii) the potential for high levels of adverse effects to be experienced by visual receptors at near-distance viewpoints.



- 2.5.7 In addition, the various landscape / environmental / GI functions that the Area performs and contributions it makes to landscape character, visual amenity, context and setting are now of higher value than they were.
- 2.5.8 In fact, the 2015 LSCA identified Area 41 as an ideal location for a new village community space, and that would be a fitting use for what is left of it: potentially, new footpath links could be created across the land from Spitalfields to the north side of Marbank Brook and beyond.
- 2.5.9 The 2019 LSCA concludes that Area 1's level of landscape capacity should be reduced to '**Low / Low to Moderate**'.

## 3. Area 2

### 3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 Area 2 forms part of 2015 LSCA Parcel no. 13.
- 3.1.2 Its CFS reference number is CFS 0336. It is included in the SWDPR as a 'preferred option' for residential development (ref. SWDP NEW 99). The SHELAA concluded that the site had the capacity to accommodate up to 36 no. new dwellings. It is informally known as 'Lawn Farm 3' as it would be the third phase of the recently-constructed Lawn Farm housing estates to the north (south of Drake Street).

### 3.2 Area Location and Description

- 3.2.1 Area 2 lies in the East to South LSCA sector, in open countryside at the edge of what is now the settlement's eastern urban extension. The A4104 / Drake Street is c. 260m to the north, and the B4208 c. 270m to the north west.
- 3.2.2 It comprises the majority of a small to medium-sized broadly rectangular grassed field and a small pond surrounded by mature trees, and occupies c. 1.7ha.

*View of Area 2 (in mid-ground on hill crest) from public footpath to south east (taken in 2015, pre-Lawn Farm development)*



- 3.2.3 The topography in the vicinity of the Area is sloping / gently undulating, the landscape incised by small watercourses which drain northwards towards Marlbank Brook. The Area lies on a locally-prominent crest of land, the highest point being in the centre of the field at just over 50m AOD.
- 3.2.4 Part of the Area's northern boundary runs along an old hedgerow, intact at its western end. The wooded pond lies just south of the hedge in the Area's north-eastern corner.
- 3.2.5 The rest of the northern boundary comprises garden boundaries. The gardens belong to recently-constructed houses at the southern end of the Lawn Farm development, which, along with other recently-constructed development, now occupies what were once small to medium-sized fields of pasture between the Area and Drake Street.
- 3.2.6 Inexplicably, permission was granted for the northern boundary hedgerow to be breached: a long section was removed, and one large and several smaller houses were built in the field to

the south, on high ground. The arbitrary fenced boundary line forms an unnatural shape and disrupts the traditional landscape pattern. Furthermore, the poor quality design of the houses, especially the choice of colours and materials and the window proportions, along with the domesticated landscaping, exacerbate the overall sense of ubiquitous urbanisation.

*Recently-constructed houses at Lawn Farm, adjacent to Area's northern boundary*





- 3.2.7 The Area's eastern, southern and western boundaries are hedgerows, with fields and a few scattered residential properties / farmsteads beyond. Castlemorton Common lies c. 175m to the south.

### 3.3 Landscape Character Baseline: Key Features and Factors

#### CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE & ASSOCIATIONS

- 3.3.1 Area 2 lies outside the Malvern Hills AONB, c. 270m from its eastern boundary.
- 3.3.2 It makes a small but important contribution to the AONB's setting, and in terms of the AONB's Special Qualities, forms part of the *Dramatic scenery and spectacular views arising from the juxtaposition of high and low ground*, and displays the *distinctive combination of landscape elements*. The Area is a hedgebound pasture field with a small wooded pond at its north-eastern corner, and in itself is a relatively *unspoiled 'natural' environment* which supports a *wide variety of wildlife habitats and species*.
- 3.3.3 The Area displays several of its host NCA 106's key characteristics, especially *gently undulating landscapes, a well wooded impression... provided by frequent hedgerow trees, regular pattern of parliamentary enclosure, and small pasture fields*. In this regard, the Area is a good representation of the NCA.
- 3.3.4 Several NCA 106 SEOs are relevant here, including '*Seek to safeguard and enhance this area's distinctive patterns*', '*Reinforce the existing landscape structure as part of any identified growth of urban areas*', and '*maintain, restore and expand semi natural habitats throughout the agricultural landscape, linking them together to create a coherent and resilient habitat network enabling ecosystems to adapt to climate change.*'
- 3.3.5 The Area is a good representation of its Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use LCT, being part of a *small to medium scale settled agricultural landscape characterised by scattered farms. The historic, small scale, settled nature of this landscape imparts a strong strength of character.*
- 3.3.6 The Area displays the majority of the LCT's key characteristics, including *small-scale landscape defined by a prominent pattern of hedged fields, pastoral land use, and rolling lowland with occasional steep sided hills and valleys.*
- 3.3.7 In the vicinity there is also evidence of *development... eroding both the small scale and pastoral character of the landscape... Particularly just outside the AONB, this has had an impact on the integrity of the small scale enclosure pattern, where hedgerows lose their function and either*

*become neglected, or have been removed, resulting in larger fields and a change in the scale of the landscape. The loss and deterioration of hedgerows in turn threatens the survival of hedgerow trees.*

- 3.3.8 Beyond the eroded urban fringes, the various landscape elements and features are mostly healthy and in good condition, making a small but important contribution to both local and wider landscape character.
- 3.3.9 At the local landscape scale, the Area makes an important contribution to the rural setting and context of the south-eastern side of Welland village.
- 3.3.10 Due to the dense clusters of modern built form, the Area has limited interinfluence / association with the landscapes north of the A4104 Drake Street / Marlbank Road; however, it has a high degree of interinfluence and close association with the local landscapes to the east, south and west, forming a small but integral part of the characteristic and historic pattern of small to medium-sized hedgebound pasture fields north of Castlemorton Common.
- 3.3.11 The degree of interinfluence between the Area and the wider landscapes to the east / south-east is high due to topography: from the Area's 'crest', the land falls eastwards and opens up, with Bredon Hill and the Cotswold Escarpment visible on the skyline.
- 3.3.12 In an arc from south west to north west there are varying degrees of interinfluence and association between the Area and the Malvern Hills' ridges and east-facing slopes, the degree reducing with distance.
- 3.3.13 The Area is intervisible with the Worcestershire Beacon which lies c. 6.2km to the north west, but there is limited interinfluence as the settlement 'intervenes'. The Area lies c. 3.8km east of the summit of British Camp; the degree of interinfluence / association between them is relatively high (see both heritage and visual baseline below).

#### HERITAGE

- 3.3.14 In terms of Scheduled Monuments, the Area lies c. 3.2km from the Shire Ditch, c. 3.5km from British Camp, and c. 2.8km from Little Malvern Priory. There is a relatively high degree of interinfluence and association between these features and the Area, as well as between the Area and Grade I listed Church of St Giles / Grade II\* Little Malvern Court, both associated with Little Malvern Priory.

*Views of British Camp and Little Malvern Priory / Court looking west from Area 2*



- 3.3.15 The degree of interinfluence / association between the Area and the majority of the local Grade II listed buildings is small, although it is higher with the Church of St James which lies at the crossroads c. 285m to the north east (intervisibility between church spire and parts of Area).
- 3.3.16 In terms of historic landscape character, the Area is categorised as post-1945. However, this is unlikely to be correct, as the field's boundaries are shown with mature escaped trees on late 19<sup>th</sup> century maps. The field was an orchard, as were most of the fields in this sector, but apart from a small cluster near the pond, the orchard trees on the Area had been cleared by the early 1900s. The small cluster disappeared during the 1960s / 70s.
- 3.3.17 Furthermore, there is evidence of medieval landuse in the locality (probably associated with the medieval settlement along Drake Street). During site visits, what could potentially be ridge and furrow was seen in the fields east of the Area, and it is not out of the question that the Area itself contains ridge and furrow.

*Possible ridge and furrow in fields east of Area 2*



- 3.3.18 The public footpaths which cross the Area / run along its boundaries are on the lines of old trackways. The now-realigned path along the Area's northern boundary would have been used as a route from the east to the Malvern Hills via what became Welland village in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and which lies c. 1.4km east of the Area.

#### BIODIVERSITY

- 3.3.19 Mutlow's Orchard SSSI lies c. 70m north of the Area, and Castlemorton Common SSSI is c. 440m to the west.
- 3.3.20 LWSs which lie in the vicinity of the Area include Mutlow's Farm Orchard; Castlemorton, Hollybed and Coombegreen Commons; and Drake Street Meadow.
- 3.3.21 Many protected / notable species have been recorded in the vicinity of the Area, including several species of bat, and great crested newts.
- 3.3.22 There is a scatter of PHI sites nearby (Lowland Meadow, Traditional Orchard and Deciduous Woodland), and some of this vegetation is recorded on the NFI.
- 3.3.23 Some of the hedgerows are species-rich and thus HPBIs, and could potentially be 'Important'.
- 3.3.24 There are yellow meadow anthills in the pasture fields east of the Area - meadow ants are indicative of undisturbed / unimproved grassland.

### 3.4 Social / Visual Amenity Baseline

#### RECREATION & ACCESS

- 3.4.1 Castlemorton Common Open Access Land lies c. 175m to the south of the Area.
- 3.4.2 A public footpath crosses the Area. It used to continue north-eastwards towards Drake Street across the adjoining field to the north, but was diverted westwards as part of the Lawn Farm proposals. To the south east, the footpath connects with other footpaths leading to Castlemorton, Birtsmorton and beyond. There is a public footpath along the Area's eastern boundary, also from Drake Street, which joins the footpath across the Area at the latter's south-eastern corner.
- 3.4.3 The public footpath along the Area's northern boundary used to run through the field / along the northern boundary hedgerow; however, the Lawn Farm development has resulted in its diversion along a road through the housing estate. It continues westwards as far as the B4208, and also connects with the public footpath leading north to Drake Street, on the east side of Mutlow's Orchard SSSI.
- 3.4.4 The Area lies c. 320m south east of Welland Village Hall (and associated Welland Park), and c. 390m south east of Spitalfields recreation area.
- 3.4.5 Several parcels of land in the vicinity of the Area are proposed as LGS in the draft NP, including Mutlow's and Mutlow's Farm Orchards; Welland Park; the village green; Spitalfields recreation area; and green spaces within the new Lawn Farm developments.

#### VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY

- 3.4.6 There are several residential properties adjacent to / in the vicinity of the Area with views of it, including the recently-constructed houses at Lawn Farm immediately north of the Area.
- 3.4.7 To the north, the Area's visual envelope is restricted by the new residential properties. Receptors are mainly people living in the adjacent / nearby residential properties and footpath users.

*View from Area 2 looking north*



- 3.4.8 To the east and south east, the Area's visual envelope is extensive due to the fact that from the Area's 'crest', the land falls eastwards and opens up, with Bredon Hill and the Cotswold Escarpment visible on the skyline.

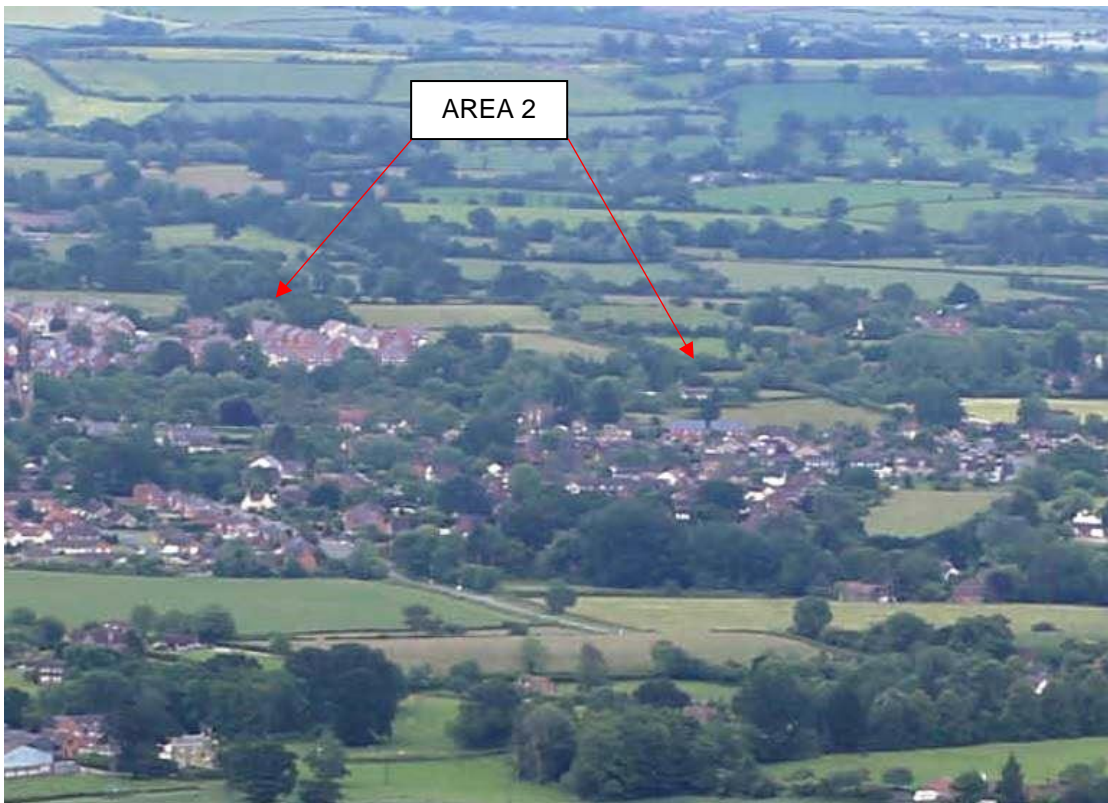
- 3.4.9 From Castlemorton Common to the south - within the AONB - the new houses north of the Area are partially visible through / over intervening mature vegetation. However, currently, the Area's southern boundary hedge is tall and infested with brambles; this means that from the public footpath running past Bakehouse Farm (and probably from the Farm itself and The Firs), views of the Area are currently quite well-screened even in winter. However, it is important to note that the hedgerow is in urgent need of (sensitive) management, and removing the brambles will increase the degree of visibility.
- 3.4.10 Although there is a relatively high degree of interinfluence between the Area and Castlemorton Common to the south west, views are currently well-screened even in winter by the dense, mature vegetation associated with Bakehouse Farm, The Firs and other properties between the Area and the Common. However, some of the vegetation is over-mature and its future screening function cannot be guaranteed. This would have a potentially significant adverse effect on views from the Common - many users are Very High sensitivity receptors.
- 3.4.11 The Area is just visible from the Worcestershire Beacon, which lies c. 6.2km to the north west, but at this distance it only forms a very small part of the overall panorama.
- 3.4.12 Travelling south along the ridgeline and upper hill slopes, the Area remains visible except where dense mature tree cover on the Hills currently filters or screens views (generally, more so in summer than winter).
- 3.4.13 The Area is visible from Jubilee Hill, Pinnacle Hill and Black Hill (c. 3.7km, 3.4km and 3.1km north west of the Area respectively). The degree of visibility is moderate from these locations: this is partly due to distance, but also because the western side of the Area currently benefits from the filtering / screening effects of mature vegetation on land adjacent to the west (although the view opens up over most of the field from Black Hill). This vegetation is also important because it visually separates the urban extension from the village core.
- 3.4.14 All the photographs below are zoomed-in.

*View of Area 2 from Jubilee Hill*





*View of Area 2 from Pinnacle Hill*



*View of Area 2 from Black Hill*



3.4.15 The Area is also visible from British Camp Iron Age hillfort and Scheduled Monument, a prominent and iconic skyline feature. The Area lies c. 3.8km from the summit, which is the location of 'Exceptional' AONB viewpoint no. 49. From this angle of view the degree of visibility

is moderate to high. New built form on the Area would noticeably increase the size of the settlement.

*View of Area 2 from British Camp*



3.4.16 On the Hills' ridges and upper slopes south of British Camp, the degree of visibility decreases with distance.

### **3.5 Area 2 Conclusions**

3.5.1 The 2015 LSCA categorised the level of capacity of the Area (which was part of larger LSCA Parcel 13), as 'Low'. This was mainly due to the fact that at the time, the Area lay in relatively tranquil rural open countryside, some distance from the settlement.

3.5.2 Now, the baseline situation has changed, with the creation of the new urban extension at Lawn Farm to the north.

3.5.3 This assessment concluded that if the Area was developed, levels of adverse effects on landscape character, visual and social amenity would be unacceptably high. This is because the settlement has expanded so much in recent years that the landscapes which surround it, and which form its context and setting, are even more valuable than they were before; now, the functions they perform and contributions they make to character, views and access to nature are more important.

3.5.4 Development on the Area would increase the levels of adverse effects currently experienced from nationally-important viewpoints on the Malvern Hills, and locally-important views towards the Malvern Hills from the once-rural outskirts of the village.

3.5.5 There would also be adverse effects on biodiversity: as mentioned in Section 1, Natural England has recently expressed significant concern about the erosion and loss of habitats on the Hills and Commons due to the year-on-year increase in use. However, locally-important habitats such as the unimproved pastures east of Area 2 are also being eroded and lost, because they now lie on the urban fringes. According to local landowners, dog-fouling is a major problem, and when dogs run loose they worry sheep.

3.5.6 This assessment concluded that Area 2's level of capacity should remain '**Low**'.

## 4. Area 3

### 4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Area 3 is 2015 LSCA Parcel no. 19.
- 4.1.2 Its CFS reference number is CFS 0659. It was not included in the SWDPR as a 'preferred option' for residential development, but is the subject of a "Promotion Document" produced in March 2019, which sets out proposals for a large cluster of new residential development on the land.
- 4.1.3 The brief for this (2019) study was to carry out a 'high-level' review of the Area, as opposed to the 'full' assessments required for Areas 1 and 2.

### 4.2 Area Location and Description

- 4.2.1 Area 3 lies in the East to South LSCA sector, in open countryside at the southern edge of the village. It comprises a medium-sized arable field with a total area of c. 3.4ha.

*View looking north across Area 3 from Castlemorton Common*



- 4.2.2 The Area's northern boundary is along a track leading to two properties lying east of the Area. Mutlow's Farm orchard and the village centre crossroads lie to the north of the Area.
- 4.2.3 Its eastern boundary is a hedgeline which zig-zags southwards to the hedged southern boundary. A scatter of residential properties / farmsteads lie in the open countryside beyond.
- 4.2.4 The Area's southern boundary is also the boundary between the parishes of Welland and Castlemorton. The parish boundary is characterised by highly distinctive and valuable boundary oak growing out of an old hedge with ancient trackways adjacent (although along several sections these features have been eroded / lost). The ancient landscapes of Castlemorton Common stretch away to the south west.
- 4.2.5 The southern section of the Area's western boundary is along the B4208, the northern section is contiguous with the boundary of the garden of a house at the Area's north-western corner. What used to be the bulk of the settlement lies west of the road.

#### **4.3 Landscape Character Baseline Summary: Key Features and Factors**

##### CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE & ASSOCIATIONS

- Area lies outside the Malvern Hills AONB, adjacent to its eastern boundary (contiguous with Area's western and southern boundaries).
- It makes a locally-important contribution to the AONB's setting and Special Qualities.
- Is a good representation of host NCA 106 and mother LCT Enclosed Commons.
- Makes highly important contribution to rural setting and context of southern side of village.
- Key location and highly important function as southern gateway to village.
- Landscape elements and features are mostly healthy and in good condition.
- Limited degree of interinfluence / association with landscapes north of A4104.
- High degree of interinfluence / association with local landscapes to east - diminishes with distance.
- Very high degree of interinfluence / association with highly valuable and sensitive landscapes to south: Castlemorton Common (SSSI / LWS / Open Access Land etc.) is adjacent to Area's southern boundary.
- Relatively high degree of interinfluence / association with Malvern Hills to west.

##### HERITAGE

- C. 3.2km east of British Camp and Shire Ditch Scheduled Monuments, and c. 2.5km south east of Little Malvern Priory SM: relatively high degree of interinfluence / association with all three.
- High degree of interinfluence / association / intervisibility between Area and Grade II listed Church of St James (c. 360m to north east).
- Historic landscape character categorised as 1800 - 1914.
- Evidence of medieval landuse in locality - Area has strong association with ancient landscapes to south and west.

##### BIODIVERSITY

- Castlemorton Common SSSI lies c. 50m to south west.
- Mutlow's Orchard SSSI lies c. 190m to north east.
- Mutlow's Farm Orchard LWS lies c. 125m to north.
- Castlemorton, Hollybed and Coombegreen Commons LWS is adjacent to Area's southern boundary.
- Many protected / notable species recorded in vicinity.
- PHI sites (Traditional Orchards) adjacent to Area's north-western and north-eastern boundaries.
- Some hedgerows species-rich HPBIs, and potentially 'Important'.

#### **4.4 Social / Visual Amenity Baseline**

##### RECREATION & ACCESS

- Castlemorton Common Open Access Land adjacent southern boundary.
- Public footpaths along tracks to north and south of Area (c. 85m and c. 90m away respectively).

### VIEWS & VISUAL AMENITY

- Visual envelope to north and north east partially restricted by built form of settlement and mature vegetation in Mutlow's Orchard / adjacent fields.
- To east, visual envelope restricted by dense, mature vegetation associated with residential properties including the Firs, and Bakehouse Farm.
- Extensive visual envelope to south east, south and south west. Very high quality panoramic views across Castlemorton Common towards Area which is highly visible from many locations.
- Views from Common are within AONB - many Very High sensitivity receptors (also Open Access Land). From south looking north west, Area is in foreground of fine views from Common to Malvern Hills, with majority of settlement well-screened by vegetation - see photo below.

*View looking north west across Castlemorton Common and southern end of Welland village*



- Approaching from south in particular, Area's functions / contributions (village gateway, rural context and setting) visually very clear.
- Area clearly visible from British Camp to west (see photo overleaf). At this viewpoint, appears visually separated from majority of settlement including new urban extension, being integral part of surrounding rural open countryside.

*View looking east / north east from British Camp*



- Area also visible from Hills' ridges and summits to north west: villagescape 'intervenes' somewhat in views from these locations (as shown in photo from Black Hill below).

*View looking east from Black Hill*



#### 4.5 Area 3 Conclusions

- 4.5.1 The 2015 LSCA categorised the level of capacity of Area 3 (LSCA Parcel 19) as 'Low to Moderate'.
- 4.5.2 Since then, the baseline situation has changed, with the creation of the new urban extension at Lawn Farm to the north.
- 4.5.3 This assessment concluded that if the Area was developed, levels of adverse effects on landscape character, visual and social amenity would be unacceptably high. This is because the settlement has expanded so much in recent years that the landscapes which surround it, and which form its context and setting, are even more valuable than they were before; now, the functions they perform and contributions they make to character, views and access to nature are more important.
- 4.5.4 Development on the Area would increase the levels of adverse effects currently experienced from nationally-important viewpoints on the Malvern Hills' and towards the Malvern Hills from Castlemorton Common (within the AONB), and would adversely affect many locally-important views.
- 4.5.5 In relation to effects on views, it should be noted that the aforementioned March 2019 "Promotion Document" for the Area contains a plan showing the 'zone of theoretical visibility' (ZTV) of the new residential development proposed on the land (Figure 10 - ZTV Plan). Although it may be an extract from a larger plan, it is misleading, and almost certainly inaccurate: i) it does not show the ZTV in relation to the Malvern Hills, and b) although not shown on the ZTV Plan, the Area is almost certainly theoretically intervisible with Little Malvern Priory and other parts of the Hills' mid and lower slopes.
- 4.5.6 Development on the Area could also give rise and / or contribute to significant adverse effects on nationally-designated habitats: as mentioned in Section 1, Natural England has recently expressed significant concern about the erosion and loss of habitats on the Hills and Commons due to the year-on-year increase in use. The Area lies c. 50m from Castlemorton SSSI and c. 190m from Mutlow's Orchard SSSI, and is also adjacent to a LWS and PHI sites.
- 4.5.7 In the light of the above factors, this assessment concluded that Area 3's level of capacity should be reduced to '**Low**'.

## 5. Areas 4 & 5

### 5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 In the 2015 LSCA, Areas 4 and 5 were assessed as a single parcel of land (LSCA Parcel no. 25).
- 5.1.2 Area 4's CFS reference number is CFS 0953, Area 5's is CFS 0771.
- 5.1.3 Neither Area was included in the SWDPR as a 'preferred option' for residential development.

### 5.2 Area Location and Description

- 5.2.1 Areas 4 and 5 lie in the South to West LSCA sector, in open countryside at the south-western edge of the village.
- 5.2.2 Together, the Areas comprise three relatively small grassed fields / paddocks, mostly bounded by hedgerows although the hedge separating Areas 4 and 5 appears to have been lost. The total area is c. 2.2ha.
- 5.2.3 The Area's north east- and south east-facing boundaries are contiguous with the rear garden boundaries of adjacent residential properties. The B4208 lies c. 45m to the south east at its closest point.
- 5.2.4 The southern (just south west-facing) boundary is also the boundary between Welland and Castlemorton parishes. The parish boundary is characterised by highly distinctive and valuable boundary oak growing out of an old hedge with ancient trackways adjacent (present here - see photo below, although along several sections these features have been eroded / lost). The ancient landscapes of Castlemorton Common stretch away to the south west.

*View looking east along Areas' southern boundary (parish boundary with hedge, track & oak)*



- 5.2.5 The Areas' north west-facing boundary is along the well-wooded Welland Brook (a tributary of Marbank Brook), which crosses Castlemorton Common to the south west.
- 5.2.6 Beyond the brook the landscapes open up across high quality, very sparsely-settled landscapes which stretch all the way to the Hills.



### **5.3 Landscape Character Baseline Summary: Key Features and Factors**

#### CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE & ASSOCIATIONS

- Areas lie within Malvern Hills AONB, c. 45m from eastern boundary at closest point.
- Areas are characterised by locally-distinctive landscape elements and features mostly healthy and in good condition, and make a small but locally-important contribution to the AONB's Special Qualities.
- Are good representations of host NCA 106 and mother LCT Enclosed Commons.
- Southern boundary vegetation in particular makes important contribution to rural setting and context of south-eastern side of village.
- Key location and highly important function as southern gateway to village.
- Apart from on boundaries, limited degree of interinfluence with settlement and landscapes beyond to north and east, although closely-associated with settlement.
- Apart from at closer quarters, moderate degree of interinfluence / association with local landscapes to south east and south - diminishes with distance.
- Very high degree of interinfluence / association with highly valuable and sensitive landscapes to south / south west: Castlemorton Common (SSSI and Open Access Land etc.) is adjacent to Area's southern boundary.
- Relatively high degree of interinfluence / association with Malvern Hills to west.

#### HERITAGE

- C. 3km east of British Camp and Shire Ditch Scheduled Monuments, and c. 2.2km south east of Little Malvern Priory SM: relatively high degree of interinfluence / association with all three.
- Limited interinfluence / association with local Grade II listed buildings, although potential intervisibility between Areas and spire of Church of St James.
- Historic landscape character categorised as 1800 - 1914.
- Evidence of medieval landuse in locality - Area has strong association with ancient landscapes to south and west.

#### BIODIVERSITY

- Castlemorton Common SSSI lies adjacent to southern boundary.
- Mutlow's Orchard SSSI lies c. 375m to north east.
- Mutlow's Farm Orchard LWS lies c. 250m to north east.
- Castlemorton, Hollybed and Coombegreen Commons LWS lies c. 50m to south east.
- Many protected / notable species recorded in vicinity.
- PHI sites (Deciduous woodland / Good quality semi-improved grassland) adjacent southern / part of north-western boundaries. Trees also recorded on NFI.
- Some hedgerows species-rich HPBIs, and potentially 'Important'.

### **5.4 Social / Visual Amenity Baseline**

#### RECREATION & ACCESS

- Castlemorton Common Open Access Land adjacent southern boundary, crossed by public footpaths.
- Public footpaths east of B4208.

### VIEWS & VISUAL AMENITY

- Visual envelope to north / north east / east restricted by settlement and dense, mature vegetation, although several residential receptors on boundaries.
- Views of Area open up in arc from south east to south west. Very high quality panoramic views across Castlemorton Common towards Area which is highly visible from many locations.
- Views from Common are within AONB - many Very High sensitivity receptors (also Open Access Land).
- Approaching from south in particular, Area's functions / contributions (village gateway, rural context and setting) visually very clear.

*View from B4208 crossing Castlemorton Common, looking north east towards village*



- Area clearly visible from British Camp to west (see photo overleaf). At this viewpoint is seen within context of existing built form to north and east, main function being rural context and setting of village.

*View from British Camp looking east*



- Area also visible from Hills' ridges and summits to north west: villagescape also 'intervenes' somewhat in views from these locations.

## **5.5 Areas 4 & 5 Conclusions**

- 5.5.1 The 2015 LSCA categorised the level of capacity of Areas 4 and 5 (LSCA Parcel 25) as 'Low to Moderate'. It also concluded that there was some capacity for built form, but only if contiguous with the existing settlement edge.
- 5.5.2 Since then, the creation of the new urban extension at Lawn Farm to the north east has significantly altered the wider landscapes. However, on a local physical level the extension is not closely-associated with Areas 4 and 5, and apart from the construction of a new house in a green gap between the Areas' eastern boundary and the B4208, the baseline situation in this part of the village has not materially changed.
- 5.5.3 The conclusion of this assessment is that if the Areas were developed - individually or in-combination - levels of adverse effects on landscape character, visual and social amenity could potentially be unacceptably high. This is because the settlement has expanded so much in recent years that the landscapes which surround it, and which form its context and setting, are even more valuable than they were before; now, the functions they perform and contributions they make to character, views and access to nature are more important.
- 5.5.4 Development on one or both of the Areas would increase the levels of adverse effects currently experienced from nationally-important viewpoints on the Malvern Hills' and towards the Malvern Hills from Castlemorton Common (within the AONB), and would adversely affect locally-important views.
- 5.5.5 There could also be significant adverse effects on nationally-designated habitats including Castlemorton Common SSSI: as mentioned in Section 1, Natural England has recently expressed significant concern about the erosion and loss of habitats on the Hills and Commons due to the year-on-year increase in use. The Area's southern boundary is adjacent to the SSSI.
- 5.5.6 As with all the Areas, the level of effects would depend on the number of dwellings built, if that was decided to be an appropriate course of action, but as the Areas lie within the AONB it is assumed that a) density would be very low and b) the quality of the design would be very high, with locally-appropriate mitigation and enhancement. It is also assumed that all the boundary vegetation would be retained and protected / enhanced, and properly managed in the long term.

- 5.5.7 In the light of the above factors, this assessment concluded that combined, Areas 4 and 5's level of capacity should remain '**Low to Moderate**'.
- 5.5.8 In the event that Areas 4 and 5 were considered as separate entities, Area 5's level of capacity is marginally greater than that of Area 4 (at the higher end of 'Low to Moderate'), as Area 5 is more closely-associated with the settlement.

## 6. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Summary of 2019 LSCA's Findings and Conclusions

- 6.1.1 The aim of this LSCA was to determine whether certain parcels of land (2019 LSCA 'Areas') on the edges of Welland village potentially had the capacity to accommodate new residential development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.
- 6.1.2 The results of the studies will form part of the evidence-base for Welland's emerging Neighbourhood Plan, and will inform the future decision-making process.
- 6.1.3 The brief for the commission entailed checking, and where necessary, updating the 2015 LSCA baseline information, and factoring it into the 2019 sensitivity and capacity studies.
- 6.1.4 In some cases, new developments have fundamentally altered the character of the landscapes within which the Areas lie. As a result, this LSCA also had to determine what if any effects this may have had on the 2015 LSCA's judgements about levels of landscape and visual value, susceptibility to change, sensitivity and capacity.
- 6.1.5 The 2019 LSCA found that the adverse effects on landscape character and visual / social amenity arising from the new urban extension at Lawn Farm east of the village are extensive, especially due to a) the high degree of interinfluence and intervisibility between Welland and the nationally-designated AONB landscapes (Malvern Hills and Commons), and b) the erosion and loss of locally-valuable elements and features resulting from intensification of use.
- 6.1.6 The situation is that Welland now has very limited if any capacity to accept further growth without causing even greater harm, and many of the landscapes which remain are now of greater functional value and sensitivity than they were previously.
- 6.1.7 In the light of the changes to the 2015 baseline situation and the likely effects, the 2019 assessment concludes as follows:

**Area 1:** Level of capacity should be reduced from 'Low to Moderate' to '**Low / Low to Moderate**'.

**Area 2:** Level of capacity should remain '**Low**'.

**Area 3:** Level of capacity should be reduced from 'Low to Moderate' to '**Low**'.

**Areas 4 & 5:** Level of capacity should remain '**Low to Moderate**'.

### 6.2 Recommendations

- 6.2.1 Section 7.2 of the 2015 LSCA sets out a series of recommendations and future initiatives relating to Welland's landscape character, visual and social amenity, biodiversity and so on. Whilst the majority if not all of these are still relevant, and should be used to guide and inform future planning and planning-related decisions, the rapid and substantial increase in the size of the village in recent years has meant that opportunities for local environmental / social improvements have been lost.
- 6.2.2 Furthermore, the piecemeal approach to development has been extremely detrimental to Welland's landscapes and communities in many regards, due to the lack of strategic environmental and social planning. The 2015 LSCA emphasised the need to assess cumulative effects before allowing the village to expand further (para. 7.2.10), but this exercise was not carried out.
- 6.2.3 In fact, Welland village has grown by over 60% in the last five years. Had the bulk of this urban expansion been proposed as a single project, it would almost certainly have been categorised as major development, and would have required an Environmental Impact Assessment. This may have led to a different decision, or at least a different, less harmful outcome.
- 6.2.4 What has not been considered is the incremental and ultimately significant increase in adverse effects on soil, water and air quality, quality of the landscape, quality of life, and on the health and wellbeing of the environment and the human and other populations it supports.

- 6.2.5 In particular, many of the nationally-designated and other important habitats in the area are highly vulnerable to change, and have very limited tolerance of the pressures arising a) directly from the increase in the numbers of people using them, and b) indirectly through factors such as pollutants, both of which are rising year-on-year.
- 6.2.6 Natural England has recently expressed concern about significant adverse effects on these habitats and the flora and fauna they support, many of which are species protected by European / national legislation. Effects include erosion / loss of landcover and features (trampling, eutrophication from dog-fouling, pollution), noise, disturbance, lighting and so on. Suitable alternative and less sensitive recreational areas and opportunities in and around the settlement need to be provided.
- 6.2.7 If any additional development in / around the village is to be considered, the proposal should be subject to very close and rigorous scrutiny, not just 'on its own merits' but in combination with existing and future development. This will require cumulative assessments of environmental, social and economic effects to be carried out.
- 6.2.8 In terms of the latter, it is recognised that the 'outstanding natural beauty' of the area contributes significantly to economic activities and well-being through tourism and inward investment. As noted above, *'Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the AONB to enjoy its natural and cultural heritage. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy'*. Ironically, intensification of use results in the degradation / loss of the landscape's special qualities that people come specifically to enjoy, resulting in adverse economic effects.
- 6.2.9 The relevant guidance should always be followed. For example, many of the mistakes made in terms of siting, layout and design at the Lawn Farm development (even in small details, for example the use of contrasting white trim which draws the eye to the detractor) should be avoided if the AONB's guidance on respecting landscape in views<sup>10</sup>, building design<sup>11</sup>, selection of colour<sup>12</sup>, and guidance on views<sup>13</sup> is followed. Studies such as Environmental Colour Assessment should accompany the planning application and be carried out alongside landscape / visual and other assessments, and not requested as a condition.
- 6.2.10 Significant mature vegetation makes a highly important contribution to the landscape character (historic and modern) and visual amenity of the area, including that of the Malvern Hills AONB. It also currently screens certain detractors from view, and provides a variety of wildlife habitats. However, the long-term future of the vegetation cannot be guaranteed. Some of the trees are nearing the ends of their useful lives. Old age, deliberate (authorised / unauthorised) removal, pests, diseases, pollution and accidents can result in decline and loss - the native trees and hedges in particular are highly vulnerable to change. There are currently concerns about the potentially devastating effects of 'acute oak decline' and oak processionary moth, ash dieback, horse chestnut canker, the Asian longhorn beetle and Phytophthora amongst others.
- 6.2.11 Potential effects arising from new development must be considered on the basis that there is no certainty that what is there now, or what is planted in the future, will survive, and cannot be relied upon to perform functions such as screening views.
- 6.2.12 If sites are proposed for development, consideration should be given to what level of effects is predicted without existing / proposed vegetation, as well as with it. This could affect future decisions about which sites are more suitable for development than others. It is also a relevant factor in the assessment of cumulative effects, and matters such as coalescence.

Carly Tinkler BA CMLI FRSA MIALE December 2019

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/64339-MHAONB-Guidance-on-Respecting-Landscape-in-Views-v09.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MalvernBuildingDesignGuideLoRes\\_001.pdf](https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MalvernBuildingDesignGuideLoRes_001.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/guidance\\_on\\_colour\\_use\\_screen.pdf](https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/guidance_on_colour_use_screen.pdf)


<sup>13</sup> [https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KEYVIEWSFinalreport-lowreswebsite\\_000.pdf](https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KEYVIEWSFinalreport-lowreswebsite_000.pdf)

# APPENDIX A

## **Figure 1 - 2019 LSCA Areas Location Plan**

(see separate document)



KEY  
 LSCA Areas



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Figure 1 - 2019 LSCA Areas Location Plan