

Welland Neighbourhood Plan

Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment Selected Sites



REPORT

On behalf of Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council

April 2022

Contents

Page number

Executive summary

1	Introduction	1
2	Landscape & Visual Sensitivity & Capacity Overview	4
3	Landscape & Visual / Social Amenity Baseline Overview	11
4	Area 1: part CFS0323 - land behind Cornfield Close	19
5	Area 2: CFS0336 - Lawn Farm (Phase III) Drake Street	29
6	Area 3: CFS0659 - land south east of B4208	40
7	Areas 4 & 5: CFS0953 - land behind Boundary Cottage, Glos Rd & CFS0771 - land rear of 1 The Laurels, Glos Rd	45
8	Area 6: CFS1085 - land at The Lovells, Garrett Bank	50
9	Conclusions	65
10	Further Recommendations	66

Appendix A

Figure 1 - 2022 LSCA Areas Capacity Plan

Front cover photograph Welland 1945 (image © 2022 The GeoInformation Group)

Acronyms

Below are the acronyms most frequently used in this report:

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CFS	Call for Sites
ECA	Environmental Colour Assessment
GI	Green Infrastructure
GLVIA3	Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 rd Edition
HPBI	Habitats of Principal Biological Importance
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LSCA	Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
LMWPC	Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council
MHDC	Malvern Hills District Council
NCA	National Character Area
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NFI	National Forest Inventory
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OS	Ordnance Survey
PHI	Priority Habitat Inventory
PO	Preferred Options
PRoW	Public Right of Way
SM	Scheduled Monument
SEO	Statement of Environmental Opportunity
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWDPR	South Worcestershire Development Plan Review
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
WCC	Worcestershire County Council
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility
ZVI	Zone of Visual Influence

Executive Summary

The aim of this Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (LSCA) was to determine whether certain parcels of land in and around 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.

The results of the studies will form part of the evidence-base for Welland's emerging Neighbourhood Plan, and will inform both plan policies and the Parish Council's responses to future planning applications.

The brief for the commission entailed checking, and where necessary, updating the 2015 and 2019 LSCA baseline information (for example, carrying out additional desktop research, fieldwork, survey and analysis), and factoring it into the 2022 sensitivity and capacity studies.

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 and 2019 LSCAs' judgements about levels of landscape and visual value, susceptibility to change, sensitivity and capacity.

The 2022 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 close proximity and high degree of interinfluence and intervisibility between Welland and the nationally-designated landscapes of the Malvern Hills AONB, and b) the erosion and loss of locally-valuable elements and features resulting from intensification of use.

The situation now is that Welland has very limited if any capacity to accept further growth without causing even greater harm, and many of the landscapes which remain are of higher value and sensitivity than they were previously.

In the light of the various changes to the baseline situation and the levels of effects likely to arise from new residential development, the 2022 assessment concludes as follows (levels of capacity are also shown on Figure 1 in Appendix A):

Area 1A: northern and eastern areas: Level of capacity should remain **Low to Moderate**.

Area 1B: south-western area adjacent to housing estate to west: Level of capacity should be increased from Low to Moderate to **Moderate to High**.

Area 2: Level of capacity should be reduced from Low, to **Very Low to Low**.

Area 3: The 2019 LSCA concluded that Area 3's level of capacity should be reduced from Low to Moderate, to Low. The 2022 LSCA concludes that the level of capacity should remain **Low**.

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

Area 6 (west): Level of capacity should be reduced from Moderate, to **Low to Moderate**.

Area 6 (east): Level of capacity should be reduced from Low to Moderate, to **Low**.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Objectives

- 1.1.1 In March 2022, chartered landscape architect Carly Tinkler was commissioned by Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council (LMWPC) to carry out a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (LSCA) of six parcels of land (Areas 1 - 6) in and around Welland village. The locations of the Areas are shown on Figure 1 in Appendix A.
- 1.1.2 These areas were selected as they were put forward as candidates for residential development during the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) 'Call for Sites' (CFS) exercise¹, and they either adjoin the existing or the proposed extended Village Development Boundary.
- 1.1.3 The aim of the exercise was to determine whether any of the Areas potentially had the capacity to accommodate new residential development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the current baseline landscape and visual situation, and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.
- 1.1.4 Currently, Welland has an indicative housing requirement of 14 dwellings up to 2041. It is understood that there are no brownfield / previously-developed land sites available to accommodate this, and that therefore this requirement, if it is to be met, would be on a greenfield site. This LSCA will inform LMWPC's Site Assessment exercise and will assist in identifying the most preferred site to meet this requirement from a landscape and visual perspective.
- 1.1.5 In fact, the LSCA process began several years ago, in 2014, when LMWPC commissioned the author of this report to carry out a parish-wide LSCA for the NP. The LSCA was carried out and published in 2015. It assessed forty-three parcels of land in and around the village, and their capacity to accommodate new residential development. The 2015 LSCA has formed an important part of the evidence-base for Welland's emerging Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and will continue to do so, along with the subsequent Area-specific LSCAs carried out subsequently. They will also inform NP policies and strategies, and LMWPC's responses to future planning applications.
- 1.1.6 The above matters are explained further in the following sections, but it is important to note at the outset that one of the main reasons for the high level of scrutiny, and the landscape-led approach, is that the western half of Welland parish lies within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the eastern half lies within its setting (the eastern boundary of the AONB runs through Welland village, along the B4208).
- 1.1.7 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 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*'.
- 1.1.8 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 The SWDPR process has been delayed. The latest (April 2022) timetable for the Review is as follows: publication consultation (Regulation 19) – July-August 2022; submission (Regulation 22) – November 2022; independent examination (Regulation 24) – February-May 2023; receipt of inspector's report (Regulation 25) – August 2023; adoption (Regulation 26) – October 2023.

- 1.1.9 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.
- 1.1.10 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.
- 1.1.11 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'*.
- 1.1.12 Furthermore, the importance of access to healthy landscapes is now recognised as being vital to human health and well-being: the AONB's landscapes make highly important contributions to these, as well as to natural capital, and ecosystem services.
- 1.1.13 The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership's various guidance documents and publications have been key sources of reference for the baseline assessments which have carried out in and around Welland over the years, and which have resulted an in-depth understanding of the character of the AONB landscapes within the study area.
- 1.1.14 Another key source of reference for this 2022 commission was the 2015 Welland NP LSCA (see above).
- 1.1.15 In November 2019, LMWPC asked CT to reassess the capacity of five of the 2015 LSCA land parcels (Areas 1 - 5) to accommodate new residential development. These Areas had also been put forward as candidates for residential development during the SWDPR CFS.
- 1.1.16 The requirement for reassessment was mainly due to the existing landscape and visual baseline situation having changed considerably since the 2015 LSCA was carried out, especially significant numbers of new houses having been constructed to the north and east of the village. However, also, the 2012 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was in use in 2015 had been revised (in July 2018 and March 2019); the 2014 – 19 Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan had been replaced with the 2019 - 24 version; new environmental and other information had come to light; some of the landscape character type areas had been adjusted; and designated wildlife site information had been amended and / or new sites added. It was therefore important to check the 2015 LSCA baseline information, and factor the new information into the 2019 study. The same exercise was carried out for this 2022 study (in July 2021, the NPPF was revised once again).
- 1.1.17 New development has fundamentally changed the character of the landscapes on and within which they have been built. As a result, the 2019 and 2022 LSCAs had to determine whether the changes altered judgements made in 2015 about levels of landscape and visual value, susceptibility to change, sensitivity and capacity.
- 1.1.18 The main objective of the 2022 LSCA was to review the 2015 and 2019 LSCAs in the light of any baseline changes and / or new information, and report the findings. However, LMWPC also asked for a sixth parcel of land (Area 6) to be added to the assessment. The parcel's capacity had been assessed as part of the 2015 LSCA, and it had been put forward as a candidate site during the SWDPR PO CFS in Autumn 2019.
- 1.1.19 The individual Area schedules in Sections 4 to 8 are intended to be read as stand-alone documents for ease of reference if required, therefore some of the information may be repeated. However, these introductory sections should be read as part of each schedule, as there are certain matters which are common to / of relevance to all the Areas, for example designations and key characteristics.

- 1.1.20 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, but with the caveat that some of the information is out-of-date. This report summarises the most relevant aspects of the existing landscape context and visual / social amenity relating to the six Areas which were reassessed / reviewed, notes the changes which are relevant to judgements about levels of sensitivity and capacity, and sets out the conclusions.
- 1.1.21 The 2015 report explained 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 were also several appendices, including the criteria used for drawing conclusions about levels of landscape and visual capacity. However, LMWPC asked for this report to include a brief summary of LSCA methods and processes for ease of reference, including an explanation of the basis on which judgements about levels of sensitivity and capacity are made.

2. Landscape & Visual Sensitivity & Capacity Overview

2.1 LSCA Method

- 2.1.1 As mentioned above, although dealt with in the 2015 LSCA, this report includes a summary of LSCA methods and processes for ease of reference, including an explanation of the basis on which judgements about levels of sensitivity and capacity are made.
- 2.1.2 LSCA is a systematic, evidence-based process which provides an impartial, objective and transparent system for assessing the sensitivity of a given landscape (sensitivity is explained below), and its capacity (term used in its usual sense) to accommodate change of a specified type, whilst also retaining the aspects of the environment which - for a variety of reasons - are valued.
- 2.1.3 Although the term 'visual' is not included in the name, as with Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), views and visual amenity are an integral part of LSCAs, and they are sometimes called LVSCAs.
- 2.1.4 In fact, there is currently no published guidance for LSCA; nor was there in 2015 when the first Welland NP LSCA was carried out. Practitioners had and still have to devise their own methods based on a combination of experience and the only document currently available - a topic paper published by the Countryside Agency in 2002 entitled *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*, and described as '*An exploration of current thinking about landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity, to stimulate debate and encourage the development of common approaches*'.
- 2.1.5 Since then, there has been much debate but no consensus about LSCA methods. A few years ago, Natural England (NE) and the Landscape Institute (LI) proposed to jointly develop and publish guidance for practitioners along the lines of the LI's *Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA). Unfortunately, the parties were unable to agree on fundamental matters such as the meaning of the term 'sensitivity'.
- 2.1.6 In June 2019, NE published *An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management*²; however, this did not deal with capacity. The Landscape Institute is considering publishing its own LSCA guidance in future.
- 2.1.7 In fact, the method used for carrying out LVIAs³ has been found to work very well for LSCAs, and it has withstood the test of time (the first edition of GLVIA was published in 1995, the third and current edition - 'GLVIA3' - in 2013).
- 2.1.8 The main difference between LSCAs and LVIAs is that LSCAs are usually carried out at an early stage in the planning process, to establish whether the principle of development / change of a certain type (eg residential / industrial / solar / forestry) is acceptable in principle before land is allocated for such use. LVIAs are mostly carried out when the location and type of development / change have been identified, sometimes having been designed in detail. Both LSCA and LVIA consider the landscape and visual effects likely to arise from what is proposed.
- 2.1.9 The most important point to note is that regardless of which method is used, the final outcome will be the same. The main differences between the previous LSCA method and the one based on GLVIA are that a) the terms 'susceptibility to change' and 'sensitivity' are defined slightly

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf

³ If the proposals are categorised as development requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), then the appropriate form of assessment is a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA); if not, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) should be carried out. Both should follow GLVIA (its use is not mandatory but is best practice, and should be requested at the scoping / pre-application advice stage).

differently; b) the steps which must be taken in order to make judgements about levels of sensitivity are carried out in a different order; and c) the LVIA method requires judgements about levels of capacity to be made by applying professional judgement, taking into account not only the reasons for the level of sensitivity but also a wide variety of factors, many of which are likely to be specific to both the area and the proposed change in question (in the 'old' LSCA method, levels of capacity were arrived at by combining levels of overall landscape sensitivity - which was a combination of landscape and visual sensitivity - with the level of landscape value).

2.1.10 In other words, adjustment to LSCA methods made over the course of time should not affect the results of updates to LSCAs which were carried out using a different method.

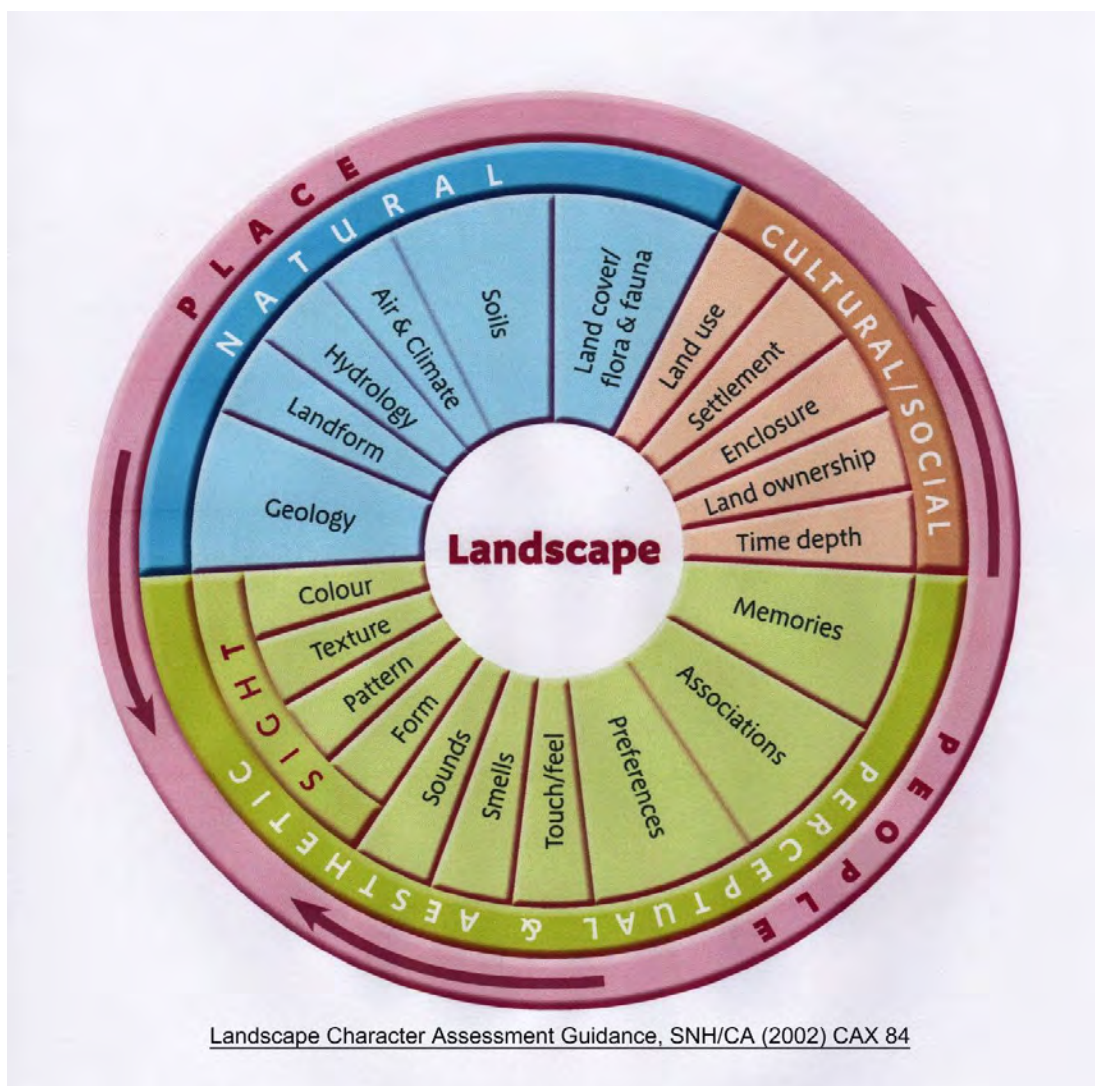
2.1.11 The method used for the 2019 and 2022 Welland LSCAs is set out below (a brief explanation of the technical terms follows):

- i. Carry out baseline landscape character assessment (LCA) and visual assessment - desktop and field studies.
- ii. Use the baseline character and visual assessments' findings to establish the levels of landscape and visual value of each of the receptors / areas identified.
- iii. Use the baseline character and visual assessments' findings to establish levels of landscape and visual susceptibility to the form of change proposed (in this case, new residential development, which, for the purposes of this study, it is assumed would be similar in type / form to the various residential developments which have recently been constructed in the local area, giving rise to similar types of effects, albeit dependant on scale, detailed designs and so on).
- iv. Combine levels of value and susceptibility to change to establish landscape and visual receptors' levels of landscape and visual sensitivity.
- v. Carry out a preliminary high-level assessment of the nature of landscape and visual effects likely to arise from what is proposed, their likely magnitude, and the levels of landscape and visual effects likely to arise.
- vi. Make informed judgements about the receptors' capacity to accommodate the change proposed without giving rise to unacceptable levels of landscape / visual harm.
- vii. Where appropriate, the study notes measures which might reduce high levels of adverse effects (which could potentially increase levels of capacity, although mitigation has not been factored in to the final judgements about capacity, and / or could deliver wider / strategic environmental / social benefits).

Landscape character

2.1.12 A landscape's character is derived from a combination of natural, cultural, social, aesthetic and perceptual factors, as shown on *Figure 1 – What is landscape?* in the 2014 LCA guidance (image overleaf). Thus, as a matter of course, landscape and visual assessments should consider all the relevant environmental topics, especially biodiversity and heritage.

LCA Figure 1: What is Landscape?



Receptors

- 2.1.13 Landscape receptors are effectively all the factors shown on Figure 1 above. The receptor may be a large area defined by its particular character, and / or by its special / aesthetic / experiential / perceptual qualities - the area may perhaps be designated for those reasons; it may also be an individual feature such as a church, river or tree, and / or a combination of such features which together give rise to distinctive characteristics and sense of place.
- 2.1.14 Visual receptors are people. They may be in publicly-accessible places, travelling in vehicles or on foot, in their own homes or at work. Most landscape and visual assessments only consider effects on people in terms of how their visual amenity would be affected by changes in the view; however, effects on social amenity should also be considered, and importantly, effects on peoples' sensory experiences. Even if one is blind, one can still be directly or indirectly affected by changes in the landscape due to changes in sounds and smells, and by dust and pollution.

Landscape / visual value

- 2.1.15 Understanding landscape and associated visual value (and values) is essential, especially as they play a major role in many of the UK's environmental, landscape and social planning policies, as referenced in the NPPF (e.g. para. 174 a)'s 'valued landscapes'), the Natural Environment PPG (revised July 2019), and the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission (BBBBC)'s January 2020 report *Living with Beauty*.

- 2.1.16 Landscape value is defined in GLVIA3 (para. 5.19) as *'The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape [and views / experiences of it] may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons'*.
- 2.1.17 Levels of value can be ascribed to large areas and individual features / combinations of features, to a landscape's particular qualities, and to what it provides as a resource.
- 2.1.18 Highly valuable landscapes are usually designated and protected from harm through planning policy. Very high value landscapes have features / qualities / attributes which are known and agreed to be of international / national significance / rarity, and / or of benefit to the planet, and to the largest numbers of people. Examples include World Heritage Sites (categorised as being of outstanding universal value), AONBs and National Parks. Landscapes of countywide and neighbourhood value can also be designated and protected from harm through policy.
- 2.1.19 The Natural Environment PPG states:
'Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures...where necessary'.
- 2.1.20 However, the NPPF emphasises that a landscape does not have to be designated in order for it to be 'valued', and for the planning system to protect it from inappropriate development. Para. 036 of the Natural Environment PPG (revised July 2019) emphasises that the NPPF *'is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside'*.
- 2.1.21 The 2002 LCA guidance says that:
'A landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests... Landscape can have social and community value, as an important part of people's day-to-day lives. It can contribute to a sense of identity, well-being, enjoyment and inspiration. It has economic value, providing the context for economic activity and often being a central factor in attracting business and tourism.'
- 2.1.22 International and national landscape designations automatically confer a Very High level of value. However, designation does not preclude development / change *per se*; nor does it necessarily mean that the landscape is in good condition or of high quality (although in the case of AONBs it should be borne in mind that natural beauty is the main reason for the designation being made in the first place), nor that it has a high degree of susceptibility to certain types of change (see below).
- 2.1.23 In LSCA, if all the areas / sites being assessed are within a designated landscape, the automatic Very High value level applies and is factored in to final judgements about sensitivity and capacity. However, on its own, this masks other value factors which may be present on / relevant to each area / site; therefore, it is necessary to 'go beneath the blanket' of the designation and identify / assess other value factors separately, so that levels of value can be established without the weight of the designation factored in and each area / site compared on that basis.
- 2.1.24 It may be the case that on one site there are several moderately high value factors which, when taken together, result in the site's value being categorised as Very High, without factoring in the designation.
- 2.1.25 Unfortunately, features and factors of high / very high local or neighbourhood importance / interest are often overlooked during the planning process. The onus of identifying them and

establishing their levels of value usually falls on the local community (or consultants paid for by them), as it is rarely volunteered by the developer; however, such studies sometimes identify previously unknown or undesignated assets which are later recognised as being of national significance.

- 2.1.26 Community involvement and public consultation are the best ways of objectively establishing what is important to local people and why, resulting in judgements - especially those about what is valuable enough to be protected - which are ratified by 'common consensus'.
- 2.1.27 Regarding visual value, it must be borne in mind that people value views for different reasons, and subjectivity is always a consideration in visual assessments (some people love wind turbines, others hate them: the assessor should adopt the worst-case scenario).
- 2.1.28 Judgements about levels of visual value factor in a) recognition of the value ascribed to particular views by people including residents with a 'proprietary interest', and b) specific indicators of the value attached to views by locals / visitors / tourists, which may include featuring on maps / in guide books, the provision of parking spaces / facilities, and references in literature / art (see GLVIA3 para. 6.37).
- 2.1.29 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 visual assessments in this area.
- 2.1.30 In considering visual value, it is essential to identify and analyse the baseline landscape character factors which contribute to that value, especially aesthetic and perceptual qualities which add to the understanding of the quality, value, function and importance of views.
- 2.1.31 It must be noted that whilst areas with high levels of landscape value are often also of high visual value, that is not always the case; however, analysis of the baseline information helps to explain the 'nature' of the view, which is influenced by matters such as how well-cared for and / or well-used the landscape is, what its character 'tells' us about an area's history and sense of place, and what it contributes to its local distinctiveness.
- 2.1.32 As well as subjectivity, the fact that peoples' perceptions and values may change over time has to be taken into account. For example, an area once considered 'visually unattractive' because it is untidy, unmanaged scrubland may be seen as 'beautiful' when one realises that it is an integral part of a healthy ecosystem, with very high wildlife value.
- 2.1.33 Judgements about levels of landscape / visual value are made with reference to previously-set criteria. Not all the criteria have to be met in order for an area to be categorised at a certain level: they simply indicate the factors which need to be taken into consideration, and professional judgement must be applied when deciding which ones are most relevant.
- 2.1.34 The levels used by the author of this study are graded on a five-point scale from Very High to Very Low, with the possibility of 'split' categories in between, meaning that small variations in quality, value, susceptibility and magnitude of effect can be taken into account and a clear hierarchy established.

Susceptibility to change

- 2.1.35 In the context of landscape character, the term 'susceptibility to change' is defined in GLVIA3 (para. 5.40) as '*the ability of the landscape receptor... to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the baseline situation and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies*'.
- 2.1.36 If a landscape is susceptible to a certain type of change (which must be clearly specified), it is very likely to be adversely affected by it.
- 2.1.37 Landscapes within which there is no development similar to the proposed development are likely to be highly susceptible to the changes that the new development would cause.

- 2.1.38 Landscapes within which there is already development similar to that proposed may be less susceptible to the addition of more; however, there may also come a point at which a tipping point is reached.
- 2.1.39 Then, either one concludes that the baseline has changed so much that this type of development now characterises the landscape and more of the same is therefore appropriate; or, one concludes that the addition of more would change the landscape's character to an unacceptable degree.
- 2.1.40 In the latter event, the remaining undeveloped landscapes' capacity to accommodate more development could be lower than it would have been previously, as there would now be less land available to perform the same functions, resulting in erosion and / or loss of said functions.
- 2.1.41 In terms of the visual resource, the landscapes which are most visually susceptible to change are usually those which are the most highly visible over a wide area, form part of highly-valued views, and / or perform highly important functions, and within which development would create an unacceptable visual intrusion into the wider landscape that almost certainly could not be adequately mitigated.
- 2.1.42 The visual susceptibility to change of the people (visual receptors) who experience views is mainly a function of a) their occupation or activity whilst experiencing the view, and b) the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the view (see GLVIA3 para. 6.32).
- 2.1.43 As with value, judgements about levels of susceptibility to change are made with reference to previously-set criteria.

Sensitivity

- 2.1.44 Landscape and visual sensitivity are not baseline attributes, they are concepts resulting from the combination of value and susceptibility to change, which are derived from study and analysis of the baseline situation and professional judgement.
- 2.1.45 A matrix is often used to determine levels of sensitivity. Thus, for example, landscape receptors with High levels of both value and susceptibility to change are categorised as being of High sensitivity, and receptors with High value but Low susceptibility to change are categorised as being of Moderate sensitivity.
- 2.1.46 As with landscape and visual effects, levels of landscape and visual sensitivity must be reported separately, and not combined / conflated, otherwise the actual landscape / visual value will either be over- or under-reported.
- 2.1.47 The main factors which determine levels of visual receptor sensitivity are summarised below:
- **Very High** sensitivity receptors include people who visit nationally-designated landscapes such as AONBs specifically to enjoy their special qualities, often following published routes and long-distance trails.
 - People walking / cycling / riding along public footpaths and roads for whom the landscape is an important part of the experience are classified as **High to Very High** sensitivity receptors. Many of the footpaths in the Welland area are a valuable resource for locals as well as visitors.
 - People living in residential properties are classified as **High** sensitivity receptors (in terms of having a proprietary interest in the view).
 - **Moderate** and **Low** sensitivity receptors are mainly people for whom scenic quality is not central to the activity, for example people driving to work along local roads or using footpaths for quick and easy access from A to B.

Capacity

- 2.1.48 The term 'capacity' is usually defined as 'the maximum amount that something can contain'. If something has reached capacity it is full, and cannot take any more.
- 2.1.49 Capacity in the context of landscape and visual assessments such as this refers to the amount of change a particular landscape (or area, or zone, or individual site, or town / village) can tolerate without there being unacceptable adverse effects on its character, or the way that it is perceived, and without compromising the values attached to it.
- 2.1.50 It is important to note that the assessment of a landscape's capacity to accept change will vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed. The nature of the proposed form of change must always be defined before undertaking an LSCA.
- 2.1.51 It is more likely, but not certain, that a landscape of low sensitivity to the proposed change will have a higher capacity to accept the proposed change. Professional judgement must always be applied, since there may be a number of factors which result in levels of capacity having to be adjusted upward or downward.
- 2.1.52 Where large numbers of areas / sites are being assessed in a single study, if many or most of the areas' / sites' levels of capacity are the same, the results should be compared and tested and any adjustments made as required, to ensure consistency throughout.

3. Landscape & Visual / Social Amenity Baseline Overview

3.1 Landscape character

DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES

- 3.1.1 Three of the LSCA Areas (1, 4 and 5) lie within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and three (2, 3 and 6) lie within its setting, close to the AONB's eastern boundary along the B4208.
- 3.1.2 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*'.
- 3.1.3 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. 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.
- 3.1.4 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.
- 3.1.5 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*'.
- 3.1.6 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.
- 3.1.7 In 2019, the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership commissioned a 'Health Economic Assessment' of Malvern's Hills and Commons⁴. 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 Years⁵ (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*'.
- 3.1.8 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).

⁴ Hölzinger, O. 2019: *Malvern Hills & Commons Health Economic Assessment*. Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

⁵ Quality-adjusted life year: A measure of the state of health of a person or group in which the benefits, in terms of length of life, are adjusted to reflect the quality of life. One quality-adjusted life year (QALY) is equal to 1 year of life in perfect health. QALYs are calculated by estimating the years of life remaining for a patient following a particular treatment or intervention and weighting each year with a quality-of-life score (on a 0 to 1 scale). It is often measured in terms of the person's ability to carry out the activities of daily life, and freedom from pain and mental disturbance (source: <https://www.nice.org.uk/glossary?letter=q>)

- 3.1.9 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 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*'.
- 3.1.10 The Malvern Hills AONB's special qualities are set out on page 9 of the Management Plan. Some of these qualities are evident in and around Welland, including on the LSCA Areas themselves. Where relevant, this is specified in the LSCA 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*.
- 3.1.11 In Welland's case, unfortunately, its distinctiveness and 'spirit of place' (a combination of highly valuable natural and cultural factors) are rapidly being eroded, even lost in some parts of the village. This is due to the size of the settlement having increased significantly (by more than 60%) since 2014 - a very short space of time (indeed, Ordnance Survey maps can't keep up with the rate of change). Furthermore (and as noted in the 2019 LSCA), much of what has been built comprises ubiquitous, sprawling housing estates, planned and designed with little or no consideration given to the inherent rural / traditional / organic character of the receiving landscapes, their sensitivity, or their capacity to accommodate what is proposed.
- 3.1.12 Many people assume that AONBs are only affected by development *within* the designated area, as though there is an iron curtain between it and the surrounding landscapes, which of course is not the case. Usually, beyond its boundary, an AONB has a landscape *setting*. Often, and as is the case here, an AONB's special qualities relate to factors within the setting, for example:
- *The Malvern Hills: a high, dramatic ridge of ancient rock that is visible from the Severn Vale and from the rolling hills and valleys to the west and*
 - *Dramatic scenery and spectacular views arising from the juxtaposition of high and low ground.*
- 3.1.13 Sometimes it is difficult to determine the extent of an AONB's setting, especially when the setting is a flat plain such as that of the River Severn on the east side of the Malvern Hills (on which Welland is situated), with elevated views from the AONB towards a very distant horizon. In terms of effects on AONBs arising from development within the setting, a number of factors have to be considered, such as distance from the AONB, the nature of the proposed development, its size, colour and so on.
- 3.1.14 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 development⁶.
- 3.1.15 Also of relevance is the July 2019 revision to National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) for the Natural Environment⁷ (Paragraph: 042 Reference ID: 8-042-20190721), which is as follows:

6

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

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

'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.'

- 3.1.16 This is an important change to NPPG, in which the government formally recognises the significance of the setting of protected landscapes.

NATIONAL / REGIONAL / LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 3.1.17 On a national basis, the majority of the landscapes within the wider study area (see 2015 LSCA for extent) 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.
- 3.1.18 Where an Area displays NCA 106's key characteristics and is a good representation of it, it is noted in the LSCA Area schedules, as are any relevant NCA 106 Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs).
- 3.1.19 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 Areas 2 and 6).
- 3.1.20 Detailed descriptions of the LCTs can be found in the 2015 LSCA and the various documents and sources of reference 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, sitting 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 (Areas 2 & 6)

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

- 3.1.21 The Enclosed Commons LCT is often characterised by a lack of traditional buildings and historic features due to the widespread clearance and reorganisation of infrastructure and boundaries which occurred post-Enclosure, from the late-18th century⁸ 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 Marlbank Brook, and possible ridge-and-furrow⁹.
- 3.1.22 Many of the Hills' and commons' ancient features are intact, and many are protected through national designation and planning policy.
- 3.1.23 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 12th century Little Malvern Priory, respectively lying c. 3km, 3.4km and 2.7km from the village centre). There is a 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.
- 3.1.24 There is also a scheduled Medieval motte and bailey at Castlemorton, c. 2.8km from the village, but there is no evident association between the two.

⁸ The Enclosure Act for Welland was passed in 1847 and the Award was completed in 1853.

⁹ 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 19th 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>.

- 3.1.25 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).
- 3.1.26 Several Grade II listed buildings / features are present in and around Welland village. The majority are along Drake Street, which was originally an ancient trackway leading from a river crossing near Upton-on-Severn to British Camp¹⁰, possibly via what is now Malvern Wells; however, there are others further east, where the landscapes display older / pre-Enclosure features.
- 3.1.27 The character of present-day Welland's landscape and villagescape reflect the marked changes which have occurred over the last 200 years. 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 13th 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.
- 3.1.28 It is evident that during the Victorian era, a decision was made to translocate the old village to a new site with better access, at what is now the crossroads and 'new' Welland village centre. There had been an intersection of routeways at that point for centuries, and the Pheasant Inn is known to have existed in 1787 (although the current building was probably built in the 19th century), but the B4208 leading north from the crossroads was probably constructed in the early to mid-1800s. The Victorians built the new church at the crossroads, and a year later, a school and a post office.
- 3.1.29 Welland remained a small village until the 1960s and 70s, when new houses were built to the west of the crossroads. However, the most significant growth has occurred since 2014, south east of the crossroads.

BIODIVERSITY

- 3.1.30 There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in close proximity to the village centre - Castlemorton Common (outwith the parish but along part of its southern boundary) and Mutlow's Orchard.
- 3.1.31 Both are wholly or partially accessible to the public - Castlemorton Common is Open Access Land (see recreation below), and although the site itself is not accessible, a fenced public footpath runs along the eastern boundary of Mutlow's Orchard.
- 3.1.32 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) directly and indirectly through factors such as noise, disturbance, lighting, pollutants which reduce levels of air, water and soil quality, and erosion / loss of landcover and features from trampling, eutrophication from dog-fouling and so on.
- 3.1.33 Natural England has recently expressed great concern about the resultant significant adverse effects on these nationally-designated habitats and the protected species of flora and fauna they support, especially with the recent large population increases in and around Malvern including Welland. There is evidence of a notable increase in litter / pollution in the local landscapes since 2015, along footpath routes near the new housing estates especially, but also in the Marbank Brook, some of it no doubt being washed down from building sites and residential properties along its course.
- 3.1.34 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 very well be lost.

¹⁰ Hurle, Pamela. *Beneath the Malvern Hills: A history of the village of Welland* (1973)

- 3.1.35 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.
- 3.1.36 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 (which may be in Marlbank Brook), and great crested newt.
- 3.1.37 Some areas are designated Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI) sites, and / or are recorded on the National Forest Inventory (NFI).
- 3.1.38 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.
- 3.1.39 Where relevant, the presence of ecological designations / features is noted in the Area schedules.

3.2 Views & visual / social amenity

- 3.2.1 Castlemorton Common is Open Access Land. On Open Access Land, walking, horse-riding, running, watching wildlife and climbing are permitted, but activities such as camping and swimming are not allowed. The Common is also registered common land. It is owned by Malvern Hills Trust, although along with other commons in the area, is subject to legal rights which are attached to certain properties (people with these rights are known as 'Commoners').
- 3.2.2 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.
- 3.2.3 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.
- 3.2.4 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.
- 3.2.5 For example, many high quality views towards the Hills, village and surrounding countryside have been fully- or partially-blocked by buildings, most of which neither reflect nor respect local character in terms of style, colour and materials, which do not consider the perspective of the viewer, and which detract from high-value visual features such as the Hills' summits and the village church spire (see for example photos overleaf which show the large mass of bright red brick and widespread use of contrasting white trim / render which draws / confuses the eye).



- 3.2.6 Important landscape elements and features are being eroded and / or lost due to the increase in use of public footpaths, and large amounts of litter and dog excrement were observed during the most recent site surveys. Also it was noted that levels of tranquillity¹¹ had dropped significantly over the last four or five years.
- 3.2.7 In terms of visual amenity, as explained in Section 2, there are several different aspects which need to be considered in judgements about sensitivity and capacity.
- 3.2.8 *Dramatic scenery and spectacular views arising from the juxtaposition of high and low ground* are high on the list of the Malvern Hills AONB's special qualities. The AONB Partnership's study of views to and from the Malvern Hills and the associated publication '*Guidance on Identifying and Grading Views and Viewpoints*'¹² is of material relevance to assessments such as this.
- 3.2.9 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.
- 3.2.10 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.

¹¹ In this context, the term 'tranquil' does not just mean 'quiet': a good definition of tranquillity, which has been adopted by both Welsh Government (Welsh Government 2012) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW 2016a), is "An untroubled state, which is peaceful, calm and free from unwanted disturbances. This can refer to a state of mind or a particular environment. Tranquillity can be measured in terms of the absence of unwanted intrusions, or by a balancing of positive and negative factors. These include the presence of nature, feeling safe, visually pleasing surroundings and a relaxing atmosphere". Natural England lists 'relative tranquillity' as one of six factors that contribute to natural beauty and which should be considered when assessing whether new areas should be designated as an AONB or National Park¹¹. Tranquillity is one of the Malvern Hills AONB's Special Qualities.

¹² See https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KEYVIEWSFinalreport-lowreswebsite_000.pdf

- 3.2.11 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.
- 3.2.12 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.
- 3.2.13 In certain views from the Malvern Hills' ridges and upper slopes, the more-than-doubling of the extent of the area covered by settlement is clearly evident, especially as much of it is on higher ground to the east of the village. As noted above, 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 into proper consideration.
- 3.2.14 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; see also Recommendations). Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the selection of materials and colours used - the resultant contrasts in views of the landscape draw the eye to the 'bulk' of the urban extension, which itself appears visually disassociated from the village when viewed from certain angles.
- 3.2.15 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 (see Recommendations). 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.
- 3.2.16 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. Nor should it be necessary to hide a well-designed scheme. The latest version of the NPPF (July 2021) deals with this matter, as explained in Section 10.

4. Area 1: part CFS0323 – ‘Land behind Cornfield Close’

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Area 1 comprises what remains of 2015 LSCA Parcel no. 41 - the north-eastern portion, which continues as a strip along the northern boundary to the western boundary. The total area is approximately 2.5ha.
- 4.1.2 The Area’s ‘Call for Sites’ (CFS) reference number is CFS 0323. It was not included in the SWDPR Preferred Options (PO) document as a residential allocation.
- 4.1.3 In the 2015 study, the Area was categorised as having Low to Moderate capacity. However, since then, 24 houses have been built on the southern portion (allowed at appeal in 2014), and an application for a further 14 dwellings on the portion north west of that was approved in April 2021. In April 2022 when this LSCA was being carried out, the latter were under construction.

4.2 Area location and description

- 4.2.1 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).
- 4.2.2 It comprises an arable field and riparian woodland to the north, occupying a total of c. 2ha.

Area 1 looking north from eastern boundary (2019)



- 4.2.3 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. 40m AOD), and its lowest point is at its north-eastern corner (c. 37m AOD), a gradient of c. 1:50.
- 4.2.4 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. Beyond, the distinctive tree-topped ridgeline of Garratts Bank rises to form the skyline. There are several residential properties off California Lane, which runs along the ridge.

- 4.2.5 South of the Brook 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.
- 4.2.6 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.
- 4.2.7 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-19th century (post-Enclosure).
- 4.2.8 South of the meadow is a house with outbuildings and an associated grassed paddock.
- 4.2.9 The southern section of the Area's eastern boundary is along Welland Brook (a tributary of Marbank 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 Marbank Road. The Spitalfields recreation area lies on the eastern side of the watercourse.
- 4.2.10 The Area's short southern boundary to the south east is along the edge of Cornfield Close (the name given to the housing estate allowed at appeal in 2014), which is accessed off the A4104.
- 4.2.11 The layout and design of the housing estate is ubiquitous, with no reflection of / response to sense of place, local distinctiveness, landscape / villagescape patterns or characteristic features. The materials and colours do not integrate well into the contextual landscape palette; the white trim in particular draws the eye to the visual clutter.

New houses at Cornfield Close (2019)



- 4.2.12 The Area's western boundary is along the eastern boundary of the site of the housing estate which was granted planning permission in 2021, north of Cornfield Close. At the time of the surveys carried out for this assessment (March and April 2022), the houses were under construction, with at least half of them having been built.
- 4.2.13 Overall, the design of the scheme is arguably better than that of the recently-constructed houses to the south in that it is less ubiquitous than its predecessor; however, it is still urban /

domestic in character, not locally-distinctive, and no attention has been paid to the Malvern Hills AONB guidance (especially *Guidance on the Selection and Use of Colour in Development*¹³ and *Guidance on Respecting Landscape in Views*¹⁴), which might have avoided the unfortunate colour contrasts and high visibility of some of the trims and the road surface in particular (the pale cream render used is visible from the Hills to the west – see photos in visual section below).

New houses north of Cornfield Close



- 4.2.14 On the west side of the southern section of the boundary, in the south-eastern portion of the new housing estate, a new orchard is proposed.
- 4.2.15 The central section of the boundary runs along the rear garden boundaries of the new houses, although the application drawings show a maintenance access strip running along the east side of the garden boundaries, from the orchard to an attenuation basin which is to be constructed as part of the development, which is within what is described as a 'meadow'.
- 4.2.16 The Area boundary runs along the eastern, northern and western sides of the meadow, then runs west to join a native hedgerow (probably mid-19th century) which runs northwards to join Marlbank Brook.
- 4.2.17 The land west of the hedge is a mixture of open grassland and scrub / probably self-set trees. In the 19th century, it comprised gardens and an orchard which belonged to the vicarage - a large, Victorian Malvern stone building which is currently a care home for the elderly, with access off the A4104 via Lime Grove (which has relatively-recent residential development along both sides).
- 4.2.18 The village cemetery is to the west of Lime Grove, and once, fields extended as far as Marlbank Brook and beyond. Today garden, orchard and field remnants appear to remain on the open grass / scrub area. The majority of the fields east of the brook are now a housing estate (built from c. 1950s onwards).

¹³ https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/guidance_on_colour_use_screen.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/64339-MHAONB-Guidance-on-Respecting-Landscape-in-Views-v09.pdf>

4.3 Landscape character baseline: key features and factors

CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE & ASSOCIATIONS

- 4.3.1 Area 1 lies within the Malvern Hills AONB, c. 90m from its eastern boundary.
- 4.3.2 It forms a very small but integral part of the AONB, and the area within which it lies displays several of the AONB's special qualities.
- 4.3.3 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, the latter being a relatively unspoiled 'natural' environment which is likely to support a wide variety of wildlife habitats and species.
- 4.3.4 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.
- 4.3.5 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.*'
- 4.3.6 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*.
- 4.3.7 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.
- 4.3.8 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*.
- 4.3.9 At the local landscape scale, the Area makes a small but 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 ridgeline.
- 4.3.10 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.
- 4.3.11 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.
- 4.3.12 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

- 4.3.13 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 (distances from scheduled boundaries).

There is a fairly high degree of interinfluence and association between these features and the Area.

- 4.3.14 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.
- 4.3.15 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.
- 4.3.16 In terms of historic landscape character, the Area is categorised as 1800 - 1914, and the existing field boundaries were probably created in the mid-19th 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 most recent application for development on the land immediately to the west of the Area, Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Council's (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.'*
- 4.3.17 An 1828 - 1832 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

- 4.3.18 Mutlow's Orchard SSSI lies c. 280m south east of the Area, and Castlemorton Common SSSI is c. 700m to the south west.
- 4.3.19 The closest LWS to the Area is Welland Cemetery (c. 150m to the south west); the cemetery is also a PHI site (Lowland Meadows)¹⁵. 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.
- 4.3.20 Many protected / notable species have been recorded within 500m of the Area, including several species of bat, and badger, otter and hare.
- 4.3.21 The woodland to the north of the area is a PHI site (Deciduous Woodland), and is recorded on the NFI (both categorised post-2015).
- 4.3.22 The hedgerows may be species rich and thus HPBIs, and could potentially be 'Important'.

4.4 Visual / social amenity baseline

RECREATION & ACCESS

- 4.4.1 Castlemorton Common Open Access Land lies c. 720m to the south west of the Area.
- 4.4.2 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.
- 4.4.3 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.

¹⁵ 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.

- 4.4.4 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).
- 4.4.5 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

- 4.4.6 There are several residential properties adjacent to / in the vicinity of the Area with views of it, including the houses along California Lane c. 170m north of the Area, houses along the B4208 to the east, the recently-constructed houses on Cornfield Close which are adjacent to the Area's southern boundary, and the houses under construction along the Area's western boundary and the section of the boundary that runs west to the native hedge.
- 4.4.7 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, 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).
- 4.4.8 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 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.
- 4.4.9 The Area is just about visible from the Worcestershire Beacon, which lies c. 5.5km to the north west. At this distance it only forms a very 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.
- 4.4.10 Previously, when travelling south from the Beacon along the ridgeline and upper hill slopes, the Area would have been visible except where dense mature tree cover on the Hills filtered or screened views (generally, more so in summer than winter). However, now that the new houses west of the Area have been / are in the process of being constructed, the further south along the Hills one travels, the more the houses screen views of the west side of the Area, which abuts the new housing estate.
- 4.4.11 The western side of the Area is now screened from view by new houses when seen from Jubilee Hill, Pinnacle Hill and Black Hill (c. 3.5km, 3.1km and 2.9km north west of the Area respectively). The northern and eastern sides of the Area remain either wholly or partially visible, depending on the angle of view (the photos below are zoomed-in, note some were taken before the new houses were built).

View of Area 1 from Jubilee Hill (2019)



View of Area 1 from Black Hill (2022) (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



4.4.12 The views are similar from British Camp (c. 3.5km to the west), the summit of which is the location of 'Exceptional' AONB viewpoint no. 49. 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 (2015)



- 4.4.13 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.

4.5 Area 1 conclusions

- 4.5.1 The 2015 LSCA categorised the level of capacity of what was then a larger parcel of land (LSCA Parcel 41) as Low to Moderate.
- 4.5.2 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.
- 4.5.3 However, since then, the baseline landscape and visual situations of both the Area and its wider landscape context have changed significantly. When the 2019 LSCA was carried out, 24 residential properties had been built on the southern half of parcel 41, large housing estates had been built on extensive swathes of farmland east of the village and smaller estates elsewhere, and planning permission had been granted for other estates and single dwellings.
- 4.5.4 This had an adverse effect on nationally-important views from the Malvern Hills' ridges and upper slopes, and on locally-important views towards the Malvern Hills from the once-rural outskirts of the village.
- 4.5.5 In fact, the village 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; today, the functions they perform and contributions they make to character, views and access to nature are even more important. Development across the Area would increase the levels of adverse effects currently experienced from nationally-important viewpoints on the Malvern Hills, and towards the Hills from certain directions, and would adversely affect many locally-important views.
- 4.5.6 In the light of these changes, the 2019 LSCA concluded that whilst the (larger) 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), and that its level of landscape capacity should therefore be reduced to Low / Low to Moderate.

- 4.5.7 However, the 2021 decision to approve new dwellings on the land north of Cornfield Close has once again changed the baseline situation. The adverse effects of that development are / soon will be as predicted in 2019, ie i) in views from the Hills, development appears as a long urban extension into good quality open countryside; ii) there are cumulative effects when seen in combination with the recently-constructed developments especially those east of the village; and iii) high levels of adverse effects are experienced by visual receptors at near-distance viewpoints.
- 4.5.8 The construction of these new houses has also once again changed levels of visual sensitivity and capacity, and has also affected levels of landscape character sensitivity.
- 4.5.9 Now, levels of capacity vary across the Area.
- 4.5.10 From a landscape character sensitivity perspective, the land along the northern and eastern sides of the Area is now more highly valuable and more susceptible to change from residential development than before. This is because a) many of the various landscape / environmental / GI functions that the Area performs are the same but the area available for them is less than it was; and b) the landscapes between the Area and the B4208 are very important in defining the rural character and setting of the north-eastern parts of the village; however, the area is relatively narrow, and houses close up to the Area's eastern boundary would significantly urbanise the landscape.
- 4.5.11 Conversely, due to the presence of the new housing estates to the south and west, the character of the south-western part of the Area - ie the land east of and adjacent to the new housing estate to the west - is less valuable and susceptible to change.
- 4.5.12 In terms of visual sensitivity, the south-western part of the Area, is now less visually valuable / susceptible to change due to the new built form partially screening elevated views from the Malvern Hills; however, the eastern and northern sides are more visually valuable / susceptible to change due to the visual functions they perform in views from the Hills, and from visual receptors in relatively close proximity to the north, east and south.
- 4.5.13 The sketch plan / montage overleaf shows the approximate boundary line between the Area's northern and eastern, and its south-western parts (Areas 1A and 1B), which is broadly determined by local topography and landscape pattern (note curved outer eastern boundary), and likely levels of visibility.

Indicative boundary line between Area's A northern and eastern, and B south-western sides



4.5.14 The 2022 LSCA concludes that the capacity of Areas 1A and 1B are as follows:

Area 1A: northern and eastern areas (c. 1.75ha)

Landscape character sensitivity: Moderate to High

Visual sensitivity: Moderate to High

Capacity: remain **Low to Moderate**.

Area 1B: south-western area adjacent to housing estate to west (c. 0.75ha)

Landscape character sensitivity: Moderate

Visual sensitivity: Moderate to Low

Capacity: increase from Low to Moderate to **Moderate to High**.

4.5.15 The general recommendations in Section 10 are relevant to Area 1; however, 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 Marlbank Brook and beyond, making a valuable contribution to the village's aspiration of creating a continuous, publicly-accessible peripheral multi-functional GI zone around the village.

5. Area 2: CFS0336 - 'Lawn Farm (Phase III), Drake Street'

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Area 2 forms part of 2015 LSCA Parcel no. 13. The total area is c. 1.7ha.
- 5.1.2 Its CFS reference number is CFS 0336. It is included in the SWDPR PO document as a residential allocation (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).
- 5.1.3 It is understood that the Landscape and Ecological Management and Maintenance Plan and the Natural England Great Crested Newt licence relating to the Lawn Farm Phases I and II developments requires the whole of Area 2 to be managed as a habitat for great crested newts and other fauna, in perpetuity as compensation for the loss of habitat which resulted.

5.2 Area location and description

- 5.2.1 Area 2 lies in the East to South LSCA sector, in open countryside at the edge of what is now the village's eastern urban extension, and within the setting of the AONB. The A4104 / Drake Street is c. 260m to the north, and the B4208 c. 270m to the north west.
- 5.2.2 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)



- 5.2.3 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.
- 5.2.4 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.

- 5.2.5 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.
- 5.2.6 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 – visible from the south. The arbitrary fenced boundary line now forms an unnatural shape and disrupts the traditional landscape pattern. Furthermore, the poor quality design of the houses, especially the choice of high-contrast colours, locally-uncharacteristic materials and unbalanced 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





- 5.2.7 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.

5.3 Landscape character baseline: key features and factors

CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE & ASSOCIATIONS

- 5.3.1 Area 2 lies outside the Malvern Hills AONB, c. 270m from its eastern boundary.
- 5.3.2 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*.
- 5.3.3 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.
- 5.3.4 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.'*
- 5.3.5 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*.
- 5.3.6 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*.

- 5.3.7 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.*
- 5.3.8 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.
- 5.3.9 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.
- 5.3.10 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.
- 5.3.11 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.
- 5.3.12 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.
- 5.3.13 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

- 5.3.14 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 (distances from scheduled boundaries). 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



- 5.3.15 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 west (intervisibility between church spire and parts of Area).
- 5.3.16 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 19th 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.
- 5.3.17 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



- 5.3.18 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 14th century, and which lies c. 1.4km east of the Area.

BIODIVERSITY

- 5.3.19 Mutlow's Orchard SSSI lies c. 70m north of the Area, and Castlemorton Common SSSI is c. 440m to the west.
- 5.3.20 LWSs which lie in the vicinity of the Area include Mutlow's Farm Orchard; Castlemorton, Hollybed and Coombegreen Commons; and Drake Street Meadow.
- 5.3.21 Many protected / notable species have been recorded in the vicinity of the Area, including several species of bat, and great crested newts.
- 5.3.22 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.
- 5.3.23 Some of the hedgerows are species-rich and thus HPBIs, and could potentially be 'Important'.
- 5.3.24 There are yellow meadow anthills in the pasture fields east of the Area - meadow ants are indicative of undisturbed / unimproved grassland.
- 5.3.25 As mentioned above, there is a requirement for the whole of Area 2 to be managed as a habitat for great crested newts and other fauna, in perpetuity as compensation for the loss of habitat which has resulted. This increases the Area's level of ecological value.

5.4 Visual / social amenity baseline

RECREATION & ACCESS

- 5.4.1 Castlemorton Common Open Access Land lies c. 175m to the south of the Area.
- 5.4.2 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.

- 5.4.3 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.
- 5.4.4 The Area lies c. 320m south east of Welland Village Hall (and associated Welland Park), and c. 390m south east of Spitalfields recreation area.
- 5.4.5 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

- 5.4.6 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.
- 5.4.7 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



- 5.4.8 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.
- 5.4.9 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),

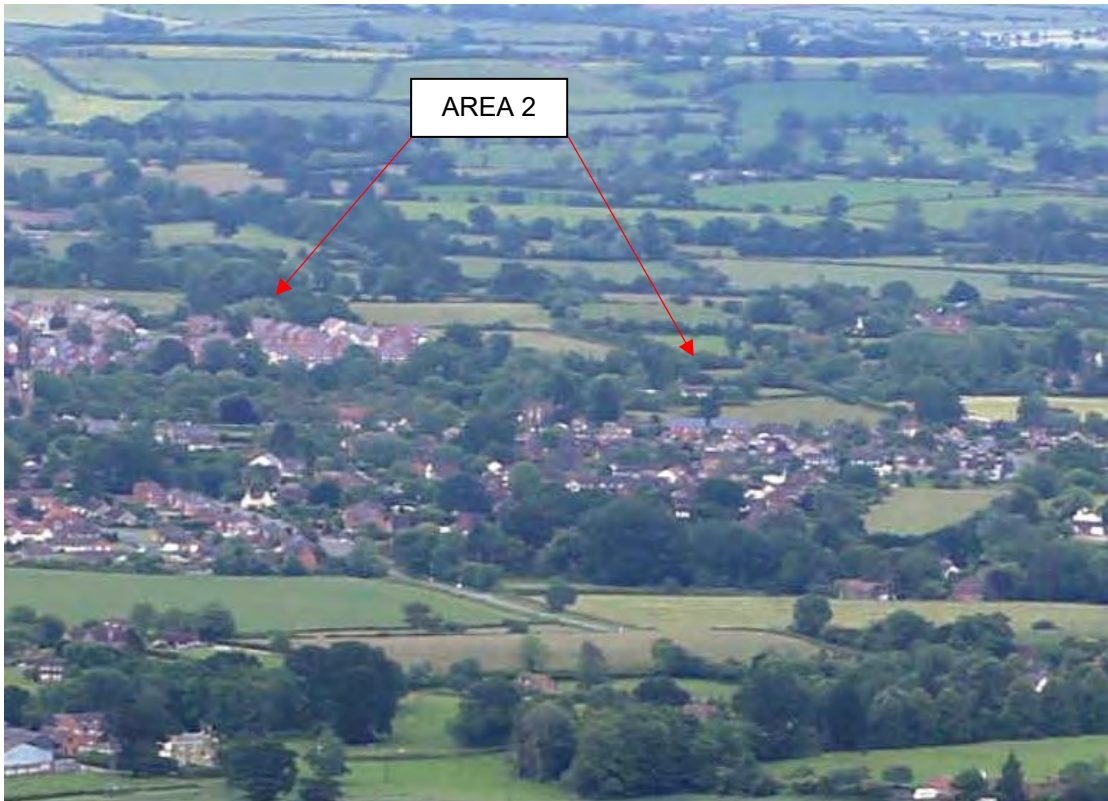
views of the Area are currently quite well-screened even in winter. However, it is important to note that the hedgerow is in urgent need of (sensitive) management, and removing the brambles will increase the degree of visibility.

- 5.4.10 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.
- 5.4.11 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.
- 5.4.12 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).
- 5.4.13 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.
- 5.4.14 All the photographs below are zoomed-in.

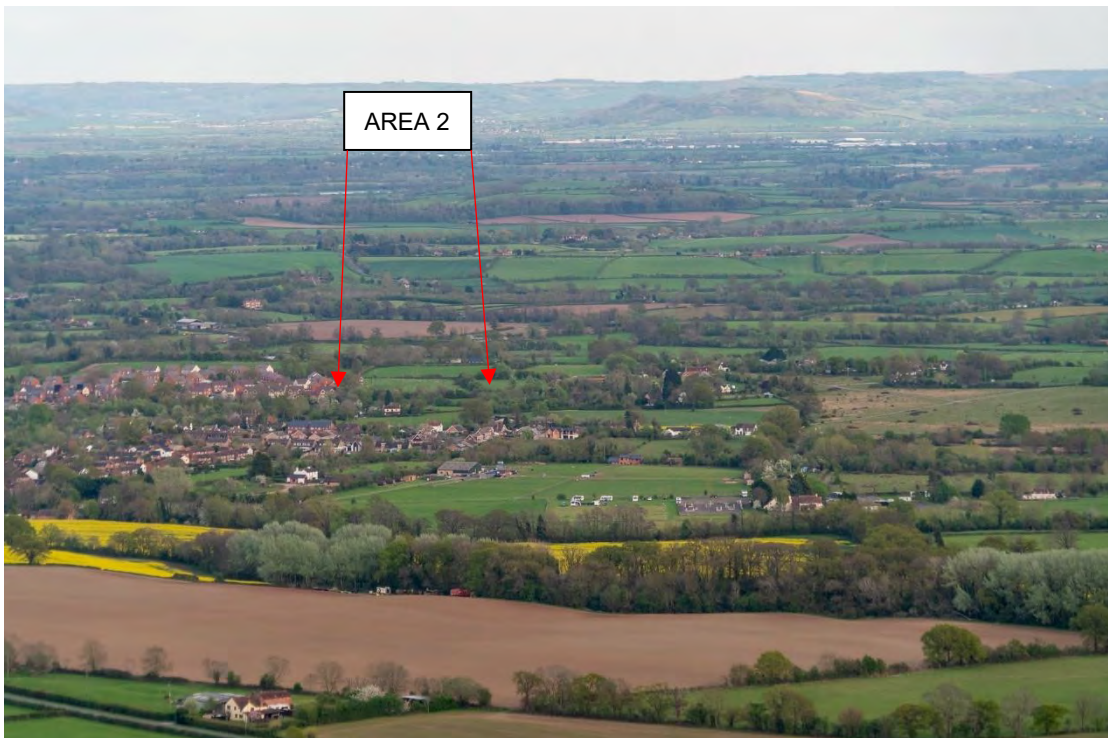
View of Area 2 from Jubilee Hill (2019)



View of Area 2 from Pinnacle Hill (2019)



View of Area 2 from Black Hill (2022) (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



5.4.15 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 (2019)



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

5.5 Area 2 conclusions

5.5.1 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.

5.5.2 When the 2019 LSCA was carried out, the baseline situation had changed significantly, with the creation of the new urban extension at Lawn Farm to the north. The 2019 assessment concluded, and the 2022 LSCA confirms, 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.

5.5.3 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.

5.5.4 The 2019 LSCA concluded that there would also be adverse effects on biodiversity, mainly due to the ongoing erosion and loss of SSSIs and locally-important habitats (including as the unimproved pastures east of Area 2) as a result of increased use; according to local landowners / farmers, dog-fouling is a major problem, and when dogs run loose they worry / kill sheep.

5.5.5 The 2019 LSCA concluded that Area 2's level of capacity should remain Low.

5.5.6 However, crucially, at that time, it was not realised that the Landscape and Ecological Management and Maintenance Plan and the Natural England Great Crested Newt licence relating to the Lawn Farm Phases I and II developments required the whole of Area 2 to be managed as a habitat for great crested newts and other fauna, in perpetuity as compensation

for the loss of habitat which resulted. This was recently confirmed by the lead adviser of Natural England's Wildlife Licensing Service (NEWS); see also section 3.13.2 of the *Landscape and Ecological Management and Maintenance Plan* (LEMP), Rev C (dated June 2015), which was submitted with the application.

- 5.5.7 As well as levels of ecological value, this increases levels of both landscape value and landscape susceptibility to change.
- 5.5.8 For the above reasons, the 2022 LSCA concludes that Area 2's level of capacity should be reduced from Low to **Very Low to Low**.

6. Area 3: CFS0659 - 'Land south east of B4208'

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 Area 3 is 2015 LSCA Parcel no. 19. The total area is c. 3.4ha.
- 6.1.2 Its CFS reference number is CFS 0659. It was not included in the SWDPR PO document as a residential allocation, but was the subject of a "Promotion Document" produced in March 2019, which set out proposals for a large cluster of new residential development on the land, and recently, a public consultation leaflet was distributed to households in the village explaining that proposals were in the process of being drawn up for a scheme of up to 50 dwellings.

6.2 Area location and description

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

View looking north across Area 3 from Castlemorton Common



- 6.2.2 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.
- 6.2.3 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.
- 6.2.4 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.
- 6.2.5 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 village lies west of the road.

6.3 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'.

6.4 Visual / social 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 (2019)



- 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).

Zoomed-in view of Area 3 from Black Hill (2022) (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



6.5 Area 3 conclusions

- 6.5.1 The 2015 LSCA categorised the level of capacity of Area 3 (LSCA Parcel 19) as Low to Moderate.
- 6.5.2 Since then, the baseline situation has changed, with the creation of the new urban extension at Lawn Farm to the north.

- 6.5.3 The 2019 LSCA concluded, and the 2022 LSCA confirms, 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 even more important.
- 6.5.4 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.
- 6.5.5 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.
- 6.5.6 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.
- 6.5.7 In the light of the above factors, the 2019 LSCA concluded that Area 3's level of capacity should be reduced to Low. The 2022 LSCA concludes that the level of capacity should remain **Low**.

7. Areas 4 & 5: CFS0953 - 'Land behind Boundary Cottage, Gloucester Road' & CFS0771 'Land at rear of 1 The Laurels, Gloucester Road'

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 In the 2015 LSCA, Areas 4 (c. 1.1ha) and 5 (c. 0.9ha) were assessed as a single parcel of land (LSCA Parcel no. 25).
- 7.1.2 Area 4's CFS reference number is CFS 0953 and Area 5's is CFS 0771.
- 7.1.3 Neither Area was included in the SWDPR PO document as a residential allocation.

7.2 Area location and description

- 7.2.1 Areas 4 and 5 lie in the South to West LSCA sector, in open countryside at the south-western edge of the village, and within the AONB (along its eastern boundary).
- 7.2.2 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.
- 7.2.3 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.
- 7.2.4 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)



7.2.5 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.

7.2.6 Beyond the brook the landscapes open up across high quality, very sparsely-settled landscapes which stretch all the way to the Hills.

7.3 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, and likelihood of presence along watercourses such as Welland Brook (adjacent).
- 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'.

7.4 Visual / social 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 Areas 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, Areas' functions / contributions (village gateway, rural context and setting) visually very clear.

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



- Areas clearly visible from Black Hill and British Camp to west (see photos overleaf). At these viewpoints the Areas are seen within context of existing built form to north and east, main function being rural context and setting of village.

Zoomed-in view from Black Hill (2022) (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



View from British Camp (2019)



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

7.5 Areas 4 & 5 conclusions

- 7.5.1 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 on the eastern

side, contiguous with the existing village edge along the B4208 – the western side should be grass (paddock / lawn) and / or woodland.

- 7.5.2 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 between the Areas' eastern boundary and the B4208, and a small number of proposed dwellings having been granted planning permission recently, the baseline situation in this part of the village has not materially changed.
- 7.5.3 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.
- 7.5.4 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.
- 7.5.5 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.
- 7.5.6 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.
- 7.5.7 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**.
- 7.5.8 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.
- 7.5.9 It should be noted that currently, Areas 4 and 5 are land-locked, therefore a new access would have to be created. This could potentially give rise to adverse effects on landscape and views, so full assessments would need to be carried out to determine whether this affected conclusions about levels of capacity.

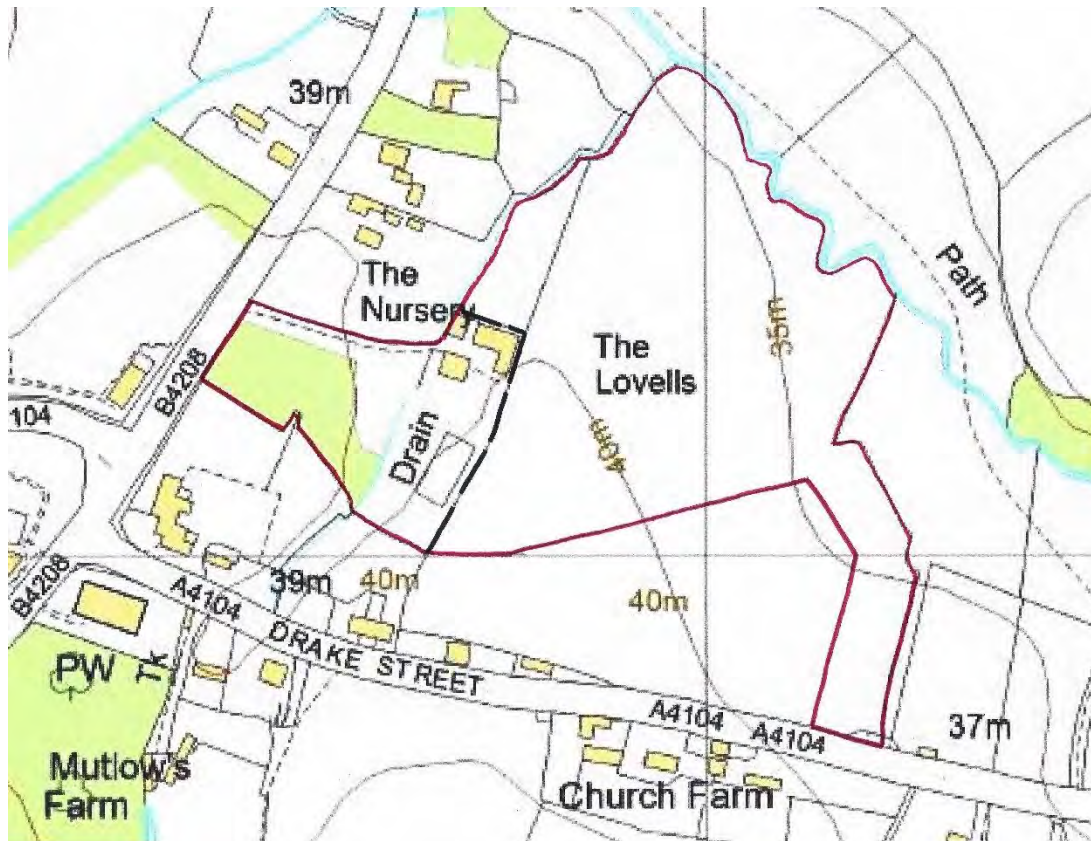
8. Area 6: CFS1085 - 'Land at The Lovells, Garrett Bank'

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 Area 6 comprises a property called The Lovells, and land associated with it. Its CFS reference number is CFS 1085. The total area is c. 4.8ha.
- 8.1.2 The Area lies within the setting of the AONB, adjacent to the latter's eastern boundary.
- 8.1.3 In the 2015 LSCA, the smaller western portion - which comprised The Lovells and its garden frontage to the B4208 - was part of LSCA Parcel no. 2; the larger eastern portion - which comprised a vineyard - was part of LSCA Parcel no. 4. They were assessed as separate parcels of land due to the differences in character (described below).

8.2 Area location and description

- 8.2.1 Area 6 lies in the North to East LSCA sector, with the B4208 to the west and Drake Street to the south.
- 8.2.2 The western section of the Area's northern boundary is defined by garden boundaries between The Lovells and neighbouring properties to the north, along the B4208, with part of it along the line of a small tributary of Marlbank Brook, the latter defining the eastern section of the northern boundary.
- 8.2.3 Both watercourses are well-wooded along their lengths, and mature trees - many ornamental - are characteristic of the established gardens along Drake Street. Beyond is open, undulating farmland with hedged field boundaries, and sparsely-scattered houses / farmsteads.
- 8.2.4 The eastern boundary of the Area follows field boundaries southwards from Marlbank Brook to Drake Street, the contextual landscapes characterised by open farmland interspersed with riparian and plantation woodland.
- 8.2.5 The Area's southern boundary follows Drake Street for a short section, before turning north then west along field and then garden boundaries to join the B4208, which the western boundary follows for a short length.
- 8.2.6 The new Lawn Farm development lies south of Drake Street. It is highly visible especially where it fronts the road closer to the crossroads, and the character of the road has changed from rural to urban. The Pheasant Inn (no longer operating as a hostelry) lies to the south west of the Area, marking the east side of the crossroads with the church to the south. Since the 2015 LSCA was carried out, new houses have been built between the Inn and The Lovells' front gardens.
- 8.2.7 The (smaller) western and (larger) eastern portions of Area 6 are very different in character, and they perform different landscape and visual functions. The dividing line between them is shown by the dashed black line on the plan below. The red line is the outer Area 6 boundary. The total area is c. 4.8ha. The western portion is c. 1ha, and the eastern c. 3.8ha.



- 8.2.8 The character of the western portion (part of LSCA Parcel no. 2) is - in the context of Welland village - urbanised / domesticated, with a residential property set well back from the road, various outbuildings, mature ornamental gardens near the house, a tennis court, and a deep, hedged garden frontage, mainly set to lawn with a few mature / maturing tree on the perimeters.
- 8.2.9 Until recently, the majority of the front garden was occupied by a large stand of semi-mature plantation trees (probably planted in the late 1990s / early 2000s), which were listed on the NFI. Most have now been felled, although a few have been retained around the perimeter. The reason for their removal is not known.
- 8.2.10 The 2015 LSCA noted the local significance of these trees and the important contribution they made to landscape character and visual amenity, and importantly in terms of judgements about sensitivity and capacity, to visual screening.

Western side of The Lovells 2018 (image © Google)



Western side of The Lovells 2022 (image © Google)



Western side of The Lovells (2022)



- 8.2.11 The tennis court and lightly-wooded lawns south of the house are separated from the west front garden by the Marlbank Brook tributary, and from the eastern portion of the Area by an ornamental / field boundary hedge to the east, and outbuildings to the north.
- 8.2.12 The western portion of the Area functions as part of the approach to the village centre, making a positive contribution to villagescape character due to it being part of the important deep, partially-wooded green gap between the houses recently built north of The Pheasant and the older houses along the B4208 north of The Lovells' front garden. The dense hedge along the road frontage is an important feature, as it screens The Lovells complex and thus maintains the currently distinctive, rural approach to the village centre.
- 8.2.13 In fact, the B4208 north of the crossroads is a relatively recent addition to the landscape, built in the 19th century to connect the new village centre with Hanley Swan. The Lovells and the houses to the north are fairly large detached properties - mostly built in the 19th and 20th centuries but extended - and sparsely scattered. The scale of the buildings and their curtilages, the fact that they are set back from the road, and the presence in places of mature ornamental planting suggests that some at least are higher status properties (mature Corsican pine along the road are protected by tree preservation orders (TPOs)). Thus, the Lovells and the houses to the north have a relatively loose association with the present-day village.
- 8.2.14 Area 6's other functions include being at the inner northern gateway to the village centre, forming part of a Key Village View looking north along the B4208 from the crossroads and part of an important view looking south along the B4208 approaching the village centre (see views below), and providing a variety of GI assets and ecosystem services.
- 8.2.15 The character of the eastern portion (part of LSCA Parcel no. 4) is distinctly rural / agricultural. The area north of the outbuildings, which is included in the western portion, appears to be a series of grassed paddocks (the interior of the Area was not visited during the 2022 surveys). The rest of the eastern portion is currently planted with grape vines, and used to be run as a successful vineyard, although the vines do not appear to have been managed for a while, and apparently the new owners are not intending to continue this use.

8.2.16 The eastern portion's main function is providing an unspoilt rural setting to this part of the village, especially along the approach from the east along historic Drake Street - all the more important now that the south side of Drake Street has been urbanised by the Lawn Farm development. However, it also provides GI assets and ecosystem services.

8.3 Landscape character baseline summary: key features and factors

CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE & ASSOCIATIONS

8.3.1 The western boundary of Area 6 is contiguous with the eastern boundary of the AONB. It forms a small but integral part of the AONB's setting.

8.3.2 The Area displays several of its host NCA 106's key characteristics (see Appendix A of the 2015 LSCA for full descriptions of national and local landscape character), 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.

8.3.3 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.*'

8.3.4 Since the LSCA was carried out in 2015, adjustments have been made to the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment: previously, the western portion was categorised as the Enclosed Commons landscape character type (LCT), and the eastern portion as Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use, whereas now, the whole of Area 6 is categorised as Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use, with the Enclosed Commons LCT boundary running along the B4208. This accords with the Malvern Hills AONB's LS&G.

8.3.5 The Area and its immediate contextual landscapes display the majority of its Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use LCT's key characteristics, especially:

- small-scale, rolling, lowland, settled agricultural landscapes
- dominant pastoral land use
- defined by hedged fields
- hedgerow and streamside trees together with those associated with settlement provide tree cover
- landscape with... scattered farms and clusters of wayside settlements
- the historic, small scale, settled nature of this landscape imparts a strong strength of character.

8.3.6 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.*

8.3.7 The overall landscape strategy for this 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*'. The objectives for the LCT include *Conserve and enhance the pattern of hedgerows* and *Retain the integrity of the dispersed pattern of settlement*.

8.3.8 At the local landscape scale, as a whole, the Area makes an important contribution to the rural setting and context of the north-eastern side of Welland village.

- 8.3.9 There is limited physical interinfluence between the Area and the wider landscapes in an arc from north west to east, due to the localised undulations and ridgelines which characterise the northern side of Marlbank Brook; however, and very importantly, this is now one of the few parts of the village where the associated wider rural landscape still characterises the village's context and setting.
- 8.3.10 Broadly, interinfluence / association with the wider landscapes is higher in an arc from east to north west, although built form now occupies the majority of the East to South, South to West and West to North sectors.
- 8.3.11 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. 3.8km due west of the Area. The degree of interinfluence / association reduces with distance, although the Area is intervisible with the Worcestershire Beacon which lies c. 5.9km to the north west (see views below).

HERITAGE

- 8.3.12 The western boundary of the Area lies c. 3.2km from the Shire Ditch SM, c. 3.7km from British Camp SM, and c. 2.8km from Little Malvern Priory SM (and associated Grade I listed Church of St Giles / Grade II* Little Malvern Court) (distances measured from scheduled boundaries). There is limited interinfluence and association between these features and the Area due to the intervening bulk of the settlement lying to the west of the Area.
- 8.3.13 The Grade II listed Church of St James with its distinctive spire stands at the crossroads c. 115m south west of the western portion of the Area, and despite the recent construction of houses north of the Pheasant Inn, there is a high degree of interinfluence between the two.
- 8.3.14 Drake Street was originally an ancient trackway, connecting a river crossing near Upton-on-Severn to British Camp, possibly via what is now Malvern Wells.
- 8.3.15 In certain parts of Welland, including Area 6, the landscape has retained its pre-Enclosure characteristics (1540 – 1799). This is an important factor in evaluating landscape value and sensitivity, since such landscapes tend to be much more vulnerable to change. The majority of the pre-Enclosure landscapes lie in the North to East sector, covering a large area north of Drake Street from the road to Hook Bank to the eastern side of The Lovells vineyard; they also extend along the south side of Drake Street from Brookend Farm to the Old Post Office, with a swathe running south in the vicinity of the sewage works, and covering some of the fields south of Church Farm.
- 8.3.16 The HER identifies a cruck-framed cottage within the Area, but its location is uncertain.
- 8.3.17 In the late 19th century, the new village of Welland was surrounded by orchards interspersed with pasture (see map extract overleaf). What are now the west and south gardens of The Lovells were orchards, and the vineyard was pasture.

Extract from late 19th century OS map



BIODIVERSITY

- 8.3.18 The Area lies c. 135m north east of Mutlow's Orchard, and c. 600m north of Castlemorton Common SSSI.
- 8.3.19 LWSs in the vicinity of the Area include Mutlow's Farm Orchard; Castlemorton, Hollybed and Coombegreen Commons; and Drake Street Meadow.
- 8.3.20 Many protected / notable species have been recorded in the vicinity of the Area, including several species of bat, otter, and great crested newts.
- 8.3.21 There is a scatter of PHI sites nearby (Lowland Meadow, Traditional Orchard and Deciduous Woodland). Some of this vegetation is recorded on the NFI, including the trees in the west garden of The Lovells, although this has since been removed.
- 8.3.22 It is possible that there are remnant orchard trees and / or habitats within Area 6: these are of very high biodiversity value (as individual sites and as part of the wider mosaic of habitats in the area), and they should be retained / protected / enhanced.
- 8.3.23 Some of the hedgerows are species-rich and thus HPBIs, and could potentially be 'Important'.
- 8.3.24 The vineyard may have had limited ecological value in the past due to intensive management practices. As mentioned above, it is understood the current owner does not intend to maintain and / or cultivate the vines and therefore there may be opportunities to increase biodiversity and levels of ecological value in future, especially if it is less intensively-managed. Given the loss of habitat in and around the village recently, especially the high value habitats to the south which were lost to the Lawn Farm development, the vineyards may have become a refuge for displaced species of fauna. The level of ecological value of this area needs to be established, but it is likely to be ecologically highly sensitive to certain forms of change, especially intensification of use.
- 8.3.25 Marbank Brook and the small tributary which runs through the Area are both high value habitats of high sensitivity to change (otter may be present), certainly more at risk of erosion / loss than in 2015 due to the amount of development which has occurred in the area since. There

has been an increase in noise, disturbance and various forms of pollution, including night-time light-spill.

- 8.3.26 In fact, during the 2022 surveys, the Brook was found to be blocked in places by plastic and other litter, and what appeared to be builders' materials including polystyrene and items of construction equipment / clothing. These items can only be coming from the north west: Marbank Brook flows along the north side of the Cornfield Close sites, and its tributary flows to the south. It is highly likely that other potentially polluting material has been / is still being washed into the watercourse.

Materials in Marbank Brook



- 8.3.27 It is likely that pollution will have reduced levels of water quality, and adversely affected the health of the associated aquatic and terrestrial riparian habitats. This in turn adversely affects landscape character and visual amenity.

8.4 Visual / social amenity baseline

RECREATION & ACCESS

- 8.4.1 Castlemorton Common Open Access Land lies c. 600m to the south of the Area.
- 8.4.2 No public footpaths or bridleways cross the Area. However, a public footpath runs close to its northern boundary, along the north side of Marbank Brook. A second public footpath runs along the track to Woodside Farm north of the Brook and runs south-eastwards across fields to join the first at a footbridge over the Brook, just east of the Area. These continue southwards as a single path which ends at Drake Street, opposite Lawn Farm. Two public footpaths run southwards from the south side of Drake Street, through the Lawn Farm housing estates and on to Castlemorton Common.
- 8.4.3 These footpaths appear to be more well-used than they were in 2015, with visible signs of erosion, damage and litter along the routes. This is without doubt due to the increase in use which has occurred since the Lawn Farm estates were built.
- 8.4.4 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.

8.4.5 Spitalfields recreation area lies west of the Area, on the west side of the B4208. It is currently proposed as Local Green Space (LGS) in the draft NP.

8.4.6 Themed trails run along the B4208.

VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY

8.4.7 To the near north west and north, the Area's visual envelope is restricted by the eastern end of Garratt's Bank / the California Lane ridgeline, which acts as a visual screen in views towards Welland from beyond it, and to the north east and east by slightly higher undulating ground.

8.4.8 The envelope opens up to the east, with a narrow open corridor formed by the Marlbank Brook and through which Drake Street runs, and closes again to the south east due to the locally-distinctive ridgeline which encloses the eastern and south-eastern sides of the village (including the Lawn Farm development). A public footpath runs along the ridgeline: views of the Area from the southern end are screened by new houses at Lawn Farm, but the Area is visible from the northern end.

8.4.9 The new housing estates at Lawn Farm and older properties along Drake Street act as intervening screens in longer-distance views towards Area 6 from the south, and longer ground-level views from the south west and west are screened by the settlement along the west side of the B4208 south of the village centre, and along the south side of the A4104 west of the village centre.

8.4.10 There are near-distance views of the west side of Area 6 from the B4208 and Spitalfields recreation area, but longer ground-level views from the north west are screened by the settlement between the A4104 and Marlbank Brook.

8.4.11 As the land rises towards the Hills, the visual envelope extends accordingly, its outer edge being the Hills' ridgeline.

8.4.12 The Area is just about visible from the Worcestershire Beacon, which lies c. 5.9km to the north west. At this distance it only forms a very small part of the overall panorama; however, it does contribute to the green, rural setting and context of this part of the village.

8.4.13 When travelling between the Beacon and British Camp along the Hills' ridgeline and upper slopes, except where dense mature tree cover filters or screens views (generally, more so in summer than winter), the whole of the Area is clearly visible - at this elevation, it does not benefit from screening by intervening built form, including the new housing estates at Cornfield Close.

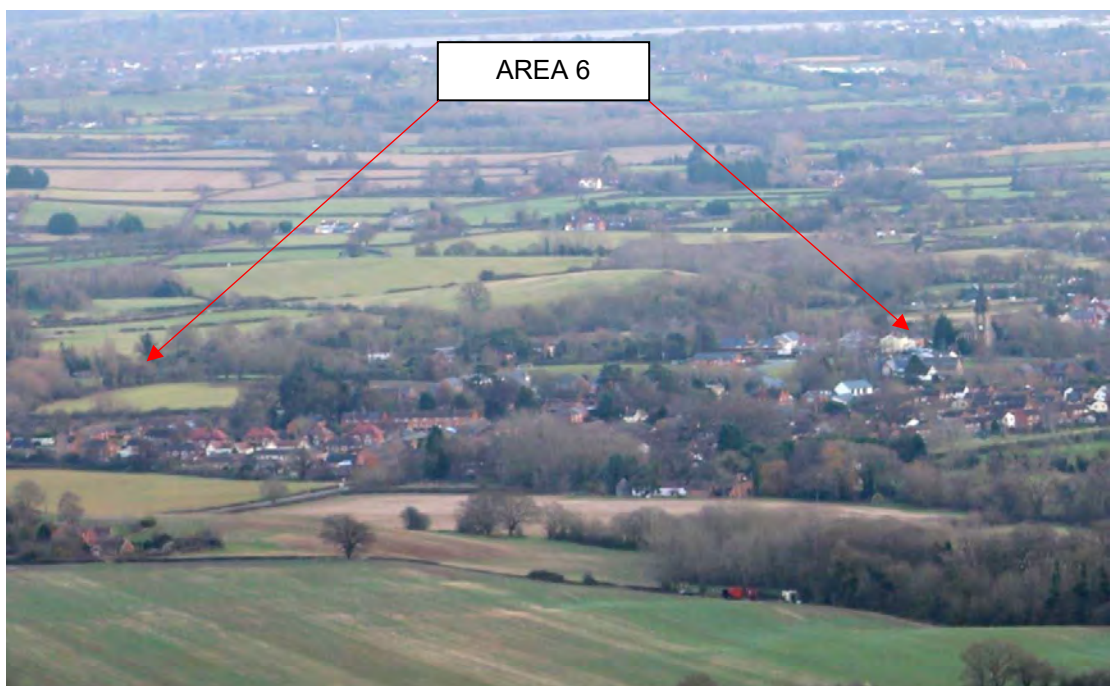
8.4.14 The photograph overleaf was taken from the Hills' ridgeline between Wynds Point and Black Hill, c. 3.1km to the north west.

Zoomed-in view of Area 6 from Black Hill (2022) (photo courtesy Jan Sedlacek @Digitlight)



- 8.4.15 The Area is visible from British Camp Iron Age hillfort and Scheduled Monument; it lies c. 3.8km from the summit, which is the location of 'Exceptional' AONB viewpoint no. 49.
- 8.4.16 In this view, the c. 365m long west - east extent of the Area (the longest part of the site) is very apparent, seen stretching from the Lawn Farm development along Drake Street to the Marlbank Brook (the arrows in the photo below show the shorter north – south extent). The Area's important contribution to the rural context and setting of village to the north east is also apparent.

Zoomed-in view of Area 6 from British Camp (2019)



- 8.4.17 On the Hills' ridges and upper slopes south of British Camp, the degree of visibility decreases with distance.
- 8.4.18 The Area is highly visible from several near-distance private and public viewpoints.
- 8.4.19 There are several residential properties adjacent to / in the vicinity of the Area which almost certainly have views of it, including: a) houses along both sides of the B4208 from the new houses north of the Pheasant to the older properties north of The Lovells and up to the north side of California Lane; b) properties along California Lane; c) properties along the track to Woodside Farm; d) Woodside Farm; d) properties along both sides of Drake Street, especially those along the north side, south and south east of the Area; and e) properties at Cornfield Close.

Elevated view over The Lovells and vineyard from residential property to south



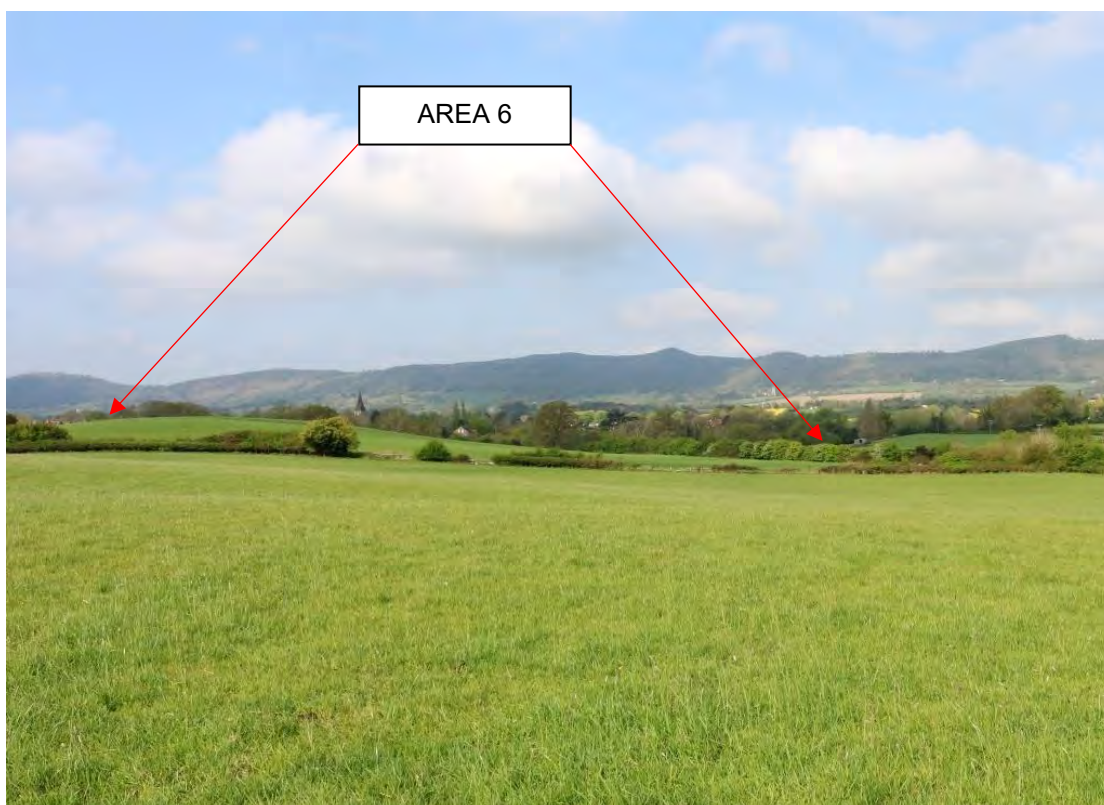
- 8.4.20 The western portion of the Area is at the inner northern gateway to the village centre, and forms part of a Key Village View looking north along the B4208 from the crossroads and part of an important view looking south along the B4208 approaching the village centre.
- 8.4.21 Currently, most views into the interior of the Area are screened / filtered by tall hedges and mature trees on the Area's boundaries and / or within it.

Area 6 looking north along B4208 (image © Google)



- 8.4.22 Mature vegetation in the western portion of the Area, parts of The Lovells complex, and the vineyard, are visible when travelling west along Drake Street, coming into view at a point near the eastern side of Lawn Farm.
- 8.4.23 The Area is highly visible from the public footpaths to the north east, which run between the B4208 and Drake Street along Marlbank Brook, a section of which forms the Area's northern boundary.
- 8.4.24 It is also highly visible from the Key Village Viewpoint (see LSCA 2015) which is situated on a public footpath which crosses a rounded hill to the north east, c. 480m from the Area's boundary. This is an exceptionally fine panoramic view, looking over the Marlbank Brook valley and the village, with the long spine of the Hills on the skyline. The full north - south extent of the Area is seen from this point, stretching c. 365m from Marlbank Brook to Drake Street.

View from Key Village Viewpoint north east of village, looking south west



- 8.4.25 Currently, many views into the interior of the Area are screened or filtered by mature vegetation, within it and on its boundaries, albeit more so in summer than winter (note that in this part of the country, the majority of trees are leafless for half the year).
- 8.4.26 The most significant vegetation in the vicinity of the Area is the riparian woodland along Marbank Brook; however, it is very important to note that this vegetation does not appear to be in good condition. In places it is very thin, and there are a few gaps through which, from the public footpath, there are views into the Area.
- 8.4.27 Tree species include ash (some of which may be suffering from Ash dieback disease), willow (not long-lived), and oak (there is currently great concern about the potentially devastating effects of acute oak decline and oak processionary moth).

Vegetation along Marlbank Brook



8.4.28 Furthermore, pollution of the watercourse could well be contributing to the decline in the vegetation's health and condition.

8.4.29 Thus, it may not continue to screen / filter views into the Area for much longer - see Recommendations in the following section.

8.4.30 Mature field boundary trees along the Area's eastern boundary currently partially screen / filter views from the public footpaths east of the Area, but they are unmanaged / over-mature and the line is thin with gaps in places.

8.5 Area 6 conclusions

8.5.1 The 2015 LSCA categorised the level of capacity of the western portion of Area 6 (LSCA Parcel 2) as Moderate. The eastern portion (part of LSCA Parcel 4) was categorised as Low to Moderate. Since then, the baseline situation has changed considerably.

8.5.2 Firstly, the village has grown significantly. In 2015, the majority of the village lay in the South to West sector of the village (the centre point being the crossroads), with a smaller amount (less than half) occupying the West to North sector. There was very little development in the North to East and East to South sectors, apart from roadside properties along the B4208 and Drake Street and scattered farmsteads / dwellings. Now, most of the open parts of the West to North sector have been filled with new houses, and half of the East to South sector is occupied by housing estates. The North to East sector, of which Area 6 occupies a relatively large part, is the only one where apart from the houses north of the Pheasant, intensive development and subsequent urbanisation have not occurred.

8.5.3 The Low to Moderate capacity of LSCA Parcel 4 factored in the Low capacity of the majority of the land in the East to South sector where Lawn Farm is now. The adverse effects arising from developing the Lawn Farm sites are as predicted in 2015, and today, the need to consider cumulative effects is more important than ever. The developments at Lawn Farm and Cornfield Close have effectively reduced the capacity of many other parts of the village to accept residential development, especially the eastern portion of Area 6. This is due to the combination of high levels of adverse effects on character and settlement pattern, and on views and visual / social amenity, that would arise if developed.

8.5.4 The village 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; today, the functions they perform and contributions they make to character, views and access to nature are even more important. Development across the Area would increase the levels of adverse effects currently experienced from nationally-important viewpoints on the Malvern Hills, and towards the Hills from certain directions, and would adversely affect many locally-important views.

8.5.5 As noted above, whilst much of the interior of the Area is currently screened from view by mature vegetation within it and / or on its boundaries, there is no guarantee that it will continue to perform that function in future - see Recommendations. Indeed, the recently-felled trees in the west front garden of The Lovells are a good illustration of this.

8.5.6 Regarding the western portion of Area 6, in 2015, the judgement that the capacity was Moderate was based on the fact that at that time there was a large stand of mature / maturing trees in the west front garden of The Lovells, which it was assumed would be retained. However, the majority have now gone.

8.5.7 Development on the Area could 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.

8.5.8 In the light of the above factors, the 2022 LSCA concludes as follows:

- i) The capacity of the western portion (Area 6A) (part of LSCA Parcel 2) should be reduced from Moderate to **Low to Moderate**.
- ii) The capacity of the eastern portion (Area 6B) (part of LSCA Parcel 4) should be reduced from Low to Moderate to **Low**.

9. Conclusions

9.1 Summary of 2022 LSCA's Findings and Conclusions

- 9.1.1 The aim of this LSCA was to determine whether certain parcels of land in and around 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.
- 9.1.2 The results of the studies will form part of the evidence-base for Welland's emerging Neighbourhood Plan, and will inform both NP policies and the Parish Council's responses to future planning applications.
- 9.1.3 The brief for the commission entailed checking, and where necessary, updating the 2015 and 2019 LSCA baseline information (for example, carrying out additional desktop research, fieldwork, survey and analysis), and factoring it into the 2022 sensitivity and capacity studies.
- 9.1.4 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 and 2019 LSCAs' judgements about levels of landscape and visual value, susceptibility to change, sensitivity and capacity.
- 9.1.5 The 2022 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 close proximity and 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.
- 9.1.6 The situation now is that Welland has very limited if any capacity to accept further growth without causing even greater harm, and many of the landscapes which remain are of higher value and sensitivity than they were previously.
- 9.1.7 In the light of the various changes to the baseline situation and the levels of effects likely to arise from new residential development, the 2022 assessment concludes as follows (levels of capacity are also shown on Figure 1):

Area 1A: northern and eastern areas: Level of capacity should remain **Low to Moderate**.

Area 1B: south-western area adjacent to housing estate to west: Level of capacity should be increased from Low to Moderate to **Moderate to High**.

Area 2: Level of capacity should be reduced from Low, to **Very Low to Low**.

Area 3: The 2019 LSCA concluded that Area 3's level of capacity should be reduced from Low to Moderate, to Low. The 2022 LSCA concludes that the level of capacity should remain **Low**.

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

Area 6 (west): Level of capacity should be reduced from Moderate, to **Low to Moderate**.

Area 6 (east): Level of capacity should be reduced from Low to Moderate, to **Low**.

Welland 1945 (image © 2022 The GeoInformation Group)



- 10.1.6 In the 2011 census, the population of the parish was 903. By 2020, it was estimated to be 1,310.
- 10.1.7 Now, the village's heart is very small in relation to the large body of people it needs to sustain.
- 10.1.8 Furthermore, many of the nationally-designated and other important wildlife 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.
- 10.1.9 As mentioned above, 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.
- 10.1.10 There has been a significant increase in visible litter / pollution in the local landscapes since 2015, along footpath routes near the new housing estates especially, but also along the Marbank Brook, some of it possibly being washed down from building sites and residential properties along its course. The Brook should be regularly cleared / tidied, and its level of water quality closely monitored.
- 10.1.11 If any additional development in / around the village is to be considered, the proposals 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.
- 10.1.12 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.

- 10.1.13 The relevant guidance should always be followed. For example, many of the mistakes which have been made in terms of the recent developments' siting, layout and design could have been avoided if the AONB's guidance such as respecting landscape in views, building design¹⁶, and guidance on views¹⁷ had been followed.
- 10.1.14 Environmental Colour Assessments (ECAs)¹⁸ are the best way of objectively determining the most appropriate colours and materials for buildings, structures and surfaces in a given landscape context. Ideally, ECAs should be carried out at an early stage in the planning and design process, alongside landscape, visual and other assessments (increasingly, ECAs are required for developments in designated landscapes, and several AONBs including the Malvern Hills now have guidance on the subject selection of colour); however, if not, ECA can be the subject of a planning condition if permission is granted.
- 10.1.15 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 wide variety of valuable wildlife habitats. However, some of the trees are nearing the ends of their useful lives: indeed, not just old age, but also deliberate (authorised / unauthorised) removal, pests, diseases, pollution and accidents can result in decline and loss of vegetation - the native trees and hedges in particular are highly vulnerable to change. As mentioned previously, there is currently great concern about the potentially devastating effects of ash dieback, acute oak decline and oak processionary moth, along with horse chestnut canker, the Asian longhorn beetle and Phytophthora amongst others.
- 10.1.16 These days, it is considered unsafe to rely on vegetation to screen views as there is no guarantee that it will remain in the long term. Unless there is a high degree of certainty that the vegetation will function as a screen in the long term, visual assessments should be carried out on the assumption that views of development may not be screened by vegetation in future, and the development should be designed accordingly.
- 10.1.17 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.
- 10.1.18 For example, currently, mature trees along the Marlbank Brook screen / filter views of the settlement from the public footpaths and residential properties north east of the village; however, new houses north of The Pheasant and at Lawn Farm are already visible over the tops of / through trees (see photos in Area schedules above). In 2015, apart from the church spire, the settlement was barely noticeable, and the views towards the Hills were uninterrupted by inappropriate built form: that is no longer the case. Without the vegetation in place, the adverse visual effects would be far higher.
- 10.1.19 Finally, on a more general note, in July 2021, a revised version of the NPPF was published. The revisions in part responded to the recommendations set out in the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission (BBBBC)'s January 2020 report *Living with Beauty*¹⁹. The

¹⁶ https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MalvernBuildingDesignGuideLoRes_001.pdf

¹⁷ https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KEYVIEWSFinalreport-lowreswebsite_000.pdf

¹⁸ For further information about ECA see The Landscape Institute's technical information note at this link: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/environmental-colour-assessment/> and or contact the authors of this report.

¹⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/861832/Living_with_beauty_BBBBC_report.pdf

recommendations in the report are relevant to planning matters at any scale, especially neighbourhood plans.

10.1.20 In summary, the BBBBC advocates 'asking for beauty, refusing ugliness, and promoting stewardship'.

10.1.21 Although 'beauty' is a subjective term, the BBBBC's definition - ie beauty '*includes everything that promotes a healthy and happy life*' - satisfied almost everyone. Nor should it ever be necessary to hide a well-designed scheme if it is really - as the national planning policy aims to achieve - the 'right development in the right place'. The National Model Design Code²⁰ was published at the same time as the NPPF was revised, the aim being to help local authorities approve high-quality designs.

10.1.22 Previously - in August 2020 - the Government had announced its intention to reform ('overhaul') the planning system, the original aim being for the Planning Bill to go before parliament in the autumn of 2021. However, from the start, the plans caused great controversy and drew fierce criticism from many quarters (especially the proposed broad-brush 'traffic light' approach). It appears likely that during lock-down, people took much more interest in what was in, and going on in, their own back yards, and realised the value of what was there.

10.1.23 Perhaps partly influenced by the change in awareness and subsequent public pressure to change tack, in early October 2021, the Government decided to 'pause' the plans, and said it may even possibly have a 'complete rethink'.

10.1.24 It now appears likely that there will be much greater focus on urban / brownfield land development; this would be sensible, as it would greatly alleviate the current pressure on greenfield sites and maintain valuable GI assets and functions / ecosystem services. However, in Welland's case, no brownfield sites are available, so any new development would have to be on greenfield land.

Carly Tinkler BA CMLI FRSA MIALE April 2022

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

APPENDIX A

Figure 1 - 2022 LSCA Areas Capacity Plan

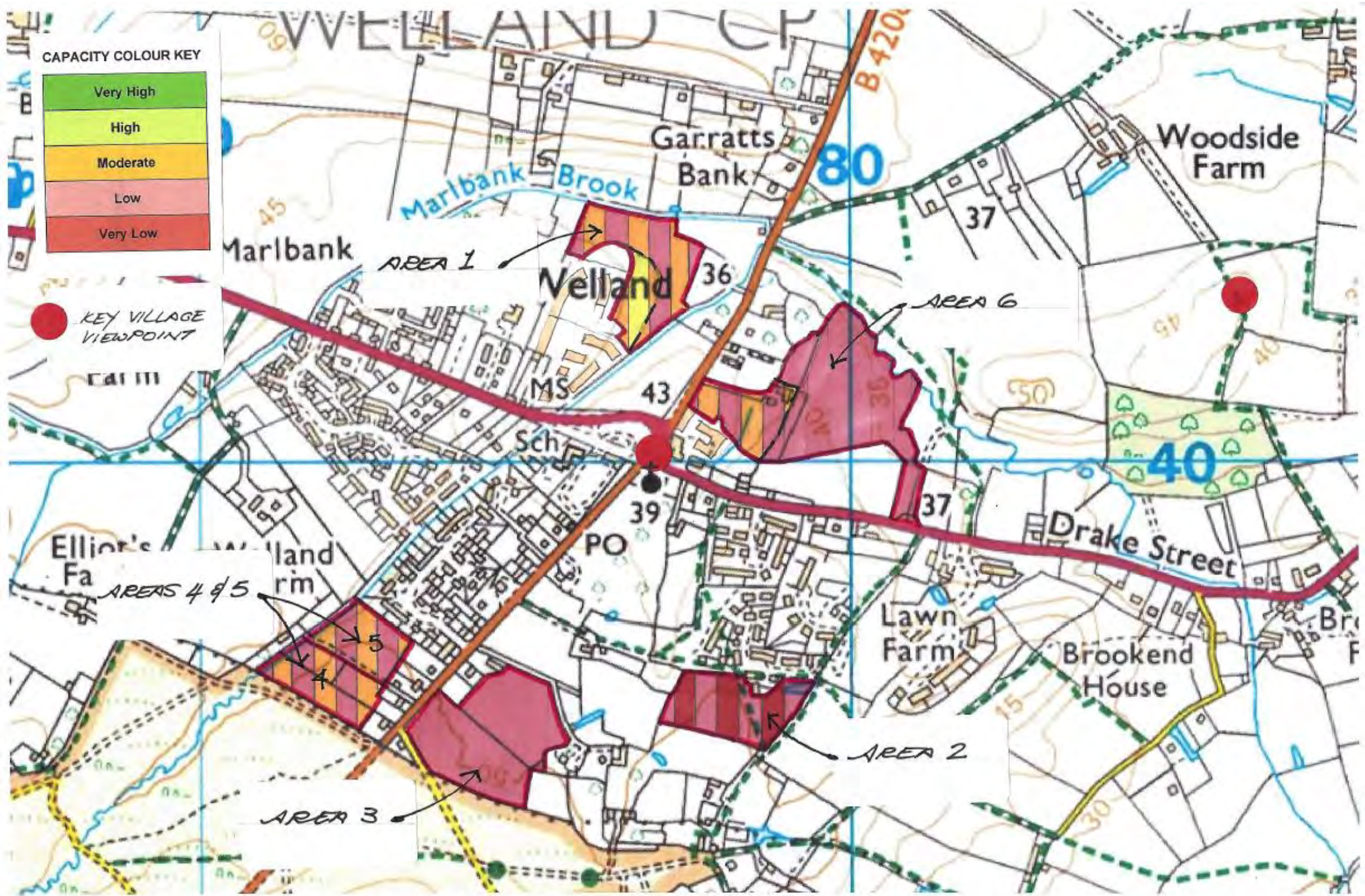


FIGURE 1 - 2022 LSQA AREAS CAPACITY PLAN

CARLY TINKLER CMLI • APRIL 2022 • MAPPING @ ORDNANCE SURVEY CROWN COPYRIGHT 2022 • LICENCE NO. 100019980

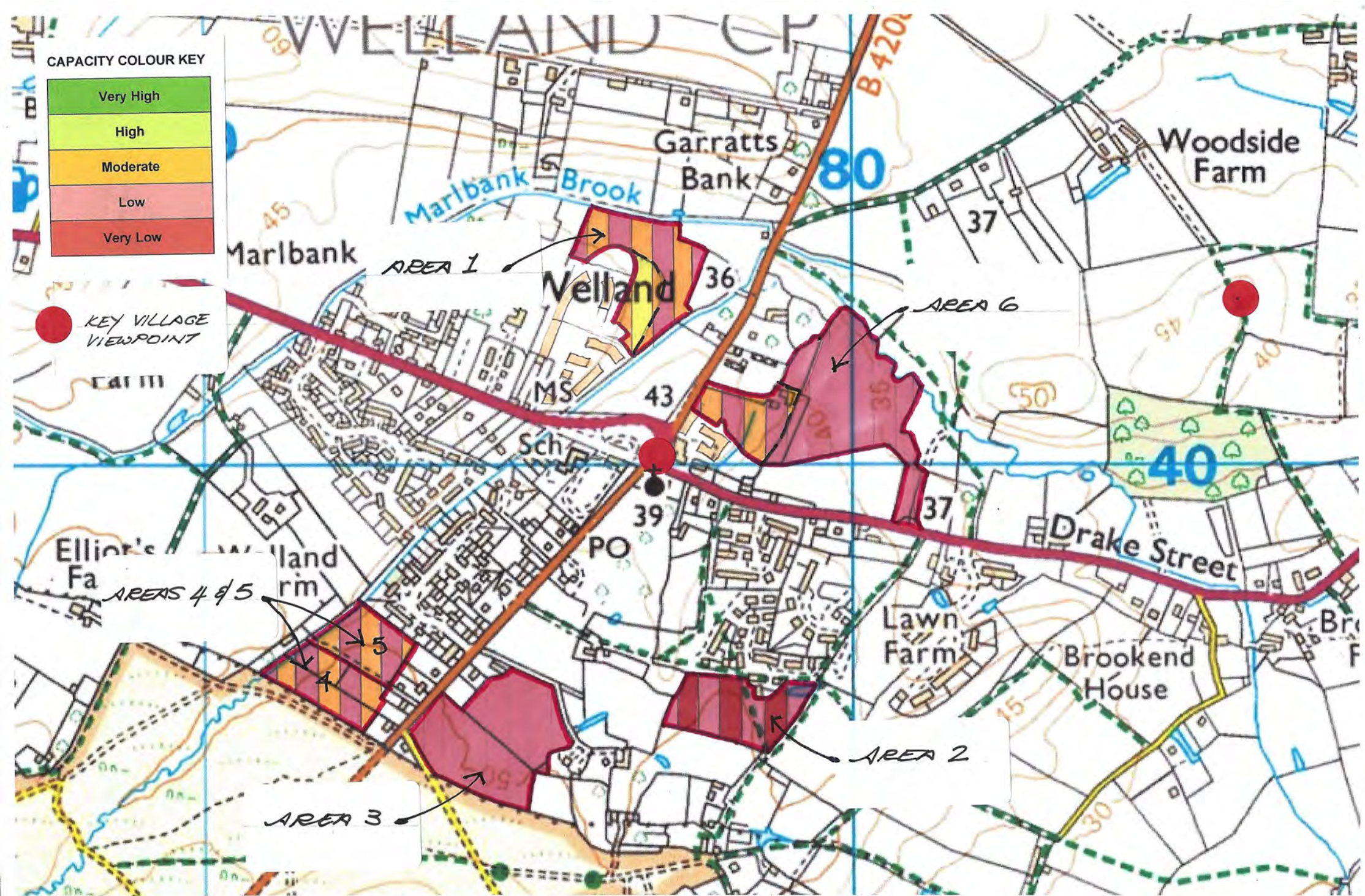


FIGURE 1 - 2022 LSCA AREAS CAPACITY PLAN

Marlbank Brook

B4208

AREA 1A

AREA 1B

B4208

B4208

Cornfield Ct

Pause for Claws

Meadow and Attenuation Basin

Orchard Area 2019m²
Futuring 20.21% GI

PRIVATE ROAD

