

Land at Red House, Chantry Vale, Sroughton: Landscape Appraisal

September 2019

Final Report



Alison Farmer Associates Ltd
29 Montague Road
Cambridge
CB4 1BU
Tel: 01223 461444
email: af@alisonfarmer.co.uk
web: alisonfarmer.co.uk

Contents

1.0	<i>Introduction</i>	2
2.0	<i>Planning Context</i>	3
3.0	<i>Existing Landscape Studies</i>	7
4.0	<i>Landscape Appraisal of Chantry Vale</i>	13
5.0	<i>Review of Taylor Wimpey Documents</i>	20
6.0	<i>Conclusions</i>	25

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Alison Farmer Associates Ltd on behalf of David and Annette Brennand of Red House, Sproughton. This assessment has been undertaken in response to proposals put forward by Taylor Wimpy in relation to land surrounding Red House, and the allocation of this land for housing in the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan – Preferred Options Consultation – July 2019.
- 1.2 The assessment focuses on key landscape/townscape surround Red House and is referred to as Chantry Vale throughout this report. Consideration is given to the issues which are likely to arise as a result of the proposed development in order to inform representations submitted in relation to the Local Plan consultation.
- 1.3 This assessment has included reference to the following documents:

Background Studies

- Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment
- Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidelines, August 2015
- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan, Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), August 2017
- Sensitivity and Capacity assessment Ipswich Fringes, Alison Farmer Associates, July 2018

Relevant Planning History

- Babergh District Council refusal of planning permission for development on land between A45 by-pass and Chantry Park, Sproughton, May 1987
- Inspectors Report from public inquiry in relation to development at Chantry Vale, 1988.
- Landscape and Appraisal, Wolsey Grange 1, Pegasus Environmental, 2015
- Planning Committee Report for Wolsey Grange 1, Feb 2016

Current Proposals – Wolsey Grange 2

- Wolsey Grange 2, Vision Document, Boyer, November 2017
- Representations on the Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Joint Local Plan Consultation (Reg18), Boyer, November 2017
- Environmental Statement – Scoping Report, Boyer, May 2019
- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation, July 2019
- Public Consultation documents, Sept 2019

- 1.4 This work has included desk study and field assessment undertaken in July 2019. Reference has been made to associated studies including:

- Review of Catchment Hydrology and other Drainage Related Matters, JPC Environmental Services, July 2019
- Heritage Impact Assessment, Michael Collins, September 2019

2.0 Planning Context

National Planning Policy

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to apply. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is to be achieved through three interdependent overarching objectives. These include economic, social and environmental. The latter objectives seek to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.
- 2.2 More specifically the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.....
 - Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystems services....

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan, Preferred Options Consultation

- 2.3 In July 2019 Mid Suffolk and Babergh published their Joint Local Plan, Preferred Options Consultation. This identified land north of the A1071 for housing development (site LA013). This site, which surrounds Red House is estimated to accommodate 1,100 new dwellings and associated infrastructure. The Local Plan makes clear that development on this site shall be expected to comply with the following:
- i. The relevant policies set out in the Joint Local Plan;
 - ii. Landscaping will be included to reflect the sensitivity of the landscape of the area;
 - iii. An ecological survey and any necessary mitigation measures are provided;
 - iv. Design, layout and landscaping is sympathetic to the close setting of heritage assets;
 - v. Public rights of way which pass through the site are retained and enhanced;
 - vi. If appropriate, measures are used to mitigate against noise pollution from the A14 and odour pollution from Water Recycling Centre;
 - vii. A free serviced site of 3ha should be reserved for a new pre-school and primary school plus proportionate contributions towards the build costs;
 - viii. Contributions to the satisfaction of the LPA, towards healthcare provision;
 - ix. Contribution to the satisfaction of the LPA, towards additional Household Waste Recycling provision;
 - x. Contributions, to the satisfaction of the LPA, for improving local pedestrian links;
 - xi. Contributions, to the satisfaction of the LPA, towards junction improvements of the A1071; and
 - xii. A full assessment of increased discharge on the watercourse, and relevant mitigation measures.
- 2.4 Beyond site LA013, and within its context, are two other development sites. The first comprises Sroughton Enterprise Park / former sugar beet factory site which is

allocated for employment (LA018) part of which has already been built out with the construction of a new High Bay Distribution building.

- 2.5 The second is LA014 which lies to the south of the A1071, comprising housing development as part of Taylor Wimpey site Wolsey Grange 1. This development is currently under construction and includes the establishment of an attenuation pond with the LA013 site (refer to Concept Framework on page 19).
- 2.6 Policy LP18 of the Joint Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation is of key relevance to landscape. It states that:

The Councils will support:

- a. *Development in suitable locations which will not adversely affect the natural environment including landscape character sensitivity and visual impacts of the proposal on the wider area (including effect on health, living conditions)*
 - b. *New development that integrates positively with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforces the local distinctiveness,*
 - c. *Proposals that are sensitive to their landscape, visual and amenity impacts (including dark night skies): subject to siting, design, lighting, use of materials and colour, along with the mitigation of any adverse impacts;*
 - d. *Development that enhances and protects landscape value such as; locally characteristic landscape features, archaeological and historic patterns of settlement and land use and designations; being demonstrably informed by local guidance, the Council's Local Landscape Guidance, the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment.*
- 2.7 The supporting text in paragraph 15.24 explains that landscapes which are not designated may nonetheless be attractive and important in terms of distinctive character and sense of place and in paragraph 15.27 that the Local Plan seeks 'to protect and, where possible, enhance the landscape taking account of its natural beauty and features...of...interest. To ensure all new development proposals respond to and reinforce the local distinctiveness of the area in scale, form, design, materials and location.'

Planning History

- 2.8 In May 1987 Babergh District Council refused planning permission for mixed use development comprising 1,600 dwellings between the A45 by-pass and Chantry Park – planning application B/1144/86. This scheme extended across the land now forming site LA013. A key reason for refusal included:

'The development would break through a strong existing visual edge to Ipswich into an area of attractive countryside which would be unacceptably disturbed'.

- 2.9 The decision was appealed, and a subsequent public inquiry held which found against the development.

- 2.10 The Inspector, in reaching his decision to dismiss the appeal, made the following comments:

'18.13 The Chantry Vale appeal site comprises a substantial area of attractive, open rolling farmland between the by-pass and the existing urban edge of Ipswich. Its topography makes it prominent to view and its landscape features make a significant contribution to the attractive approach to Ipswich from the west. It also affords attractive views from other roads and footpaths which surround and cross the site.

18.14 Much of this scenic quality is due to the notable tree screen which borders the eastern side of the site. The general effect is of open countryside extending unbroken across the site and up to the very edge of the town, which is scarcely apparent behind the trees. The sugar beet factory, though unsightly itself, is seen as a relatively minor feature in terms of the large scale, long distance views.

18.15 The proposed development would extend housing beyond the wooded perimeter of the town into the open countryside. Housing would cover the slopes rising from the Gipping Valley which are exposed to view. Landscaping would not compensate for the loss of the fine views which are now enjoyed into and across the site. The setting of the listed buildings at Red House Farm would be seriously harmed.

18.26.... The development of some 1,600 houses on the site, however sympathetically designed, would result in irreparable harm to those characteristics on which I place a very high value. The development would also detract markedly from the setting of Red House Farm.

[emphasis added]

- 2.11 Babergh District commented at the inquiry that:

'Development would ruin forever the beautiful natural approach to the west of Ipswich'

Covenanted Land

- 2.12 Approximately 22 acres of farm land immediately surrounding Red House is covenanted land insofar as it is subject to a restrictive covenant constraining its use other than as agricultural land. The extent, however, of the covenanted land, is not a reflection of land that forms the rural setting to Red House – clearly this extends further. Rather the extent of the covenanted land reflects the agreement and negotiations between the parties.

Summary

- 2.13 The following conclusions can be drawn:

- Planning policy seeks sustainable development which conserves and enhances valued landscape and intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside.

- Past planning applications for this area of land highlight the inherent sensitivities of the site.

3.0 Existing Landscape Studies

Introduction

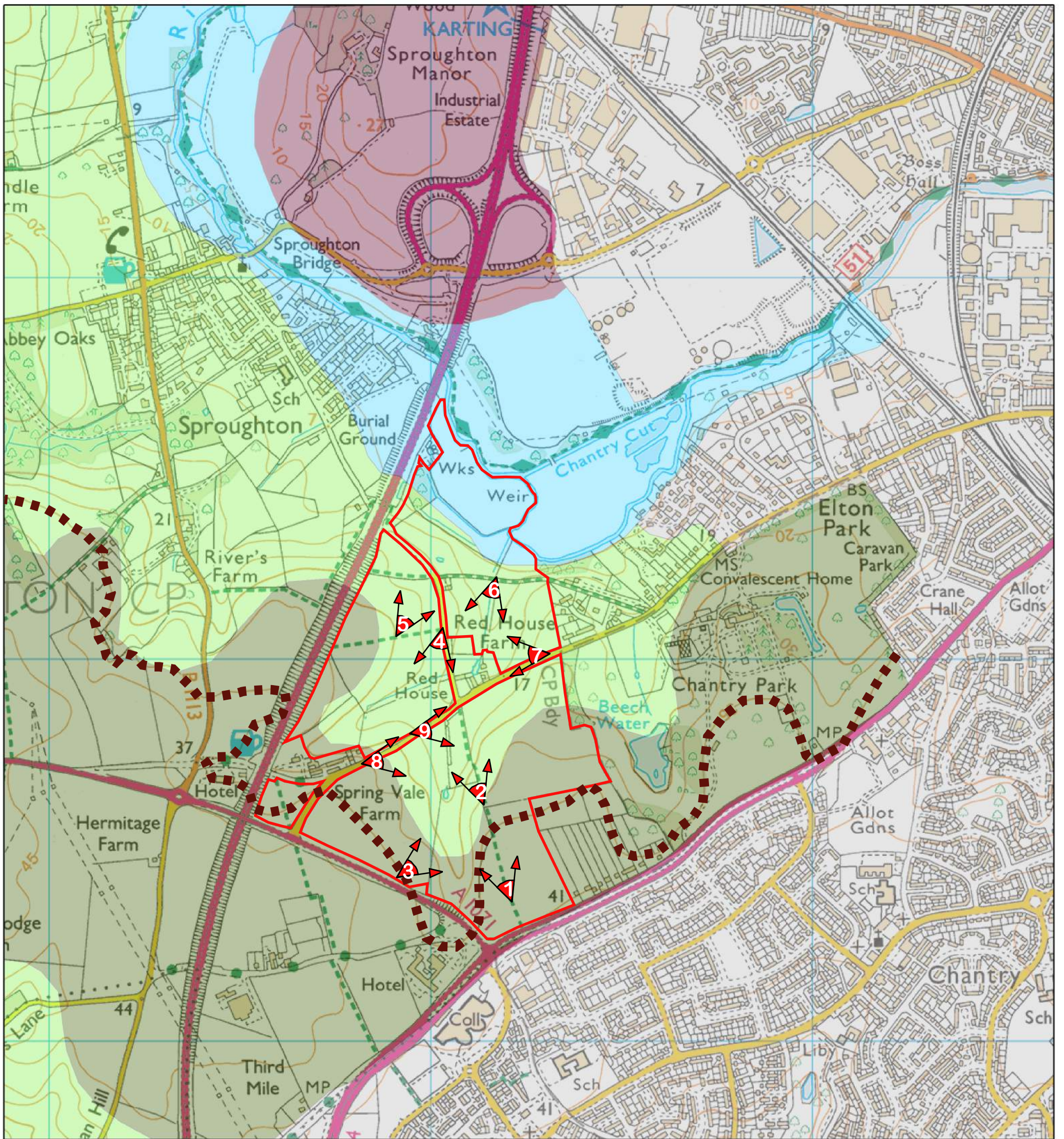
- 3.1 Policy LP18 of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan, Preferred Options Consultation sets out those documents which should inform development proposals and provide an important evidence base. This section considers these three documents in more detail and specifically in relation to the land surrounding Red House. It also considers the relevant Green Infrastructure Study.

Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.2 The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment defines landscape types which repeat across the county. Three-character types occur within Chantry Vale and are illustrated on Figure 1. Most of the area comprises Rolling Valley Farmlands which form the undulating valley sides of the Gipping. Above these slopes to the south sits a flatter plateau landscape (Plateau Farmlands) while to the north is the valley floor of the Gipping comprising Valley Meadowlands. Relevant key characteristics for each of the landscape types are set out below.

Rolling Valley Farmlands

- 3.3 This landscape type is described as having:
- Small to medium sized fields on the valley sides with an organic form which was created by piecemeal enclosure of common arable and pasture lands.
 - Field size tends to increase on the upper sides and plateaux edges of these valleys.
 - The overall impression in the landscape is of sinuous and organic boundaries around the anciently enclosed fields.
 - This is a rich and varied landscape..... the steeper valleys and sunken lanes contrast clearly to most of the other valley networks in the county.
 - Much of this landscape retains its historic patterns, of both the agricultural and built environment. However, the Gipping valley has been a focus of economic activity and as such has been subject to transport and industrial developments.
- 3.4 The guidelines for this type note the following:
- Woodland frames the valleys and is often present on the upper slopes.
 - The spatial relationship of this landscape to the adjacent valley floor means that change and development here can have a profound visual impact.
 - A landscape that is.... highly sensitive because of the landform and the particularly rich built heritage.
- 3.5 In relation to development the LCA notes for the Rolling Valley Farmlands that:
- In these valley side landscapes; the visual impact of new vertical elements is increased by the landform. Therefore, new buildings are likely to have a



Key

- Land north of A1071
- Plateau Farmlands
- Rolling Estate Farmland
- Valley Meadowlands
- Rolling Valley Farmlands
- Visually Important Break in Slope (35m Contour)
- 3
3
3
3
 Viewpoints

**Land at Red House, Chantry Vale
Landscape Appraisal**

Figure 1: Landscape Character and Viewpoints



significant impact on both the character and visual amenity of valley floor and valley side landscape types.

- The setting of specific features and elements of these landscape, such as small-scale enclosure patterns or historic buildings and monuments, can also be significantly damaged.
- The majority of development will, to some degree, be subject to this problem. Therefore, it is essential to manage the issue effectively, taking every opportunity....to modify and improve...or be clear...that the impact of the proposal is unacceptable or may be at a high risk of refusal due to landscape impacts.
- Valley side landscapes have historically been a focus for settlement. However, large scale expansion should be confined to the adjacent plateau. In this location the landscape and visual impact can be more easily mitigated with effective planting and design.
- Settlement extensions in a valley side landscape.... tend to create a highly visible new 'roofscape' on the sides of the valleys. The effect of this can be partially mitigated by planting within the development as well as on the perimeter and offsite. It is essential to ensure that there is sufficient space within the development for effective planting, and that any requirement for offsite planting is considered at the earliest stage.

Plateau Farmlands

3.6 This landscape type forms the higher land between river valleys and includes Chantry Park to the east of Red House and site of Wolsey Grange 1 to the south of the A1071. It is described as comprising:

- Predominately arable landscape.
- Flat or gently rolling landscape of medium and occasionally light soils.
- Settlement pattern generally of dispersed farmsteads and small hamlets, with occasional larger villages.
- Woodland is a consistent feature, mostly taking the form of plantation woodland often associated with landscape parks such as at Chantry.
- Condition of this landscape is mixed, with some areas slightly degraded, but there are also gems such as Chantry Park.

3.7 The guidelines for this landscape type focus primarily on the wider agricultural landscape and are not directly relevant to the plateau farmlands in the vicinity of Red House. This is because in this location much of the Plateau Farmland has been or is in the process of being developed with only the fringes, (where they form the setting and context of the Gipping Valley), remaining in agricultural use. Whilst Chantry Park is included in this landscape type it sits on the valley slopes and has similar topography to the site, sloping towards the Gipping Valley. These slopes are less apparent from the surrounding landscape however, in part due to development which has occurred to the north of the Hadleigh Road.

Valley Meadowlands

- 3.8 This landscape type forms the valley floor of the main river valleys. It is described as comprising:
- Flat landscapes of alluvium or peat on valley floors.
 - Grassland divided by a network of wet ditches.
 - Occasional carr woodland and plantations of poplar.
 - Occasional small reedbeds.
 - Limited to no settlement.
 - Cattle grazed fields with some fields converted to arable production.
- 3.9 The management guidelines for the Valley Meadowlands notes that these landscapes can be profoundly affected by changes to the management of land and the construction of buildings on the valley sides. In terms of land management, lack of appropriate grazing or conversion to arable and the planting of inappropriate woodland species can have adverse effects on the setting of this landscape.
- 3.10 The LCA notes, in relation to development in the setting of the Valley Meadowlands, that:

'Construction of buildings that project above the skyline should be avoided if at all possible.... through repositioning.... planting or reducing the height of the development...'

Mid Suffolk and Babergh Landscape Guidelines

- 3.11 This guidance document highlights the importance of ensuring that new development does not harm the quality of the countryside/landscape it is set within and therefore the quality of life benefits it offers in terms of health and wellbeing that come from a rural landscape in good condition.
- 3.12 In relation to the Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape type which comprises the majority of the landscape surrounding Red House, the guidance states that *'due to the rolling landscape, development in this area is considered to have a wide zone of visual impact. All development must take into consideration the cultural and historic importance of this area...'*

Settlement Sensitivity Study

- 3.13 In July 2018 Suffolk Coastal, in association with Babergh, Mid Suffolk and Ipswich Local Authorities commissioned a Settlement Sensitivity Study. This study considered land adjoining Ipswich and the settlements which lay within its fringes.
- 3.14 The purpose of this study was to:
- Inform the preparation of local plan policies and land use allocations.
 - Inform the submission and determination of planning applications.
 - Identify priorities for the enhancement, protection, management and conservation of landscape areas and the goods and services they can provide.

- 3.15 The area of Red House falls within assessment area IP6. The assessment of this area notes that:

'The sensitivity of this area lies in its small-scale river valley character, natural and cultural heritage interest and as a valued recreational resource. The valley slopes are also valued in providing a buffer and sense of perceived separation between the existing urban edge of Ipswich and the Gipping Valley, the latter reading as part of the wider western setting to the town.'

The valley sides around The Red House have a high sensitivity (despite being east of the A14 and in close proximity to the existing urban edge) due to their intact rural character, visual connectivity to the wider landscape to the west and high visibility. This area acts as an important setting both to the Gipping Valley and Ipswich. The land immediately to the north forms part of the former sugar beet factory and is less sensitive due to its lower elevation. Nevertheless, it sits adjacent to the river and offers opportunities to create a stronger river corridor for wildlife and recreation connecting land to the west into the heart of Ipswich.'

[emphasis added]

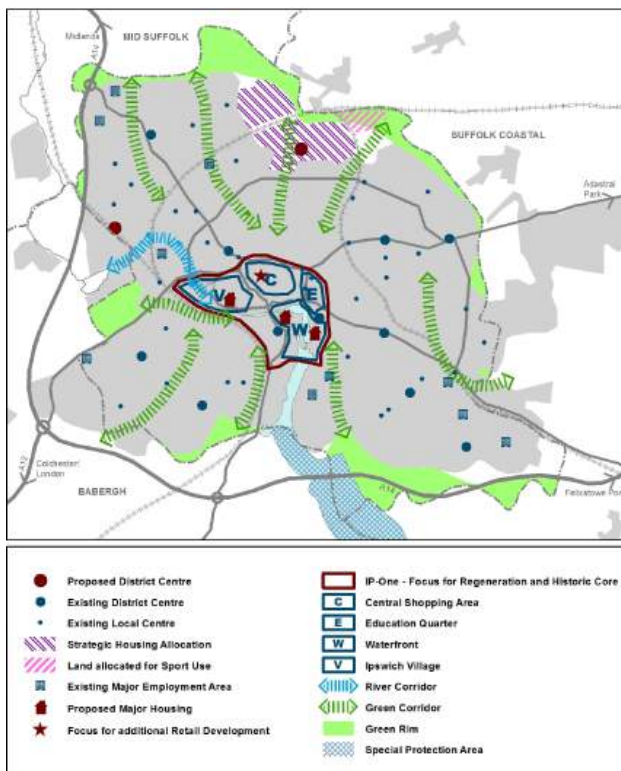
- 3.16 Within the assessment table the following points are made which are considered relevant to the Red House area:

- The valley floor is relatively flat comprising meadows and plantations and some arable while the valley sides are predominately arable in medium to small scale fields with notable areas of woodland particularly on the upper slopes.
- Fragmentation of the valley landscape as a result of infrastructure and development...nevertheless many parts of the river valley landscape and valley sides remain intact and have a strong sense of place.
- Housing on the edge of Ipswich is not readily apparent from this landscape due to its position set back from the lip of the valley and due to vegetation along the A14.
- Within the valley itself in the area of Chantry Cut/ former Sugar Beet Factory the existing urban edge is fragmented and has an unkempt and disused character, the river and canal (Chantry Cut), lost from view and relatively inaccessible. However, to the south, housing on the southern valley slopes is well integrated and has a soft urban edge flanked by relatively intact agricultural land between the housing and A14. This landscape offers one of the most attractive approaches to Ipswich along the Hadleigh Road.
- The topography of the valley sides means that many areas of the valley are highly visible and provide an agricultural setting to the valley landscape. In particular the open agricultural southern valley slopes in the vicinity of Red House, between the A14 and existing urban edge are visually prominent giving rise to a rural context to Ipswich and the River Gipping as well as reinforcing perceptions that this section of the Gipping Valley is separate from Ipswich, the urban edge of which lies beyond.

- Some noise intrusion from the A14.... Away from these areas there is a sense of tranquillity and strong sense of place.

Green Infrastructure

- 3.17 The Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy was first published in 2008 and updated in 2015 and concluded that development in areas around the northern and western part of Ipswich should be expected to provide enhancements towards the network of strategic accessible natural green spaces. Furthermore, the Ipswich Core Strategy, adopted in February 2017, set out a strategy for the future development of Ipswich. A key challenge noted in the document was ensuring that Ipswich accommodates growth in a way that enhances its character and unique sense of place and residents' quality of life.
- 3.18 The Ipswich Key Diagram within the Strategy (see below) reaffirms the 'green rim' of countryside around parts of the settlement and green corridors along the river corridor of the Gipping which penetrate the urban area. The Core Strategy recognises that the value of these corridors is enhanced when they connect to the wider countryside in neighbouring authority areas. This is important as although the mapping of river corridors and 'green rim' extends only as far as Ipswich Borough boundary, it is clear they continue westwards into Babergh District. The mid to upper slopes of Chantry Vale are visible from the wider landscape beyond the A14 and form part of the 'green rim' around Ipswich. Furthermore, within Chantry Vale, the 'green rim' and Gipping river corridor closely interrelate and are of additional value as a result.



Extract from Ipswich Core Strategy 2017

Summary

3.19 The following conclusions can be drawn:

- Several independent assessments have articulated the character, value, and function of land at Chantry Vale.

4.0 Landscape Appraisal of Chantry Vale

Local Character

- 4.1 The character of the landscape surrounding Red House is influenced by underlying geology and natural springs which have given rise to the topography of the area and influenced historic settlement pattern and land use. The landscape forms part of the southern valley sides of the River Gipping, the lower lying land of the valley floor occurring to the north with a rim of higher land or plateau occurring to the south. The area is drained by two tributary valleys which come together in the vicinity of Church Lane and Red House and flow on to join the River Gipping in the north. These tributary valleys create gentle undulations set within predominately north facing slopes that creating a distinctive bowl or 'vale'. The area is often referred to locally as 'Chantry Vale'. The break in slope between the valley sides and wider plateau to the south occurs around the 35m contour and is illustrated on Figure 1.
- 4.2 Land use comprises a mixture of arable and pasture in medium to small scale fields defined by hedgerows and occasional mature trees which lend a mature and established character.
- 4.3 The Heritage Assessment undertaken by Michael Collins sets out the historic development of Red House and associated barns, its adjoining landscape, including Chantry Park.
- 4.4 The geology, drainage and topography have all influenced the siting of farmsteads which took advantage of the folds in landform and natural supply of water e.g. Spring Vale Farm and Red House Farm.
- 4.5 Today the historic elements of the landscape are still legible and influence present day landscape character. Historic Landscape Characterisation classifies the land surrounding Red House to the north and east as Pre 18th Century enclosures while to the south and west as pre 18th Century enclosures or later and former parkland associated with Robert Harland (refer to Heritage Impact Assessment by Michael Collins). The first edition OS maps show the same historic lanes and routes, dispersed farmsteads at Red House and Spring Vale, historic parkland at The Chantry and division of small to medium scale fields defined by hedgerow trees. Much of the enclosure pattern remains intact with only some alteration where infrastructure, such as the A14 and A1071, has caused the severance of fields. Development beyond the area has, to date, had limited influence on perceptions of the area, which retains a strongly rural character.
- 4.6 The landscape around Red House or 'Chantry Vale' comprises a sizable tract of countryside on the edge of Ipswich. The topographic variation across this landscape coupled with its historic character and rural land uses gives rise to a distinctive sense of place which has a coherence and physical intactness. Although the A14 lies immediately to the west of the site it is in cutting and its margins vegetated. It does not visually impinge or intrude into this landscape although traffic noise is noticeable in the

north-western part of the site due to landform and prevailing wind direction. The rest of the area is relatively tranquil, its rural character rare in the content of Ipswich's immediate fringes.

Topography and Views

- 4.7 Views across this landscape have been grouped into elevated views, low lying views and sequential views and are located on Figure 1.

Elevated Views from Mid to Upper Slopes

- 4.8 The topography of this area enables elevated views which focus northwards across the 'vale' and Gipping Valley to the wider countryside beyond as well as to the fringes of Ipswich which extend down the northern slopes of the River Gipping. These views are across long distances and are discussed further in relation to Viewpoints 1 – 3 below.

Viewpoint 1

- 4.9 From the mid to upper slopes there are extensive long-distance views to the wider agricultural landscapes. The A14 is not evident in these views and the 'vale' is perceived as part of unbroken countryside stretching beyond the fringes of Ipswich.



Viewpoint 1: Looking northwest across the valley to elevated land beyond the A14 around Thornbush Hill

Viewpoint 2

- 4.10 Once beyond the 35m contour the land begins to flatten off. From here views to the wider landscape are more restricted, although the sense of a wider rural landscape can still be perceived.



Viewpoint 2: Looking south from plateau landscape

Viewpoint 3

- 4.11 From the existing urban edge along the A1071, and in the vicinity of Wolsey Grange 1, there are elevated views across Chantry Vale towards Ipswich seen in the distance on the other side of the Gipping. The gentle folds of the landscape are an important component of the rural foreground views. The High Bay Distribution Unit appears out of scale with the landscape, but its light colour and simple form mean that in many lighting conditions it does not stand out against the sky and the expanse of foreground landscape retains its intact rural character.



Viewpoint 3: Looking northeast from edge of plateau landscape across valley to Ipswich in distance

Views from Lower Lying Areas

- 4.12 From lower lying areas views are across the Chantry Vale and the gentle undulations of the valley sides. These views are framed by the higher land to the south and west which is frequently defined by a treed horizon or by vegetation along the valley floor and edges of Ipswich to the north and east. Development that comes close to the 35m contour and or sits on the edge of the upper slopes of the Vale can appear on the skyline. Figure 1 shows how the 35m contour extends across the A1071. As a result, the Holiday Inn building and the new housing (Wolsey Grange 1 currently under construction), appear on the skyline when viewed from the north, whereas development set slightly further back from the edge of the valley/plateau junction either side of London Road (at c 41m contour), recedes in views and is more effectively mitigated by existing vegetation.

Viewpoint 4

- 4.13 Wolsey Grange 1 is currently under construction to the south of the site and new two storey housing development at the entrance to the site is visible on the skyline from Chantry Vale. These properties are located around the 35m contour and are seen breaking the skyline and intruding into an otherwise rural valley landscape. To the right of these houses, vegetation along the A1071 forms a wooded skyline, defining the extent of the 'vale'.



Viewpoint 4: View from Church Lane looking north towards Wolsey Grange 1.

Viewpoint 5

- 4.14 Vegetation within the valley floor filters views to the north and places distance between the site and the existing Ipswich fringes which are visible on the opposite side of the Gipping. In the case of the High Bay Distribution Unit, its scale, colour and simplicity mean that it does not read as part of the built urban fringe and its light colour recedes against a sky backdrop.



Viewpoint 5: View looking north towards the Gipping Valley and Ipswich with large High Bay Distribution Unit building in foreground which visually recedes in views against the sky.

Viewpoint 6

- 4.15 The buildings of Red House are seen set within the lower folds of the landscape at the confluence of the two tributary valleys. Set amongst trees and surrounded by arable fields, the central position of these buildings means they are a focus within the vale landscape and contribute to local distinctiveness and sense of place.



Viewpoint 6: Low level view on the edge of the Gipping floodplain looking south towards The Red House outbuildings

Approaches and Sequential Views

- 4.16 Key approach routes into Ipswich in the vicinity of Chantry Vale include the A1071 and Hadleigh Road. The A1071 lies along the southern boundary of the site on the highest land which forms the ridge between the Gipping and Belstead valleys. This route is fringed to the south by the Wolsey Grange 1 development and existing urban edge of Ipswich. Whilst there is some vegetation along the road and limited footpaths, the route has a generally urban character. Its relatively straight alignment and level gradient reinforce this perception. The gateway to Ipswich is reached just before the junction into Wolsey Grange 1.
- 4.17 In contrast the character of Hadleigh Road is quite different. This route has a sinuous form and varied gradient as it traverses the Rolling Valley Farmland and tributary valley to the Gipping. It is fringed by hedgerows and trees and arable fields with a variety of vistas into the wider surrounding countryside. As such the route affords a rural approach to Ipswich, the gateway to the town being reached at the junction with Larchwood Close. As noted in para 2.10 above, Hadleigh Road was identified by Babergh District as *'beautiful natural approach to the west of Ipswich'*. Similarly, the Settlement Sensitivity Assessment noted that Hadleigh Road and the adjoining open fields offer one of the most attractive approaches into Ipswich. The sequence of views gained along Hadleigh Road are illustrated in viewpoints 7-9 below.



Viewpoint 7: Looking west along Hadleigh Road towards The Red House and valley context.



Viewpoint 8: Looking northeast along Hadleigh Road towards Chantry Park and Ipswich



Viewpoint 9: Elevated view looking northeast from Hadleigh Road towards Red House set within an unspoilt, rural valley context.

Landscape Value

- 4.18 The landscape surrounding Red House formerly comprised part of the Gipping Valley Special Landscape Area which extended from the edge of Ipswich to include the Belstead Brook and its tributaries as well as the Gipping Valley around Sproughton. It included the valley landscape as well as the intervening higher plateau landscape between the valleys.
- 4.19 Special Landscape Areas are no longer part of the emerging Local Plan and a criteria-based approach has been adopted with reference to landscape character assessment. Nevertheless, the qualities inherent in the landscape are not lost as a result of the removal of local designation policy. As noted in para 2.2 above the NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance valued landscape. These are frequently determined with reference to the criteria set out in Box 5.1 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA). The criteria include consideration of:
- Landscape Quality
 - Scenic Quality
 - Rarity
 - Representativeness
 - Conservation Interest
 - Recreation Value
 - Perceptual Aspects
 - Associations
- 4.20 The existing character and sensitivity assessment for this area indicate that this landscape is likely to have a weight of evidence that supports its recognition as a valued landscape. The findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment undertaken for the Wolsey Grange 1 development concur with this - the Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape character type to the north of the site was classified as having a

High Value, High Susceptibility and High Sensitivity (appendix 3 of the Landscape Appraisal - Viewpoint 7 Rolling Valley Farmlands Landscape Character).

- 4.21 Whilst it is accepted that changes in the vicinity of the site over the last 20-30 years has caused some alteration to the character and qualities of the land (such as the construction of the A14, the High Bay Distribution Unit and the current construction of Wolsey Grange 1), it nonetheless retains a distinctive and intact character which sets it above ordinary countryside. Its association with valued historic assets both designated and undesignated, coupled with its role in providing a unique and rare setting, approach and gateway to Ipswich, all increase its sensitivity. Furthermore, there is consensus regarding the value of this landscape, which is evident in past planning decisions and appeals, former local landscape designation and in the most recent character assessments and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment.

Conclusions

- 4.22 The following conclusions can be drawn:

- Chantry Vale comprises an area of largely intact historic countryside on the edge of Ipswich and forms part of the Gipping Valley.
- The landscape has many special qualities which support its consideration as a valued landscape.
- The topography of the site influences its character and qualities as well as views. The open undulating character and sloping valley sides give this area a high visual sensitivity.
- The landscape retains a sense of scale, intactness and cohesiveness which is rare on the fringes of Ipswich inside of the A14.
- Development on the fringes of the area has not altered its rural character and scenic qualities and should not be used as a justification for development of the Vale.

5.0 Review of Taylor Wimpey Documents

5.1 This section considers the nature of the proposed development within allocation LA013.

Proposed Development

5.2 The proposed development put forward by Taylor Wimpey is illustrated on the Illustrative Concept Masterplan below. It comprises:

- The construction of approximately 800 dwellings;
- Landscape and open spaces which create a north-south Green Corridor with SuDS;
- An area of land identified for a 2-form entry primary school in the south west;
- New junction arrangement between Hadleigh Road and A1071;
- Three new junctions off Hadleigh Road to provide access into the proposed housing areas, including a substantial new roundabout;
- 5 attenuation ponds located on the mid-lower valley slopes within the Green Corridor (shown as slightly darker colour).



Illustrative Concept Masterplan - Extract taken from recent Consultation Documents

- 5.3 It is noted that the allocation LA013 is for 1100 dwellings. Accommodation of additional housing on the site, above and beyond that shown in the masterplan, is likely to have ramifications for the density and or extent of development as well as for drainage and attenuation.
- 5.4 It should also be noted that the proposed scheme does not provide any details on the height of buildings or need for night lighting both of which can influence landscape effects.

Context

- 5.5 The Taylor Wimpy Vision Document (page 10) describes the context of the proposed development stating that the site is bound on three sides by the strategic road network including London Road to the east, the A1071 to the south and the A14 to the west. It goes on to state that '*This highway network represents a physical boundary to the site, divorcing it from the wider countryside.*' This statement appears to overplay the influence of surrounding road infrastructure. The A14 is not visible although it is audible in some areas depending on wind direction. The A1071 affects the fringes of the area where the landscape comprises part of the adjoining plateau and the Hadleigh Road provides one of the few remaining rural approaches to Ipswich. Viewpoint 1 above illustrates the limited impact of road networks on this area and demonstrates how this area is perceived as forming part of a wider landscape.

Sensitivity

- 5.6 The Vision Document states that the proposed development layout has been informed by site analysis of key constraints (page 20). However, this analysis fails to identify the inherent sensitivity of the site and does not include visual sensitivity of the sloping land, nor the role and function of the site in providing a setting to Ipswich, rural approach and distinctive gateway to the town.

Landscape Character and Mitigation

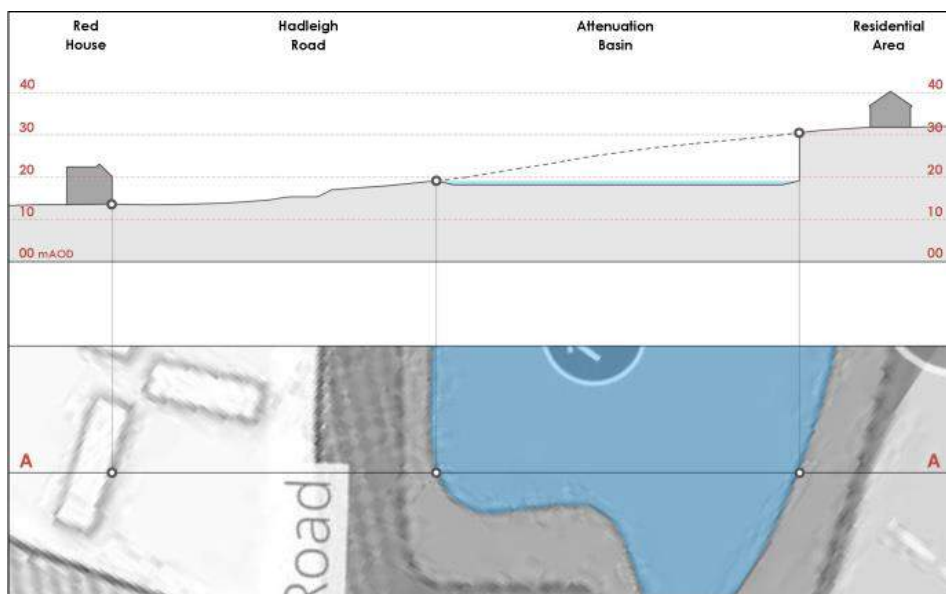
- 5.7 The valley landscape surrounding Red House stretches from the A14 to Chantry Park, (approximately 1km) and from the River Gipping to the A1071, again approximately 1km. The proposed development will result in a narrowing of the rural valley landscape to just c. 150m in width at its narrowest (shown on the Illustrative Concept Masterplan above). The development will extend down the valley slopes to around the 18m contour in the northwest and will foreshorten views. The proposed development would therefore fundamentally alter the character of the area. Such changes would not be possible to mitigate, even through landscape planting within the site, as it is the extent of open, rural countryside and vale topography which define the area's distinctiveness. These qualities would be lost and cannot be replaced.

Design Principles

- 5.8 The Illustrative Concept Masterplan (see above) shows some response to the sensitivities of the site through the creation of a north-south Green Corridor. However, development would cause a narrowing of the open 'vale' landscape resulting in built form impinging on the valley sides and on Red House. The green corridor will be visually and physically separated from the wider landscape to the west, its context will be urban, and it will contain five attenuation basins which will require alteration to the valley topography.
- 5.9 Furthermore, a smaller east-west green corridor shown on the masterplan would not contribute to perceptions of the 'green rim' which defines the Gipping Valley and setting of Ipswich. It would have an entirely different character and quality to the current extent of open countryside comprising Chantry Vale due to its narrow width and urban context. Proposed development on the valley slopes would fundamentally alter and fragment this tract of land.

Attenuation Basins

- 5.10 The north-south Green Corridor through the site accommodates 5 attenuation basins and the covenanted land surrounding Red House. This corridor connects to land to the south which accommodates a further attenuation pond as part of the Wolsey Grange 1 development. The attenuation basins are located part way up the valley slopes and will require alteration to topography for them to function. Although the form and layout of the attenuation basins are indicative at this stage the cross section below illustrates the difficulties likely to be experienced when incorporating them into relatively steep slopes. To avoid steep artificial embankments/slopes the basins will need to cover a greater area.



Based on the attenuation basins illustrated on conceptual drawing (Boyer – Nov 2019)

Gateways and Approaches

- 5.11 The introduction of a new junction between Hadleigh Road and the A1071 and three new access points off Hadleigh Road will significantly alter the sense of approach and gateway to Ipswich. Details of access arrangements/junctions have been provided in the recent public consultation. Those for the Hadleigh Road are illustrated below. These new road junctions, and especially the proposed substantial new roundabout, will have an urbanising influence, and indicate a need to partially realign and widen Hadleigh Road, with subsequent vegetation loss and a need for lighting.



Proposed road junctions taken from Taylor Wimpy Consultation Documents September 2019

- 5.12 Rather than approaching Ipswich along a winding, rural road through an area of historic farmland, the proposed development will result in the new gateway to Ipswich being pushed out as far as the junction of Hadleigh Road and the A1071. The 'green corridor' associated with the valley will become an incidental open space when travelling along Hadleigh Road, c. 450m in width between the two new access junctions into the development, and will be set within the context of housing which will rise up the valley slopes.

Degree of Fit

- 5.13 It could be argued that the retention of an area of green space through the centre of the site will enable the accommodation of the covenanted land and sense of valley landscape which forms a setting to heritage assets. On this basis the proposed development may be argued to have a good fit. However, this does not take account of the following:
- The character of the site will be fundamentally changed due to the loss of the scale and extent of open rural landscape. The open space which remains will be dramatically reduced and its urban context will give rise to perceptions of an urban open space rather than countryside.
 - Attenuation ponds and other infrastructure will have an urbanising influence on the character of the remaining open space and result in notable alteration to topography.
 - The orientation of open space north-south through the site will not retain an east-west 'green rim' and development of the site will result in the loss of valued views and connection to the wider countryside.

- d) The constraints of the use of the covenanted land other than as agricultural land, which preclude the land from having general amenity value.
- e) The introduction of three new access junctions off Hadleigh Road to service the proposed development will fundamentally alter the rural character and distinctiveness of this approach into Ipswich, substantially extending the gateway to the town westwards.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Overall the site is highly sensitive to the proposed development.
- 6.2 Areas of the site which may have some capacity to accommodate residential development are on the upper slopes above the 35m contour where they can be associated with the existing urban edge and mitigated through edge planting which can form a wooded skyline. Such a skyline would reinforce the 'green rim' and protect the Vale landscape from the visual intrusion of development. This approach to development would be in accordance with landscape character and existing landscape guidelines.
- 6.3 Key sensitivities of the site include:
- Isolated location of Red House and the importance of the rural landscape in providing an unspoilt and intact setting to this heritage asset.
 - Rural valley sides which are rare in the context of Ipswich.
 - Slopes which are visually sensitive connecting to the wider countryside.
 - Importance of scale in order to conserve and enhance the character of the valley and setting to Red House.
 - Importance of the 'green rim' for Ipswich and its setting.
- 6.4 These qualities matter because of their location on the edge of Ipswich and the easy reach of this countryside for the town's population. The area therefore forms an invaluable natural resource. These issues and sensitivities were previously identified in landscape studies which form an evidence base for the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 6.5 Even if development could be accommodated on the valley sides through mitigation (which is questionable) no amount of mitigation planting would address the fundamental change to the rural character of the valley landscape which forms the setting and context to Red House and more broadly to the southwest fringes of Ipswich.
- 6.6 The analysis indicates that Chantry Vale is likely to constitute a valued landscape. Even if the 'valued' status of the area is not accepted, the NPPF makes it clear that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be conserved and enhanced (para 170b).
- 6.7 On balance it is concluded that, due to the sensitivity of the land surrounding Red House, it is not possible for site LA013 to accommodate the proposed development without conflicting with Policy LP18. Development in this area would:
- Adversely affect the natural environment including landscape character sensitivity and visual impacts;

- Fail to integrate positively with the existing landscape character of the area nor reinforce local distinctiveness;
- Fail to respond to the sensitivity of the area in terms of landscape, visual and amenity effects and be unable to satisfactorily mitigate adverse effects;
- Not enhance and protect landscape value.

6.8 This raises concerns regarding the acceptability of the allocation of land at LA013. On this basis Babergh District is urged to reconsider this allocation as part of its Local Plan Consultation Process.