

FINAL

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL APPRAISAL

relating to an application for

“an agricultural storage building and associated operational development and landscaping”

at

New Green Farm, Lower Shorne

on behalf of

AC Goatham and Son

July 2025

Date of Issue:

1st Draft 30th June 2025

2nd Draft 30th June 2025

Final 4th July 2025

File ref: P:\967 New Green Farm\repots\HBA\current\HBA-967-LVA.docx

Checked: DH Approved: DH

No part of this report including plans, figures or other information, may be copied or reproduced by any means without the prior written permission of Huskinson Brown Associates. This report including plans, figures or other information, has been prepared for the exclusive use of the commissioning party in relation to the above planning application and unless otherwise agreed in writing by Huskinson Brown Associates, no other party may use, make use of or rely on the contents of this report other than in relation to the application and its determination. No liability is accepted by Huskinson Brown Associates for any use of this report, other than for the purpose for which it was originally prepared and provided.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	4
3	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	9
4	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL BASELINE	13
5	DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS	20
6	LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS	21
7	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	28

Appendix 1:

LVA Methodology

Appendix 2:

HBA Landscape Strategy HBA-967-001

LVA Figures:

HBA Figure 1	Landscape Context
HBA Figure 2	Aerial Context
HBA Figure 3	Landscape Character
HBA Figure 4	Map Regression
HBA Figure 5	Visual Analysis
HBA Figure 6	Viewpoint Photographs

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Huskisson Brown Associates (HBA) is a firm of Chartered Landscape Architects, established in 1987 and registered since then with the Landscape Institute. HBA has been a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment since 1992.
- 1.2 HBA has undertaken a range of environmental planning and landscape and visual assessment, appraisal and design work for many clients including public bodies, private companies and individuals on projects including commercial, industrial, retail, recreational, healthcare, agricultural, infrastructure and residential schemes. HBA also has experience in providing advice on landscape design and assessment to Local Planning Authorities as part of their development management function.
- 1.3 HBA has been commissioned by AC Goatham and Son to advise on landscape and visual matters and prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) in relation to an application for “an agricultural storage building and associated operational development and landscaping” at New Green Farm, Lower Shorne. The proposal seeks to construct a controlled atmosphere storage building, three chiller units and a substation on an area of arable land.
- 1.4 The Site location and surrounding landscape context are illustrated in the accompanying [HBA Figure 1](#) (Landscape Context). Photographs demonstrating representative views from public viewpoints in the local area are illustrated on LVA Viewpoints at [HBA Figure 4 and 5](#).

Assessment Approach

- 1.5 Current guidance on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Landscape and Visual Appraisal is set out in The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (GLVIA3). This places an “emphasis on likely significant effects and stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of the likely effects”. The main issues of landscape and visual relevance are therefore addressed in the following LVA report.
- 1.6 GLVIA3 (Chapter 1, Para 3.3 and Table 3.1) makes a distinction between a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) that is carried out as a part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) where there is a requirement to determine significance of effects in EIA terms, and LVIA that is carried out as part of an appraisal of development proposals (i.e. non-EIA) where the identification of the significance of effects (in terms of the EIA regs) is not required. An LVA can be more informal but shares the essence of the approach adopted in EIA. As the proposal that is the subject of this application is not subject to an EIA, the report has been termed an appraisal.
- 1.7 The preparation of this LVA has involved both desk-based and site work. Site work involved a walkover review of the Site and walking the Public Rights of Way and local roads in the area to help determine the landscape character and visual context of the Site and surrounding area and inform the design development of the proposal. This also enabled an evaluation to be made of the degree of change that would be expected to arise from the proposed development. A site visit was carried out on 29th January 2025 in fair weather conditions.

- 1.8 The methodology for the assessment of potential landscape and visual effects in this LVA is based on principles of good practice from GLVIA3 and is set out in full in [Appendix 1](#).
- 1.9 The following documents and sources are considered primary ones of relevance to the landscape and visual context of the Site and its immediately surrounding area and have been used to inform the LVA:
- National Planning Policy Framework (Revised December 2024) and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance
 - National Design Guide (January 2021)
 - Development Plan for Gravesham:
 - Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies Map (2014)
 - Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) – saved Policies
 - Kent County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 (2020)
 - Design for Gravesham- Design Code SPD (May 2024), Gravesham Borough Council
 - Gravesham Green Belt Study (April 2018), Gravesham Borough Council
 - National Character Area Profile 113: North Kent Plain (2015), Natural England
 - The Landscape Assessment of Kent (October 2004), Jacobs Babbie for Kent County Council.
 - Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (May 2009), Jacobs for Gravesham Borough Council
 - The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (May 2001), Kent County Council, English Heritage, Oxford Archaeological Unit.
 - Online review of current and historic Ordnance Survey mapping, MAGIC website, Kent County Council KLIS - Kent Landscape Information System website, Historic England website, Google Earth and Google Maps (with Streetview).
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (October 2014), Christine Tudor, Natural England.
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (GLVIA3) (April 2013), the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
 - Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals. (Currently under review) The Landscape Institute. (September 2019).
 - TGN 02-21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations. The Landscape Institute (May 2021).
 - LITGN-2024-01 Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). The Landscape Institute (August 2024).
 - Specialist surveys and reports prepared by other consultants to accompany this planning application, notably the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (January 2025) and Biodiversity Gain Plan (February 2025) by Greenspace Ecological Solutions.

Purpose and Structure of the LVA

- 1.10 The purpose of the LVA is to identify and assess the predicted landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The baseline study has also informed the siting of the development and the landscape strategy for the Site.
- 1.11 The LVA records and assesses the landscape and visual baseline, including reviewing relevant published character studies and other background documents and identifying the key landscape and visual attributes, character and sensitivities of the Site and its surroundings. It identifies relevant landscape and visual receptors and determines the sensitivity to change of those receptors to the specific development proposed in the accompanying application. It describes and assesses the predicted landscape effects of the proposal and separately describes and assesses the predicted visual effects of the proposal. Where appropriate, landscape and visual mitigation measures are also identified. It provides a summary and reaches overall conclusions on likely landscape and visual effects.
- 1.12 A number of figures and photographs from representative viewpoints (LI TGN 06/19 Type 1 Visualisations – Annotated Photographs) support the LVA and are referenced throughout the text and appended to the report.

2 LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 A summary of planning policy and designations relevant to the landscape and visual context of the Site and against which the scheme proposals are to be tested (in landscape and visual terms) is set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.2 The NPPF (revised December 2024) sets out the Government's national planning policy for England. It is a material consideration in determining planning applications (Paragraph 2) and should be read as a whole (including its footnotes and annexes) (Paragraph 3). Its overall aim is to promote sustainable development (Paragraph 7).
- 2.3 Paragraph 8 states: *"the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supporting ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).*
- *an economic objective: ...*
 - *a social objective: ...*
 - *an environmental objective: to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy".*
- 2.4 Paragraph 135 states: *"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*
- a) Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
 - b) Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - c) Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;*
 - d) Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;..."*
- 2.5 Paragraph 154 states that *"Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:*
- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry..."*
- 2.6 Paragraph 187 requires that *"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
 - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*

c) ...”

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 2.7 The NPPG supports and informs the NPPF and replaces a number of earlier planning practice guidance documents and government circulars. The guidance relating to Natural Environment explains key issues in implementing policy to protect and enhance the natural environment. Under the Landscape sub-heading, the topic of ‘How can the character of landscapes be assessed’ notes that: *“To demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used”* (PPG Paragraph: 037, Reference ID: 8-037-20190721).
- 2.8 The guidance relating to Green Belt provides advice on the role of the Green Belt in the Planning system. The Green Belt section of the PPG in particular refers to the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt: *“Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:*
- *openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;*
 - *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
 - *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.”*(Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722, Revision date: 22 07 2019)
- 2.9 The processes and tools for achieving well-designed places through the planning system are set out in PPG to be read alongside the National Design Guide, stating that the National Design Guide *“can be used by all those involved in shaping places including in plan-making and decision making”* (PPG Paragraph: 001, Reference ID: 26-001-20191001). The National Design Guide sets out ten overarching characteristics of well-designed places and illustrates what good design means in practice.

Gravesham District Local Development Plan

- 2.10 The Development Plan for Gravesham is made up of the following documents:
- Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies Map (2014)
 - Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) – saved Policies
 - Kent County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 (2020)
- 2.11 The following policies taken from the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) are considered of relevance to the proposed development:

Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development

- 1.16 *“... In the rural area, development will be supported within those rural settlements inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those*

settlements, including affordable housing and proposals to maintain and diversify the rural economy, will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in this plan. The extent of the Green Belt is defined on the Policies Map. A strategic Green Belt boundary review will be undertaken to identify additional land to meet the housing needs up to 2028 and to safeguard areas of land to meet development needs beyond the plan period, while maintaining the national and local planning purposes of the Green Belt.”

Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure

- 2.12 “...There will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough, and opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats will be sought, in particular within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas shown on the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network map and within new development...”
- 2.13 The overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced. The greatest weight will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting. Proposals will take account of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, and the Cluster Studies where relevant.”

Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles

- 2.14 “New development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti- crime standards. The design and construction of new development will incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques, be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles, and be resilient to the effects of climate change. This will be achieved through the criteria set out below:
- Using the collaborative approach advocated in Building for Life 12 and in line with the guidance set out in Kent Design, the design, layout and form of new development will be derived from a robust analysis of local context and character and will make a positive contribution to the street scene, the quality of the public realm and the character of the area. Account will be taken of the scale, height, building lines, layout, materials and other architectural features of adjoining buildings. Account will also be taken of the wider site context, including strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value which contribute to local character and sense of place;...
 - New development will be located, designed and constructed to:
 - safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land;
 - avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution, and land contamination; and
 - not pose an unacceptable risk or harm to the water environment, including the quality and/or quantity of ground waters, surface waters, wetlands and

coastal water systems;...

- *New development will protect and, where opportunities arise, enhance biodiversity and the Borough's Green Infrastructure network. Support will be given to environmental enhancements where opportunities arise;..."*

Policy CS07: Economy, Employment and Skills

- 2.15 *"...The Council will support proposals that promote the appropriate expansion and diversification of the rural area economy. Support will be given to the conversion of rural buildings to employment use/live-work units where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and where it accords with policies in this plan, in particular relating to Green Infrastructure..."*

Design for Gravesham (SPD)

- 2.16 The Design for Gravesham- Design Code SPD was produced in May 2024 by Gravesham Borough Council and offers guidance to support the implementation policies set out in the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014). It sets out a number of design principles including:

4.3 Responding to local history and context

- *"New development must be place specific and contextual..."*
- *Each new development must enhance and not detract from the existing or emerging character of the area where it is situated..."*

5.9 Pattern, grain and scale

- *"New development must respond sensitively to the prevailing pattern and intervals of existing development to reflect the grain of the existing character area where the building (or larger development) is placed..."*

6.6 Protecting and enhancing blue and green infrastructure

- *"New developments must be designed to conserve, enhance, connect, and improve the use and access of the Borough's existing blue and green infrastructure..."*
- *Trees, hedges, woodland and natural green spaces positively contribute to the sense of identity of a place and should be integrated into the design proposals with a presumption against removal in all instances."*

6.8 Biodiversity

- *"Biodiversity in Gravesham must be protected and enhanced through the design of streets and spaces..."*
- *A minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain must be targeted (householder applications to be exempt). BNG will be measured using Defra's biodiversity metric and habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years.*
- *New developments should establish ecological networks that are resilient to future climate change pressures.*
- *New developments should promote links with the existing blue and green*

infrastructure through habitat creation and improvement. Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement should be maximised. Measures can consist of:

- Species-rich planting palettes with a bias towards native and wildlife friendly species*
- Habitat creation features such as bird boxes, bat boxes, hedgehog houses, fence gaps for commuting wildlife*
- Re-use of felled trees on site as log piles or dead hedges*
- Biodiverse roofs*
- Integration of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)*
- Existing trees and valuable habitat features should be integrated into the site layout and landscape design with a presumption against removal.”*

Landscape Designations

- 2.17 The Kent Downs National Landscape, formerly known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is located 2km to the south of the Site.
- 2.18 There are no sites designated nationally or internationally for their ecological value within 1km of the Site.
- 2.19 With regards to non-statutory designated sites, Court Wood Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located 0.8km south of the Site and Court Wood (The Warren) LWS is located 1km southwest of the Site.
- 2.20 There are no trees or tree groups subject to Tree Preservation Orders within the Site.
- 2.21 There are no Public Rights of Way across the Site. Footpath NS156 runs adjacent to the Site's northwestern boundary for approximately 20m and is within the ownership boundary of the applicant for 850m.
- 2.22 There are no Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings in close proximity, to the Site.

3 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1 Landscape Character is defined in GLVIA3 as:

- *“A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse”.*

3.2 The general hierarchy of the published landscape character studies relevant to the Site and its surroundings are set out below. Relevant Landscape Character Areas are mapped on [HBA Figure 3 Landscape Character](#).

3.3 National Landscape Character

3.4 Natural England has divided the country into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment. The Site is located within [NCA 113: North Kent Plain](#), as defined by Natural England in March 2015.

3.5 The character area is described as *“the strip of land between the Thames Estuary to the north and the chalk of the Kent Downs to the south. The area is open, low and gently undulating. It is a very productive agricultural area with predominantly high-quality, fertile loam soils characterised by arable use. Traditional orchards, soft fruits and other horticultural crops exist in central and eastern areas giving rise to the use of the title ‘Garden of England’. There is an extensive area of ancient woodland around Blean, plus significant ancient woodlands further west. However, it is generally an open landscape: characteristic shelterbelts occur within the fruit-growing areas, but the agricultural land is mostly devoid of hedgerows.”*

3.6 Key characteristics of NCA 113: North Kent Plains are identified as including:

- *“An open, low and gently undulating landscape, characterised by high quality, fertile, loamy soils dominated by agricultural land uses.*
- *Large arable/horticultural fields with regular patterns and rectangular shapes predominating, and a sparse hedgerow pattern.*
- *Orchards and horticultural crops characterise central and eastern areas, and are often enclosed by poplar or alder shelterbelts and scattered small woodlands.*
- *Large settlements and urban infrastructure (including lines of pylons) are often visually dominant in the landscape, with significant development around Greater London and the Medway Towns, as well as around towns further east and along the coast. Major rail and road links connect the towns with London.”*

3.7 Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO), that comprise examples of landscape actions and character guidance, are provided for each NCA. This guidance is set out below where it is relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development.

SEO 1 “Maintain the historic character and long tradition of a farmed landscape, creating habitats to establish more resilient and coherent ecological networks within the farmed and peri-urban areas, benefitting biodiversity and geodiversity, and helping to regulate water and soil quality. Protect traditional practices including the longstanding associations of the

fruit belt, maintaining a strong sense of place and reinforcing Kent's reputation as the Garden of England."

3.8 Examples of achieving this include:

- *"Supporting the maintenance of a diverse farmed landscape, incorporating horticulture. Safeguarding high-quality agricultural land and encouraging land management practices which protect soil assets and the benefits they provide."*

County Landscape Character

3.9 At a county level, Kent County Council published the Landscape Assessment of Kent in 2004 which divides the county into 114 distinct character areas. The Site is located within the **Hoo Peninsula** Landscape Character Area (LCA), the characteristic features of which are: *"Prominent hills and low-lying alluvial marshes. Flat/undulating farmland. Decline in orchards and mixed farmland with shelterbelts. Intensive, open farmed arable land. Intrusive influence of industrial development."*

3.10 The condition of the Hoo Peninsula LCA is assessed as poor, as *"There is very little coherent landscape pattern here. Visual detractors in the landscape occur on a large scale (industrial horizon) and detailed scale (industrial farm buildings). Isolated patches of woodland provide clusters of semi-natural habitat, but there is very little opportunity for ecological interest within the open arable fields. The occasional large brick farmhouse and the nature of the alluvial marshland augments the cultural and functional integrity of the area, but overall it is considered to be weak."* The analysis of landscape condition is summarised as:

- *Pattern of elements: Coherent*
- *Detracting features: Some*
- *Visual Unity: Coherent*
- *Cultural integrity: Poor*
- *Ecological integrity: Weak*
- *Functional integrity: Very Weak*

3.11 The sensitivity of the Hoo Peninsula LCA was assessed as moderate, as *"The historic framework to this landscape is mainly indistinct. The highways retain some characteristic features. Brick farmsteads, and isolated development associated with the railways contribute to local distinctiveness in a minor capacity. The sense of place is considered to be weak. The contrast of the low hills against the surrounding marshland is an apparent feature in the open view. Views are long and visibility is high."* The analysis of landscape sensitivity is summarised as:

- *Distinctiveness: Indistinct*
- *Continuity: Historic*
- *Sense of Place: Weak*
- *Landform: Apparent*
- *Extent of tree cover: Open*
- *Visibility: High*

- 3.12 The guidance for the Hoo Peninsula is to 'Restore and Create', including specific landscape actions to:
- *"Restore pockets of small scale farmland in the area and, where it is appropriate, around existing settlement.*
 - *New landscape elements may need to be created around new settlements, using characteristic elements adapted to developing uses of the land - to include large-scale agriculture, transport and residential uses.*
 - *Create new ecological bases within the farmland which may also act as recreational resources for residential areas..."*

Borough-wide Character Assessment

- 3.13 The Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment was produced in May 2009 by Jacobs on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council and divides the district into 11 local landscape character areas (LLCAs). The Site is located within Higham Arable Farmland LLCA which is described as: *"located east of Gravesend and south of Shorne and Higham Marshes. ... The landform is very gently undulating and generally rises from north to south. ... There are extensive views across open arable land from within the character area and views out of the character area, towards the marshes and the River Thames in the north, from some higher vantage points and areas near the boundary line. ...there is little tree cover, allowing extensive views across an arable landscape. There are some remnant areas of orchards indicating a former agricultural use, often overgrown with trees in poor condition. ... Shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure. Despite these features, there is an open character as a result of the extensive views and lack of tree cover. There is a regular pattern of medium to large fields throughout the area, with some smaller paddocks adjoining properties east of Higham. ... Isolated farmsteads and scattered properties throughout the remaining area contribute towards local distinctiveness, with oast houses, thatch roofs and converted timber barns. ... Several footpaths and roads used as public paths cross the arable farmland."*
- 3.14 The condition of the Higham Arable Farmland LLCA is considered **poor** and it has a **moderate** landscape sensitivity. The guidelines for the Higham Arable Farmland LLCA are to **restore and create**, with specific guidelines including:
- *"Restore and create field boundary hedgerows*
 - *Restore and create ecological networks by linking existing isolated woodland clumps and orchards*
 - *Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obstructive elements within visually sensitive areas of the open landscape*
 - *Create areas of regenerative woodland within farmland to create woodland links.*
 - *Improve footpaths and access throughout the area to link woodlands to marshlands."*

HBA Comment on published Landscape Character studies

- 3.15 The Site is located within a gently undulating agricultural landscape, sloping down from the south towards the Thames to the north. Overall, the Site and its landscape setting are

not reflective of the landscape character areas described in the published landscape character studies, with the high prevalence of commercial orchards an uncharacteristic landscape use and the presence of widespread post and wire framework associated with the orchards limiting the perception of an open landscape.

- 3.16 The published studies place emphasis on the need to restore and create habitats, including hedgerow and woodland planting. Opportunities for habitat creation should therefore be sought as an integral part of any proposed development at New Green Farm.
- 3.17 An evaluation of the relevant characteristics of the Site itself are described in more detail in Section 4 of the LVA, based upon our field assessments and desktop review.

4 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL BASELINE

- 4.1 The Site and its local context are illustrated on *HBA Figure 1 Landscape Context* and *HBA Figure 2 Aerial Context*.

Location & Local Land Use

- 4.2 The Site is located within Gravesham Borough, 1.3km to the northwest of Higham and 1.5km northeast of Shorne. It lies within a parcel of land defined by Lower Road to the north and Gravesend Road to the south which is used for a mixture of arable and orchard planting. To the north of Lower Road, the land use is predominantly agriculture as the landscape extends towards areas of marsh adjacent to the River Thames. South of Gravesend Road, the land use is mixed, with agricultural fields rising into woodland around the periphery of Shorne. The Site and its surroundings are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 4.3 The Site forms part of a wider holding at New Green Farm which operates as a commercial orchard, with the Site lying towards the centre of the holding. The Site is rectangular in shape, covering an area of approximately 0.76ha and comprises arable land with an earth bund in the north-eastern corner. There are no formal boundaries to the Site. The Site is accessed via a network of tracks that dissect the wider holding, with the entrance to the holding on Lower Road to the north of the Site.

Built Form and Settlement

- 4.4 The Site lies in an area where the settlement pattern is sparse, with scattered farmstead developments set within the working agricultural landscape. Beyond the Site's immediate setting, development is concentrated in the villages of Higham and Shorne to the southwest and southeast respectively.
- 4.5 The Site itself is agricultural land with no built form. Within the wider holding at New Green Farm there is an agricultural barn 40m northwest of the Site and a caravan 25m northwest of the Site.

Topography

- 4.6 The Site lies in a gently undulating landscape, rising towards the villages of Higham and Shorne to the southwest and southeast of the Site and the Kent Downs National Landscape beyond, reaching levels of 110m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) 1.57km southwest of the Site at several locations within the Shorne Woods Country Park. To the north of the Site the landscape gradually slopes downwards towards Shorne Marshes and the River Thames, reaching 2m AOD 1.9km north of the Site.
- 4.7 The Site itself lies at approximately 30m AOD and is relatively flat, with the wider holding at New Green Farm undulating between 17m and 45m AOD. A 2.5m high earth bund lies in the northeastern corner of the Site.

Land Cover and Vegetation

- 4.8 The Site is predominantly arable land with an earth bund in the northeastern corner of the Site. A row of young Alder trees follows the northwestern boundary of the Site, extending

beyond the Site boundary to join with the planting associated with a disused chalk pit to the south of the Site.

- 4.9 The Phase 1 Habitat Survey, carried out as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) by Greenspace Ecological Solutions (January 2025) recorded three habitats on Site: Poor semi-improved grassland, ephemeral and arable, with arable being the predominant land use.
- 4.10 The wider landscape is predominantly agricultural, with both arable and orchard planting present. Fields are defined by hedgerows and tree planting and are generally large and irregular in shape. Further south, beyond Gravesend Road, woodland becomes more prominent as the land rises to meet the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

- 4.11 The Site is not designated for its nature conservation or wildlife value. The closest designated wildlife site is Court Wood Local Wildlife Site, located approximately 800m south of the Site.
- 4.12 The PEA by Greenspace Ecological Solutions (January 2025) identifies the ecological features that may be impacted by any development on the proposed development Site and sets out a series of biodiversity enhancements for the Site.
- 4.13 The report states that *“development of the site is unlikely to impact designated sites, areas of ancient woodland or Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs)”* and recommends a sensitive working strategy during construction is taken due to the suitability of the Site for badgers. Precautionary working methods to protect nesting birds and reptiles are also required.

Public Rights of Way and Recreational Land

- 4.14 No public rights of way lie within the Site boundary however footpath NS156 follows the northwestern boundary of the Site, with the footpath generally following field boundaries from Gravesend Road to the south and Lower Road to the north. The footpath continues to the south of Gravesend Road and the north of Lower Road.
- 4.15 There are several public rights of way within the surrounding area including:
- Footpath NS159 which travels southwest-northeast between Footpath NS156 and Gravesend Road.
 - Footpath NS158 which travels southwest-northeast between Forge Lane and Gravesend Road.
 - Footpath NS157 which travels southwest-northeast between Gravesend Road and Green Farm Lane.
 - Footpath NS171 which travels southwest-northeast between Green Farm Lane and Lower Road, passing through Green Farm.

Historic Landscape

- 4.16 A review of historic Ordnance Survey mapping has shown that the Site was previously a chalk pit. Whilst the agricultural landscape within which the Site lies has remained generally unchanged, the villages of Shorne to the southwest of the Site and Higham to the

southeast have gradually expanded around an existing network of roads. Scattered farmsteads and associated agricultural buildings have been introduced into the landscape over time, in particular at Green Farm to the west of the Site.

- 4.17 The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation was published in May 2001 by Oxford Archaeological Unit on behalf of Kent County Council and English Heritage. The report identifies and maps 87 Historic Landscape Types (HLT) across the county, of which the Site lies within HLT 9.2 Scattered settlement with paddocks (post 1800 extent) and HLT 1.13 Prairie fields (19th cent enclosure with extensive boundary loss).
- 4.18 With regard to historic landscape designations, the landscape surrounding the Site has few historic features, limited to two listed buildings at Green Farm 580m to the west of the Site (Green Farm House (ref. 1346411) and Green Farm Granary (ref. 1083897)) and the conservation areas associated with Queens Farm, Higham and Shorne to the north, east and south of the Site respectively.

Planning History

- 4.19 A previous planning application to ‘determine as to whether prior approval is required for the erection of a cold store’ was submitted for the central portion of the Site in January 2024 (ref. 20240020), for which it was determined that prior approval was not required. The proposal subject of this application was for a 26.25m x 40m cold store building. The principal of some development on this Site has therefore previously been accepted.

Perceptual Qualities

- 4.20 CPRE The Countryside Charity prepared a Tranquillity Map of England (February 2007) that provides a broadbrush study of relative tranquillity levels based upon “*Remoteness from people, habitat type, presence and visibility of rivers and woodlands, presence and visibility of unnatural features as detractors, openness of the landscape, overhead skyglow and identification of noise sources*”. The Site is located in an area that lies towards the centre of the spectrum of relative tranquillity.
- 4.21 CPRE The Countryside Charity also produced England’s Light Pollution and Dark Skies map (2016) which records levels of light pollution and dark skies based upon: “*the level of radiance (night lights) shining up into the sky.*” The Site is located in an area within the brighter part of the spectrum.
- 4.22 The tranquillity of the Site is limited due to its location within a commercial orchard. The level of human activity and the movement of agricultural vehicles varies throughout the year, with less activity throughout the winter when the orchard is dormant and a high level activity when fruit is being picked in the late summer and early autumn. As a result, the Site is more tranquil in the winter months when bird song is present and human activity is limited, with levels of tranquillity much reduced in the height of picking season.
- 4.23 The Site is not wild land and has no perception of wildness, “naturalness”, remoteness or seclusion.

Visual baseline

- 4.24 The existing visual context and potential visibility of the Site and Proposed Development is described below. Whilst this primarily informs the assessment of visual effects of the

Proposed Development it also in part feeds into some of the perceptual considerations relating to the assessment of landscape value.

- 4.25 Local roads and right of way were walked to consider available views of the Site and to identify the range of visual receptors (people) who may experience changes to their views and visual amenity through any development on the Site.
- 4.26 A 'Primary Visual Envelope' (PVE) ([HBA Figure 5](#)) has been prepared, indicating those parts of the surrounding area from where it is considered that views of the Proposed Development are most likely to be possible. Not all areas within the PVE will be exposed to views, similarly there may be other locations outside the PVE that may have views, but on the basis of the site inspections, these are not considered to be significant.
- 4.27 The PVE and existing visual context is described below.
- 4.28 There are no protected views or distinctive landmarks that the Site contributes to.
- 4.29 Close distance views towards the Site are limited to views from public footpath NS156, a 20m section of which follows the northwestern boundary of the Site. From the footpath views into the Site are available as the path runs adjacent to and to the north of the Site, with views from elsewhere on the footpath screened by the topography, orchard infrastructure, an earth bund within the Site boundary and vegetation associated with the disused chalk pit immediately southwest of the Site. The views of the Site from the footpath are filtered by a row of young trees that run parallel with the footpath, with a view directly into the Site available where the tree planting ends ([Refer to HBA Figure 6, Views 1, 2, 3 and 6](#)).
- 4.30 Beyond the Site's immediate surroundings, views towards the Site are heavily filtered by the undulating topography, orchard frames and vegetation. The adjacent agricultural barn and woodland planting are visible from several locations including footpath NS171 as it passes through Green Farm ([Refer to HBA Figure 6, View 5](#)) and from Lower Road where the formal access to the Site and wider holding create a gap in the orchard infrastructure ([Refer to HBA Figure 6, View 4](#)).
- 4.31 Further afield, views towards the Site are screened by the undulating topography, orchard infrastructure and vegetation, with the Site not visible in views beyond Gravesend Road to the south or Lower Road to the north ([Refer to HBA Figure 6, Views 7, 8 and 9](#)). No public viewpoints of the Site have been identified from land within the Kent Downs National Landscape.
- 4.32 The above provides a summary of the overall visibility of the Site in its current form. The potential visibility of the proposed development is considered separately in [Section 6](#) of this LVA.

Landscape Value

- 4.33 Landscape value is defined by GLVIA3 as:

"The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of different reasons".

- 4.34 Whilst the NPPF does not define ‘valued landscapes’, it is acknowledged and established by case law, that value is not merely something that is designated either by statute, such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or non-statutory process.
- 4.35 The landscape of the Site is not considered to be a ‘valued landscape’ in and of itself - NPPF Paragraph 180(a).
- 4.36 GLVIA3 notes at paragraph 5.19, where the valuing of the landscape is addressed that: *“A review of the existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding landscape value, but the value attached to undesignated landscapes also needs to be carefully considered and individual elements of the landscape – such as trees, buildings or hedgerows – may also have a value. All need to be considered where relevant”*. It may also be appropriate to have regard to the other factors including those identified in Box 5.1, Page 84 of GLVIA3, listed as ‘range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes’.
- 4.37 Since GLVIA3 was published in 2013, appeal decisions, high court judgements and practitioners’ experience have provided further information about the factors which can be considered in assessing landscape value outside nationally designated landscapes. The Box 5.1 criteria have therefore been updated and refined in TGN 02/21 ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’ (Table 1) to cover the headings of:
- *Natural heritage*
 - *Cultural heritage*
 - *Landscape Condition*
 - *Associations*
 - *Distinctiveness*
 - *Recreational*
 - *Perceptual (scenic)*
 - *Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity)*
 - *Functional*
- 4.38 These are considered in relation to the Site in its local context (and drawing upon the landscape baseline already described), below:
- Natural Heritage and Cultural Heritage
- 4.39 There are no features of wildlife, earth science, archaeological/historic, or cultural heritage interest that add further value to the landscape of the Site
- Landscape Condition
- 4.40 Landscape condition is defined by GLVIA3 as:
- “A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements”*.
- 4.41 The Site lies in a predominantly intact agricultural landscape, with recent tree planting seeking to reestablish a historic field boundary to the northwest of the Site that had been

lost. The landscape is generally not reflective of the key landscape characteristics identified in Published Landscape Character Studies with the surrounding orchard infrastructure preventing the perception of an open landscape and restricting views to and from the marshes to the north and the Kent Downs National Landscape to the south.

- 4.42 The posts and frames within the commercial orchard are an intrinsic part of the character of the orchard, however the height of the infrastructure prevents open views across the landscape and contrasts with the undulating arable fields in the surrounding area. Within the Site itself, an earth bund to the northeast of the Site is a locally detracting feature which is uncharacteristic of the landscape.
- 4.43 With regard to the condition of the habitats on Site, the Biodiversity Net Gain report by Greenspace Ecological Solutions Ltd states that the existing grassland and ruderal/ephemeral planting on Site are of moderate condition, with no condition assessment provided for the cereal crops which are the predominant land cover.
- 4.44 The overall condition of the Site is considered to be **ordinary** (Refer to [Appendix 1 – Table 1](#)).

Associations

- 4.45 There are no known cultural or associations with notable people, events and the arts that contribute to the perception or landscape value of the Site and its surrounding context.

Distinctiveness

- 4.46 The Site does not have a strong sense of place, being part of an arable field within a commercial orchard, nor does it contain any distinctive, rare or unusual features. The wider holding within which the Site lies is representative of a working orchard, characteristic of the local landscape.

Recreational

- 4.47 The recreational value of the Site is limited to its contribution to the setting of footpath NS156 which passes adjacent to the Site's northwestern boundary for approximately 20m.

Perceptual (Scenic Quality)

- 4.48 The scenic quality of the Site is limited due to its setting within a commercial orchard and its relative visual containment. It does not have any strong aesthetic qualities, nor does it contribute to any distinctive views or landmarks.

Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)

- 4.49 The tranquillity of the Site is limited due to its location within a commercial orchard. The level of human activity and the movement of agricultural vehicles would increase during the growing and picking season, diminishing the relative peace and quiet and distant bird song that can be observed on Site in the winter when the orchard is dormant.
- 4.50 The Site is not considered to be wild land.

Functional

- 4.51 The Site forms the northern corner of a larger irregular agricultural field set within a commercial orchard complex.
- 4.52 The Site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and contributes towards the prevention of settlements within the Green Belt merging and the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment.

HBA conclusion on landscape value

- 4.53 On the basis of the analysis above, the Site in its current form is considered to be of **low** value (Refer to [Appendix 1 – Table 2](#)).

5 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Those aspects of the development proposal which are relevant to the assessment of landscape and visual effects are described below.

Description

- 5.2 The proposed development at New Green Farm is for the construction of a controlled atmosphere (CA) storage building, three chiller units and a substation. The CA storage building would be 14m high to the ridge with a footprint of 68.2m x 48.225m. The building would be clad in olive green plastic coated steel sheets and its roof would be clad with light grey corrugated fibre cement sheets, similar to an existing agricultural barn 40m northwest of the Site. The building would be accessed by the existing network of tracks that run throughout the wider holding at New Green Farm, with entrances to the building located on its northern, eastern and western facades. An existing earth bund in the northeastern corner of the Site would be removed to accommodate the construction of the building.
- 5.3 The proposed development would be implemented alongside a landscape strategy, as set out in [Appendix 2 Landscape Strategy](#), which would be implemented on land adjacent to the Site, within the ownership boundary of the application. The landscape strategy seeks to build upon the existing vegetation adjacent to the Site in order to contribute to the network of tree planting throughout the wider holding at New Green Farm and integrate the proposed development into its landscape setting. Native trees and shrubs would be planted within an existing tree line adjacent to the Site's northwestern boundary in order to increase the density and depth of planting and contribute to the visual screening of the development from footpath NS156 as it follows the northwestern boundary of the Site. The tree-line would be extended to the north and east, reducing the proportion of the proposed building visible from footpath NS156 to the north of the Site and supporting its integration into its setting within a working farm.
- 5.4 In order to meet the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, a 0.59ha area of arable field margins pollen and nectar mix would be planted outside of the Site boundary, on land within the ownership of the client and adjacent to the Site.

6 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

- 6.1 The methodology used for this LVA is set out in *Appendix 1*.
- 6.2 Landscape and visual effects are related subject areas but are assessed separately. Landscape effects derive from changes in the natural and built environments which may give rise to changes in their fabric, character and quality and how these are experienced. Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of a development proposal.
- 6.3 Effects can be positive (beneficial), negative (adverse) and are sometimes neutral. This last ranking may most frequently occur where the change is very limited. It may also occur where a visual change may be very discernible but is considered no better or worse than what it replaced having regard to the context of the view.
- 6.4 Effects on landscape character, value, and visual amenity can arise from many causes, for example, perceived changes to:
- the scale, grain and pattern of the landscape, for example by alien or engineered landform or out of context planting or changes to land cover;
 - deterioration or erosion of the rural landscape by the urbanising effects of traffic, hard surfacing, structures and built development, lighting and signs and associated loss of tranquillity; and
 - views or loss of views between surrounding locations and the proposed development.

Assumptions and Limitations

- 6.5 This report is based on assumptions made about the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from the proposed development.
- 6.6 The assessment has considered the landscape and visual effects both upon completion (Day 1), and for residual effects after 15 years when the planting would have established and matured sufficiently to provide mitigation.
- 6.7 Construction effects have not been considered in this LVA. This is because the scheme would not be expected to give rise to any unusual or long term effects.

Landscape Effects

- 6.8 The appraisal of landscape effects can be described as a consideration of the effect in terms of:
- **Sensitivity** of the receptor made up of judgements about:
 - the **value** attached to the receptor; and
 - the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change arising from the specific proposals.
 - **Magnitude of the effect** made up of judgements about:
 - the **size and scale** of the effect, for example is there a complete loss of a particular element of the landscape or a minor change;
 - **geographical extent** of the area that will be affected; and

- the **duration of the effect** and, rarely, its reversibility.

Landscape Value

- 6.9 The landscape value of the Site in its local context has been considered and ranked as being of overall **low** value.

Landscape Susceptibility

- 6.10 Landscape susceptibility is defined by GLVIA3 as:

“The ability of a defined landscape or visual receptors to accommodate the specific Proposed Development without undue negative consequences.”

- 6.11 The landscape of the Site in its local context is judged to have overall low susceptibility (**Appendix 1 Table 3**) to the Proposed Development on account of:
- The location of the site within a large-scale commercial orchard.
 - The generally flat landscape within which the Site lies.
 - The simple landscape pattern of the surrounding landscape.
 - The absence of features providing any time depth.
 - Human influence of the landscape surrounding the Site owing to its function as a commercial orchard which limits any sense of naturalness.
 - There is low intervisibility between the Site and the surrounding landscape due to the height of the frames within the orchard adjacent to the Site.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 6.12 The **low** susceptibility and overall **low** landscape value combine to produce a ranking of **low** landscape sensitivity (refer to **Appendix 1 – Table 8**).

Landscape Effects Assessment

- 6.13 The proposed development would have direct and permanent effects upon the landscape of the Site itself as a result of the introduction of a new built form and the loss of approximately 0.42ha of cropland, grassland and ruderal/ephemeral vegetation. The existing landscape structure, land use and character of the Site and its immediate surroundings as part of a commercial orchard would not change. The proposed development would increase human activity on the Site, albeit the Site is set within a commercial orchard that is frequented by human activity throughout the year therefore the perceived change would be limited. There would be no impact upon relative levels of tranquillity.
- 6.14 The proposed landscape strategy (**Appendix 2 Landscape Strategy**) would reinforce and enhance the landscape structure of the Site and its immediate surroundings by augmenting the existing tree line with evergreen and semi-evergreen species and extending the planting to the north. The tree planting would provide visual screening of the development from footpath NS156 and contribute to the network of tree and hedgerow habitats within the wider holding at New Green Farm.

- 6.15 With regard to BNG, the loss of cropland, grassland and ruderal/ephemeral habitat would be mitigated off-site through the creation of an area of pollen and nectar rich field margin planting to the southwest of the Site on land that is within the applicant's ownership.
- 6.16 The key valued features of the Hoo Peninsula LCA and Higham Arable Farmland LLCA would be unaffected by the proposed development, with the development seeking to enhance the landscape structure of the surrounding area through additional tree planting and retaining agricultural use of the Site. The introduction of the building would, however, be considered as a visually detracting feature in the limited views from which it would be seen. Whilst the scale of the proposed development is large, it is not uncharacteristic in its setting of scattered agricultural developments and would be of a similar finish to adjacent buildings.
- 6.17 The landscape effects would be limited to the Site and its immediate setting and would be permanent. No indirect adverse landscape effects are considered to arise for the wider character of the Hoo Peninsula LCA or the Higham Arable Farmland LLCA.
- 6.18 On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to have a **high** magnitude of landscape effect on the landscape of the Site at Day 1. When combined with the low sensitivity of the landscape, this gives rise to landscape effects assessed as **moderate adverse** importance at Day 1.
- 6.19 At Year 15, the magnitude of landscape effect is considered to reduce to medium as the landscape strategy establishes and contributes to the strengthening of landscape pattern and enhancement of habitat value. When combined with the low sensitivity of the landscape, this results in an importance of landscape effect assessed as **slight adverse** at Year 15.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 6.20 The approach to a visual effects assessment involves a consideration of the effect in terms of;
- **Sensitivity** of the visual receptor (viewer) made up of judgements about:
 - the **susceptibility** to change of the viewer (receptor); and
 - the **value** attached to views.
 - **Magnitude of visual effect:**
 - For example, if there is a complete loss of a particular element or only a minor change, together with a consideration of extent and permanence.
- 6.21 The visual sensitivity should then be considered against the magnitude of effect, to determine the ranking of visual effect that would arise. This has been undertaken for appropriate locations identified as part of the baseline work.
- 6.22 Viewpoint locations and their users (receptors) have been selected to represent a range of potential visual effects which may occur from the proposed development and demonstrate short, middle and long distance views. Short distance views are categorised based on the viewpoint being within 100m of the Site, middle distance views 100-500m, long distance views 500-1500m and very long distance views +1500m.

Susceptibility

- 6.23 The susceptibility to change depends upon receptor occupation or activity and the extent to which attention focuses on views and visual amenity. Typical thresholds for visual susceptibility are provided in Appendix 1, Table 6, and described in relation to the Site below.
- 6.24 In this instance, the most susceptible visual receptors include people engaged in outdoor informal recreation, on public rights of way or permissive routes, whose interest is likely to be focused on the rural landscape and views. These receptors are considered to have **high susceptibility** and usually include not only pedestrians but also cyclists and equestrians where appropriate.
- 6.25 For the purposes of this assessment, workers and visitors to the existing Site have been discounted.
- 6.26 Vehicle travellers, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians on the local roads such as Gravesend Road and Lower Road are considered to have a **medium susceptibility** to visual change. Users of these roads are likely to be travelling for a purpose other than to enjoy the view.
- 6.27 Residents at home are considered to have a **high susceptibility** to visual change but, as is normal, are not specifically considered in this LVA.

Value

- 6.28 Typical values for certain types of view locations are set out in **Appendix 1, Table 5**.
- 6.29 In this instance, no designated or protected views have been identified locally and views have been generally ranked as of **medium value** but those from local rural footpaths have been ranked as **medium high value**.

Sensitivity

- 6.30 Derived from the rankings of susceptibility and value, described above and indicated below, the following are the sensitivities adopted for this assessment (Appendix 1, Table 8):

Pedestrians on public footpaths

- (Susceptibility: H, Value: M-H) **high sensitivity**.

Vehicle travellers, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians on local roads

- (Susceptibility: M, Value: M) **medium sensitivity**.

Effects of completed development on visual amenity

- 6.31 The assessment of the visual effects of the proposed development both at completion and at Year 15 is presented in a tabular form below.

IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL EFFECTS TABLE – DAY 1 & YEAR 15					
Visual Receptor and existing view Refer to Figures for photographs and photo viewpoint locations.	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Year 15	Comment

IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL EFFECTS TABLE – DAY 1 & YEAR 15

Visual Receptor and existing view Refer to Figures for photographs and photo viewpoint locations.	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Year 15	Comment
Users of the Public Rights of Way network					
Footpath NS156 (north of Gravesend Road) HBA Viewpoints 1, 2, 3 and 6 Pedestrians travelling in both directions on footpath NS156 between Gravesend Road and Lower Road. Short distance view: representative viewpoint 1 is 15m from closest part of the Site and representative viewpoint 2 is 30m from closest part of the Site Middle distance view: Representative viewpoint 3 is 245m from closest part of the Site Long distance view: Representative viewpoint 6 is 690m from closest part of the Site	High	Medium adverse	Moderate adverse	Slight adverse effect	At Day 1 Winter the proposed development would be visible from a section of footpath NS156 as it passes the Site and travels north towards Lower Street. Existing young tree planting would offer some filtering as the footpath runs parallel to the Site boundary, albeit the development would still be noticeable. Where the tree planting stops to the north of the Site, direct views into the Site and of the proposed building would be available. From the south, the proposed development would be screened by the existing vegetation associated with the adjacent disused chalk pit. The establishment of the young tree planting on the northwestern boundary of the Site would contribute to the screening of the development at Summer Year 15, with the proposed building only glimpsed through the vegetation. From the north the proposed building would partially screened by the proposed native hedgerow planting, with only the upper portion of the building visible.
Footpath NS156 (south of Gravesend Road) HBA Viewpoint 8 Pedestrians travelling north on footpath NS156 between its junction with footpath	High	No effect	No effect	No effect	The proposed development would be screening from views by intervening vegetation and built form.

IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL EFFECTS TABLE – DAY 1 & YEAR 15

Visual Receptor and existing view Refer to Figures for photographs and photo viewpoint locations.	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Year 15	Comment
NS159 and Gravesend Road. Long distance view: Representative viewpoint 4 is 1100m from closest part of the Site					
Footpath NS171 HBA Viewpoint 5 Pedestrians travelling in both directions along footpath NS171. Middle distance view: Representative viewpoint 5 is 690m from closest part of the Site	High	Low adverse	Slight adverse effect	Minimal adverse effect	At Day 1 winter the roof of the proposed development would be visible from a single point on footpath NS171 where a field gate and access track provide views towards the Site. The roof of the proposed development would be visible over the roofline of the existing agricultural barn adjacent to the Site. By summer Year 15, much of the proposed development would be screened by the orchard planting, with only the top of the roof visible.
Local road users					
Lower Road HBA Viewpoint 4 Pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists and vehicle travellers heading in both directions on Lower Road between its junction with Green Farm Lane and Taylors Lane. Middle distance view: Representative viewpoint 4 is 370m from closest part of the Site	Medium	Low adverse	Slight adverse effect	No effect	The roof of the proposed development would be visible over the top of the orchard infrastructure at Day 1 winter from a short section of Lower Road around the existing access track. At summer Year 15 the proposed development would be screened by the orchard planting.
Gravesend Road HBA Viewpoint 7 Pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists and vehicle travellers heading in both directions on Gravesend Road between its junction with Green Farm Lane and the settlement edge	Medium	No effect	No effect	No effect	The proposed development would be screened by roadside vegetation, with the adjacent planting associated with a disused chalk pit screening views of the development where

IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL EFFECTS TABLE – DAY 1 & YEAR 15

Visual Receptor and existing view Refer to Figures for photographs and photo viewpoint locations.	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Day 1	Importance of Effect Year 15	Comment
associated with Higham. Long distance view: Representative viewpoint 7 is 700m from closest part of the Site					there are gaps in the roadside vegetation.
Taylors Lane HBA Viewpoint 9 Pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists and vehicle travellers heading in both directions on Taylors Lane between Turks Hill and Hill Farm. Long distance view: Representative viewpoint 9 is 780m from closest part of the Site	Medium	Low adverse	Slight effect	No effect	At Day 1 the roof of the proposed building would be visible above the existing topography and orchard infrastructure. By Summer Year 15 the proposed development would be screened by the existing orchard planting.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The appraisal has described the landscape and visual context of the proposed development at New Green Farm which seeks to construct a CA storage building, three chiller units and a substation alongside associated infrastructure and soft landscaping on an area of grassland to the centre of the commercial orchard development at New Green Farm.
- 7.2 The Site is located in the Gravesham Borough, 1.3km to the northwest of Higham and 1.5km northeast of Shorne within a parcel of agricultural land defined by Lower Road to the north and Gravesend Road to the south and lies in an area where the dominant land use is orchard. The Site itself comprises a small, rectangular arable field and an earth bund and is accessed from Lower Road via the network of tracks within the wider New Green Farm holding. The Site and its surroundings are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 7.3 The Site lies in the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area (as assessed in the Landscape Assessment of Kent, 2004) and the Higham Arable Farmland Local Landscape Character Area (as assessed in the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, 2009), a gently undulating landscape of arable use with orchards a common land use, both currently and historically, with landscape management guidance to 'restore and create'. The published landscape character studies place an emphasis on the need to restore and create habitats, including hedgerow and woodland planting, and the need to avoid the introduction of extensive or obtrusive features into the landscape.
- 7.4 The proposal would include the construction of a CA storage building, three chiller units and a substation. The CA storage building would be 14m high with a footprint of 68.2m x 48.225m and would be clad in olive green plastic coated steel sheets with a light grey corrugated fibre cement sheet roof, similar to an existing building adjacent to the Site. The building would be accessed via the existing network of tracks that traverse the wider holding at New Green Farm.
- 7.5 The proposal would be implemented alongside a landscape strategy which seeks to embed the proposal into its landscape setting and screen views from the adjacent footpath NS156 through the augmentation of an existing tree line and the extension of the tree line to the north. In order to meet Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, a 0.59ha area of pollen and nectar rich field margin planting would be created adjacent to the Site on land under the client's ownership.
- 7.6 The LVA finds that:
- 7.7 The proposed development would have direct and permanent effects on the Site's landscape as a result of the loss of 0.42ha of cropland, grassland and ruderal/ephemeral vegetation and the introduction of a large building into the landscape. The overall landscape structure, use and character of the Site and its landscape setting would be unchanged, with the development contributing to the function of the Site as part of a commercial orchard. The landscape effects would be at a Site-level, with no indirect adverse effects on the wider character areas of the Hoo Peninsula LCA and Higham Arable Farmland LLCA.

- 7.8 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would result in a moderate adverse importance of landscape effect at Day 1, reducing to slight adverse by Year 15 as the landscape strategy establishes and reinforces the existing landscape pattern.
- 7.9 The proposed development would be visible from a limited number of publicly accessible locations in the surrounding area, given the vegetation cover, topography and agricultural infrastructure present within the surrounding landscape. From footpath NS156 which travels between Gravesham Road and Lower Road, briefly following the Site's boundary, views of the proposed development would be available at Day 1 winter when travelling in both directions along the footpath as it runs adjacent to the Site and continues north towards Lower Road, resulting in a moderate adverse importance of effect. As the tree and shrub planting establishes, views into the Site from the footpath would be screened, with only the roof of the proposed development visible over the top of the planting at Summer Year 15, reducing the importance of effect to slight adverse.
- 7.10 From footpath NS171 the Site would be visible from a single viewpoint where a field gate and access track provide direct views towards the Site. The roof of the proposed development would be visible over the roofline of an existing agricultural building, resulting in a slight adverse importance of effect at Day 1 winter. By summer year 15, the proposed development would be screened by the adjacent orchard planting, with only parts of the roof glimpsed over the vegetation. This would reduce the importance of effect to minimal adverse. From Lower Road to the north of the Site and Taylors Lane to the east of the Site, the roof of the proposed development would be glimpsed at Day 1 winter over the existing orchard infrastructure. At summer year 15 views of the proposed development from local roads would be screened by vegetation associated with the adjacent orchard, resulting in no importance of visual effect.
- 7.11 The proposed development introduces built form into a part of the agricultural landscape that is not pristine, functioning as a commercial orchard with built form and planting frames frequent. Whilst the scale of the building is large, it is proportional to its function and proposed to be sited where existing vegetation, built form and topography provides a degree of screening of the proposed development from the wider landscape. The adverse landscape effects resulting from the proposed development would be very localised and limited to the Site itself. The existing landscape pattern, structure and character of the Hoo Peninsula LCA and LLCA Higham Arable Farmland would be maintained, with the proposed landscape strategy contributing to the creation of habitats and reducing the visual impact of the proposed development.