

Landscape Consultation Response

Comments by: Mark Goodwin CMLI, Senior Landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council.

Date: 01.04.2026.

Application ref: **PL/2026/00367** - Outline planning permission: (All matters reserved, except for means of access).

Site Address: **Land East of Calne Road, Lyneham**

Proposal: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for access) for up to 200 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), provision of public open space, and associated infrastructure.

Background

This is an outline planning application with all matters of final layout, scale, appearance and landscaping, reserved for subsequent detailed planning approval/s, except for the means of vehicular access into the site, which is proposed to be taken from Calne Road (opposite Freegrove Drive) which runs parallel with the western edge of the application site.

This landscape consultation response considers the submitted documents and plans included on this councils planning web site up to and including the date of this consultation response, where relevant to the consideration of landscape and visual matters.

Pre-application planning advice was sought by the applicant under planning application reference ENQ/2025/01805. The Illustrative Masterplan layout accompanying this outline planning application is essentially the same submitted for the pre application enquiry.

Relevant Policy and guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.

- Section 12 - Achieving well designed places.
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Development Plan

Wiltshire Core Strategy

- Core policy 51: Landscape (CP51).
- Core policy 52: Green Infrastructure (CP52).
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (CP57).
 - Wiltshire Design Guide – Wiltshire Council Supplementary Planning Document adopted 25th March 2024 (WDG)

Lyneham and Bradenstoke Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020 to 2030 (LBNDP)
(Made October 2021).

- Policy 2: Design.
- Policy 6: Local Green Spaces.
- Policy 7: Safe and sustainable travel.

North Wiltshire District Local Plan (2006 / 2011) – Saved Policies

- NE14: Trees, site features and control of new developments.

Statutory legislation

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended)

- Section 85: Duty to seek to further the statutory purpose of National Landscapes.

Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023

- Section 245: Protected landscapes.

Comments/observations

The site and its context.

The site lies to the southeast of the settlement of Lyneham. Lyneham lies on the elevated plateaux of the 'Limestone Ridge' landscape character type¹, which is a belt of Coral Rag formation limestone hills that extend on a northeasterly alignment from Chippenham/Calne in the south to Swindon in the north emerging from the lower clay vale and rolling clay lowland areas located each side.

The site comprises an existing pastoral field unit (northern part of site) and the substantial part of a second field unit (southern part of site) located on the south eastern plateaux of the Limestone Ridge which overlooks and adjoins the lower rolling clay lowland which separates the Limestone ridge from the elevated west facing scarp slopes of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB) located circa 3.5km from the site. The northern part of the site is largely enclosed from wider landscape view by existing settlement and urban uses located north and west and screened from the east by MOD storage hangers and screening woodland that wraps around the MOD site and by a mature woodland strip that lines the eastern edge of a water treatment works, located to the northeast of the site. The southern part of the site is more visually exposed from the east but is also largely visually contained from the north and west by intervening settlement and blocks of local woodland and treelines.

To the west occupying the majority of the Lyneham upper plateaux lies the MOD Lyneham site and former RAF airfield, now largely re-purposed as a large scale operational solar farm and MOD training facility. MOD housing areas lie to the west of the site beyond Calne Road which links Lyneham to Calne.

The highest part of the site lies at 126m AOD in the northwest corner with a gentle east falling/facing slope of around 3-4m across the main application site area.

¹ Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – Landuse consultants (2005).

North Wessex Downs (AONB) National Landscape

The site does not fall within a local or national landscape designation but does sit on the elevated upper east facing gentle slope / upper plateau area of the Limestone Ridge which fronts the 'North Wessex Downs National Landscape', formerly known and referred to as the 'North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB). The site lies circa 3.5km from the western edge of the National Landscape Designation at the nearest point to the site. Long distance 3.5km views of parts of the site and the aircraft hangers to the north of the site are possible from certain longer vantage points, viewed over and across the separating lower clay vale agricultural landscape where gaps exist in intervening strips and blocks of woodland present along the limestone ridge (i.e. lining the watercourse to the north of the MOD site leading to the water treatment works and east of the site below Freegrove Farm) and gaps between woodland present along the rising scarp slopes of the National Landscape.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)

The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the outline scheme, prepared by Stephenson Halliday (Dec 2025). The Appraisal evaluates the resulting landscape and visual effects considered likely to arise from a development of this proposed nature and scale at this site location.

A summary of the Landscape and visual effects considered likely to arise from the proposed scheme are included at Section 4.7 of this report, extracted below, as follows:

"Summary of Landscape Effects

*4.7.4 Physical effects would be contained within the Site boundary. Visual and perceptual effects on the landscape character diminish with increasing distance from the Site on the host landscape receptor. The proposed mitigation planting would be predominantly native and of local provenance so as to reflect the localised landscape character. In terms of landscape effects on the identified landscape receptor, (LCA 8A: Swindon – Lyneham Limestone Ridge), these range from **Moderate / Minor Adverse to Negligible Adverse**.*

*4.7.5 **Moderate / Minor Adverse** effects are expected for the Site and its immediate setting during the construction, Year 1 and Year 15 operation stages of the Proposed Development, due to the scale of change over the majority of the Site. However, away from the Site within the wider landscape of LCA 8A, the long-term effects are considered to be **Negligible Adverse** due to the limited interaction that the wider LCA would have with the Proposed Development."*

"Summary of Visual Effects

*4.7. 6 The greatest overall visual effects are on those receptors within closest proximity to the Proposed Development, primarily users of PRoW Lyne 27 and residential receptors on the settlement edge of Lyneham. For the construction stage, these receptors would experience **Moderate Adverse** effects due to the scale of change and their proximity to the Site. These effects are considered to reduce to **Moderate / Minor Adverse** once the proposed mitigation has established by Year 15 of operation.*

*4.7.7 Views from the wider settlement of Lyneham are assessed as **Minor / Negligible Neutral** by Year 15 of operation due to the good degree of containment they have from the Site. Receptors using PRoW Lyne 10 would experience **Moderate / Minor Adverse** effects during construction and would remain at **Moderate / Minor Adverse by Year 15**.*

4.7.8 Receptors within Goatacre would be afforded a good degree of containment from the Proposed Development and as such, views from the settlement would be highly limited. Effects at the **construction and Year 1 of operation** stages are assessed as **Minor Adverse, reducing to Minor / Negligible Adverse** by Year 15.

4.7.9 Views for receptors within the open countryside to the south and south east would also be highly limited. **Construction** stage effects are assessed as **Minor Adverse, reducing to Minor / Negligible Adverse at both Year 1 and Year 15 of operation.**”

The application site has a visual relationship and connection with the lower-level landscape ‘Rolling Clay Lowland’ character type and clear intervisibility with the ‘Low Chalk Plain and Scarp’ character type. The assessment has not considered these landscape character types or relationships with the host (site) landscape character Type/Area.

I have read the LVA, and its supporting figures/maps and photography and appended information. A ‘landscape sensitivity assessment’ is included at Appendix 2. I don’t agree with the assessors’ final judgements in relation to ‘value’ or ‘susceptibility’ which combine to inform the overall judgement of ‘**sensitivity**’ of the site and receiving landscape as **low** for the nature and scale of development being proposed here. I believe that overall sensitivity should be considered ‘**moderate**’, largely due to the site’s location on the elevated upper slopes/plateaux area of the Limestone Ridge character type, which provides the backdrop to views and the visual setting from the elevated scarp slopes, and white Horse Trail viewed from within North Wessex Downs National Landscape. This could influence slightly the assessment scores for certain receptors.

The assessment should have considered the potential for resulting effects upon the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, located to the southeast of the site on the opposite side of the valley at circa 3.5km.

North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB)

At section 3.4 of the LVA, landscape designations potentially impacted by the development are evaluated. In relation to the potential for effects to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape it states...

“It is acknowledged that there could potentially be some intervisibility between the Proposed Development and the National Landscape. However, due to the intervening distance, it is considered that any views would be limited to glimpses, seen in the context of the established settlement and in a very small proportion of the overall aspect. The magnitude of effects on views from the North Wessex Downs National Landscape would be no greater than negligible and as such, are not assessed in detail.”

The boundary of the National Landscape is located approx. 3.5km to the southeast of the application site. The southeastern half of the site, and any development proposed within it shares intervisibility with the western elevated scarp slopes of the NL opposite the site, broadly extending between Clevancy and Clyffe Pypard. The site and the proposed development will be viewed as a small visual component in wide panoramic views where these are achievable between blocks of woodland. It will be important to ensure that any new built development inserted into this application site is characteristic and/or recessive in form and colour, that lighting effects are minimised as far as possible, and that potential new urbanising skyline

effects are avoided within any subsequent detailed Reserved matters development proposal. The southeastern boundaries and corner of the application land will require structured landscape planting to mitigate the effects of introducing a potentially harsh new elevated visible development edge / corner drawing visual attention from available eastern viewpoints including those located at further distance from within the North Wessex Downs NL/AONB designation.

The site is located on the southeastern plateaux area of the limestone ridge. The limestone part registers as an elevated mid-range back drop setting in available views out from the national landscape over the lower clay vale. The Illustrative masterplan does show intent for new tree planting along the sites eastern and southern boundaries which is important, as I would view this to be essential visual mitigation to help limit the effects of a new suburban development introduced on the upper exposed plateaux edge. In my opinion the southern corner and eastern edge of the site should be strengthened with further woodland / tree planting, to increase the screening/filtering of the new development edge, indicatively shown on the illustrative masterplan.

The currently submitted outline parameter plan may allow sufficient space for this strengthened planting but will be dependent on the final land take requirements for surface water drainage infrastructure. Bearing this in mind the final layout and shape of the design of SUDs features including the SW attenuation basin could and should illustrate the intent to accommodate further tree planting around its peripheries. Tree planting here could also serve to provide borrowed street tree amenity for the southernmost and easternmost new streets.

Total screening is not required in my opinion, Lyneham, similar to Royal Wootton Bassett is a settlement that originates as a hilltop settlement located on the Limestone Ridge with strong visual associations with lower clay vale countryside and visual associations across the separating valley to the western edge and rising scarp slopes of the NWD's NL.

In this regard some visual associations from areas of POS and new public streets would serve to add value to the sense of place for the new community, but strong tree canopy cover is also recommended to establish foreground visual filtering to a new elevated urban settlement edge and to recreate the strong vegetated boundary that currently runs along the edge of Calne Road, and which effectively filters views of the Melsome Road housing area (located to the west of the site) and which provides a wooded skyline function in views from the east and helps embed elevated urban areas into the wider landscape.

Conclusion

The site is not allocated in the Development Plan or identified as a preferred site in the emerging draft Local Plan or being promoted by the applicant for development as a rural 'exception' site. The proposal does not accord with the LBNP requirement for residential development to be of 10 dwellings or less within the village (i.e. not 'major development' as defined in the NPPF). The fundamental consideration of the principle of the proposed development on this site including any local need, in relation to national and local Planning Policy is a planning matter separate to these landscape considerations.

If the LPA is receptive to the general principle of accommodating major development at this application site, then the proposed urban development of this site will result in some adverse landscape and visual effects.

The change to the existing character of the site itself, and the loss of existing open elevated views across it from Calne Road, located to the west of the site, and Footpath LYNE27, offset a short distance from the sites southern boundary are identified as receptors that will experience the greatest levels of adverse permanent change effects arising from the urban development of this site.

Residual visual effects will diminish as screening and filtering mitigation planting along the sites eastern and southern boundaries begin to screen and filter the new development's exposed edges.

The presence of existing MOD hangers to the north and northeast of the site and areas of existing woodland growing along the watercourse to the north of the MOD site and along the eastern edge of the water treatment works, would effectively screen and contain wider views of the introduced new development located in the northern parts of the site, viewed from the north and east. Views from public receptors located to the immediate south, north and west of the site, will experience some visual change effects but these are unlikely to register as significantly adverse effects in my opinion.

The lack of existing intervening-built form to the southeast of the site and gaps in intervening woodland blocks beyond the site to the east make the southern part of the site more visually sensitive from wider eastern vantage points.

The currently open public views and longer visual association with the western edge of the North Wessex Down's National Landscape (AONB) gained from Calne Road will be lost for users as they approach and pass the site, screened by the introduced new intervening-built development and new eastern site boundary mitigation planting.

Existing long distance visual associations with the National Landscape will remain for users of public footpath LYNE 27 (south of the site) viewed beyond the southeastern corner of the development site, and from LYNE 10 located a short distance to the east of the site. Some new framed views could be possible to create from within areas of proposed perimeter POS, and from the new public streets within the proposed development towards the NL.

In my opinion most resulting effects will be limited and localised to the site itself and its immediate context with some limited potential for longer distance intervisibility with the NWD's NL. These limited longer range visual effects could be acceptably mitigated in my opinion through eastern and southern site boundary landscape treatments.

End.