Land South of A507, West of A10 Buntingford
Landscape Summary Proof of Evidence

of Natasha Jones BA(Hons) BLA CMLI

LPA Planning Application Ref: 3/24/1255/OUT

PINS Ref: 6009644

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Prepared for:
Hallam Land Management

Prepared by:
Stantec

Project Number:
331610261

Appeal against the Refusal of Outline Permission for:

Land North Of A507, West Of A10 Buntingford: employment land (flexible use B2, B8, E(c), and E(g)), informal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from A507, with all matters reserved except for access.

Landscape Proof of Evidence of Natasha Jones, Director of Landscape Architecture at Stantec.

LPA Planning Reference: 3/24/1255/OUT

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Prepared on behalf of Hallam Land Management.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 My name is Natasha Jones, and I am a Director of Landscape Architecture at Stantec UK Limited. I have been Director since 2021 and am a leader of the UK Landscape Architecture team. I joined Stantec in 2013. Prior to that, I was Associate Director at Cooper Partnership Limited.

1.1.2 I hold a Bachelor of Arts with Honours degree in Landscape Design and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Post-graduate degree, both from Manchester Metropolitan University. I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) since 1998.

1.1.3 I have over 27 years' post-chartership professional experience in landscape planning, landscape architecture and environmental matters. I have provided professional advice on townscape, landscape and visual impact assessment and for the strategic design, green infrastructure and landscape strategies of a wide variety of developments throughout the UK. These include small and strategic-scale residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, infrastructure, energy and renewable energy, and recreation proposals for local authorities, public and private companies. I have dealt with sites within and adjacent to National Parks, National Landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Strategic and Local Gaps and other local landscape designations. My professional experience includes preparing evidence and acting as an expert witness on landscape matters at public inquiries, Development Consent Order (DCO) examinations, and local plan hearings.

1.1.4 I am familiar with the Appeal Site and its surroundings having overseen the production of the landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) and landscape strategy associated with the Proposed Development. I most recently visited the Appeal Site on 19th May 2026.

1.1.5 I was instructed by Hallam Land Management to fill the role of landscape expert witness (the Appellants) in 2025. All conclusions are my own and based on my own professional opinion and experience.

1.1.6 I was the landscape expert witness for the Appellant at the appeal for residential development at Land North of A507, West of A10, Buntingford (Appeal Reference 6008238). The appeal was allowed as set out in the Appeal Decision CD 7.1.

1.1.7 Since the Appeal Decision CD 7.1 was issued on 24th September 2026, in relation to residential development at Land North of A507, West of A10, Buntingford (Appeal Reference 6008238), the Council has confirmed that in applying the new presumption in favour of sustainable development in the NPPF 2026 (Policies S3 and S5), it now considers the Proposed Development to constitute sustainable development and the remaining harm to landscape character and appearance does not substantially outweigh the benefits of the Proposed Development, such that the Council's view is that planning permission should be granted for the Appeal Scheme. The Council has also confirmed that it will not be submitting further evidence or statements seeking to defend the second Reason for Refusal, which is the landscape RfR.

1.1.8 The evidence that I have prepared and provide for this Inquiry in this Proof of Evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution, the Landscape Institute, irrespective of by whom I am instructed. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

2 Summary

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 In my proof, I review the historic maps, tracing Buntingford's growth from an original ribbon settlement along Ermine Street to a clustered settlement pattern. My key points include:

- Early maps show small fields behind settlement and ribbon development along the river and main road.
- Post-war and late 20th Century housing expanded the town to the west, east, and south, altering the settlement pattern to a cluster form. The Proposed Development would be a continuation of the growth of that cluster settlement pattern.
- The role of the A10 road opened in 1987 was for the purpose of diverting traffic out of the congested town centre, rather than acting as a boundary for development.
- I have shown that the alignment of the A10 does not respond to landform or historic landscape pattern, and that its purpose as a development-limiting boundary is a false construct.

2.1.2 I have analysed the relationship between the Appeal Site and Proposed Development and LCA 141 Cherry Green Arable Plateau. My key points are:

- LCA 141 is described as a large-scale, elevated plateau landscape, which is not rare or highly distinctive within the county.
- The part of LCA 141 near to the A507 and A10, within which the Appeal Site is located, is noted to have less of a quiet and remote feel due to the existing urban influences. The proposed built form would be concentrated in the central and eastern parts of the Appeal Site, with the western part proposed as country park open space.
- There is a greater extent of LCA 141 area which would not be subject to the theoretical visibility of the development, than the portion of LCA 141 which would have theoretical visibility.

- The urbanising effect of the Proposed Development upon LCA 141 would be limited and would not fundamentally alter or redefine the key characteristics of LCA 141 or affect the integrity of the distinctive features of LCA 141.

2.1.3 In my proof, I set out a summary of landscape matters contained in Appeal Decision CD 7.1, which are pertinent to the Appeal Site and Proposed Development, followed by the reasonings for the findings of the assessment of landscape effects upon LCA 141 and the negative and positive effects that would arise. I also discuss the Rib valley landscape cell, defined by a series of landform spurs that wrap around and contain the valley floor of the River Rib, the associated valley slopes and Buntingford. My key points are:

- The Appeal Site is situated within the Rib valley landscape cell, and the Proposed Development would be contained within it, avoiding far-reaching impacts on the wider rural landscape and landscape character.

- The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (BCANP) (CD 5.2) emphasises the importance of maintaining the town's valley setting and limiting development on higher ground, with Appendix 1 of the BCANP (CD 5.2) . I consider that the Proposed Development would be within the valley setting as it is within the Rib valley landscape cell.

2.1.4 In my proof, I describe the Rib valley landscape cell and that the Appeal Site is located on valley slopes below the western and northern spurs of landform in LCA 141. Adjacent LCAs are 142 High Rib Valley and 143 Wyddial Plateau; both of which are identified as Moderate condition, whereas LCA 141 is identified as being of Poor condition.

2.1.5 In relation to NPPF 2026 policy N2 (1a), I consider that the Appeal Site does not warrant a degree of protection at a high level because the Appeal Site does not lie within a Protected Landscape designation or local landscape designation

2.1.6 It is my opinion that Proposed Development would be physically well-related to the settlement of Buntingford and would be a settlement extension which is in keeping with the cluster pattern of settlement of Buntingford that has evolved. From a townscape perspective, the A10 would be perceived as a road within the extended settlement area. New built form of the Proposed

Development would be adjacent to the existing urban area and consented developments that are within a small part of the northeastern area of LCA 141, and located where there is existing urban influence upon LCA 141. LCA 141 is described as a large-scale character area that is not rare or distinctive. Therefore, I consider the Proposed Development's urbanising effect on LCA 141 to be limited and not to alter key characteristics of the LCA.

2.1.7 The Proposed Development would be contained within the Rib valley landscape cell, which includes the settlement of Buntingford. I consider that sensitively designed new, built form within the Rib valley landscape cell is an appropriate approach to avoid far-reaching impacts on the wider rural landscape and landscape character. I also consider that mitigation planting would soften the appearance of new built form, over time. I conclude the level of adverse harm to the landscape would be limited and localised.