

Townscape Character

The Oadby and Wigston Landscape Character Assessment (2005) considers the Urban Landscape Character of Oadby (in part 3 of the document). The site lies on the southern edge of the “Later Estates South - O (iv)” Character Area and across the A6 from the “Early Estates North - O (iii) Character Area.

However, the document notes that there is generally a lack of local distinctiveness in the surrounding urban areas and that “any development on this (the urban fringe) would not have to reflect the existing character of the urban area but could develop a new local distinctiveness” (para. 3.3.60).

This is further reinforced within Borough Wide Urban Character Objective BW/7, which states in para. 6.6.31.

“The lack of distinctive character of the majority of the urban landscape character areas along the urban fringe provides an opportunity to develop a new character for new development extending the urban limits. Character should be driven by design considerations arising from: site specific conditions, the need to integrate into the urban fringe, increasing residential densities, providing for community safety and increasing bio-diversity.”

With this in mind, it is implied that any proposed development on the site should look to establish its own distinctive character rather than reproduce the existing character of the surrounding urban edge. It suggests that, instead new development should look to the more traditional local vernacular style embodied by a limited number of buildings that are mainly concentrated in the town centre.

Some of the main features of the traditional local vernacular style include:

- strong orange/red brick colour;
- slate or orange/red tile pitched roofs;
- long fronted buildings with focus on the horizontal, narrow in depth and often of three storeys;
- raised brick detailing and subtle ‘chess board’ patterning; render;
- timber work e.g. porches; and
- houses grouped around a ‘yard’.

Within the urban fringe, the document also recommends that new development should include green space or an urban space that provides a focus for the development.

FIGURE 6: TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER



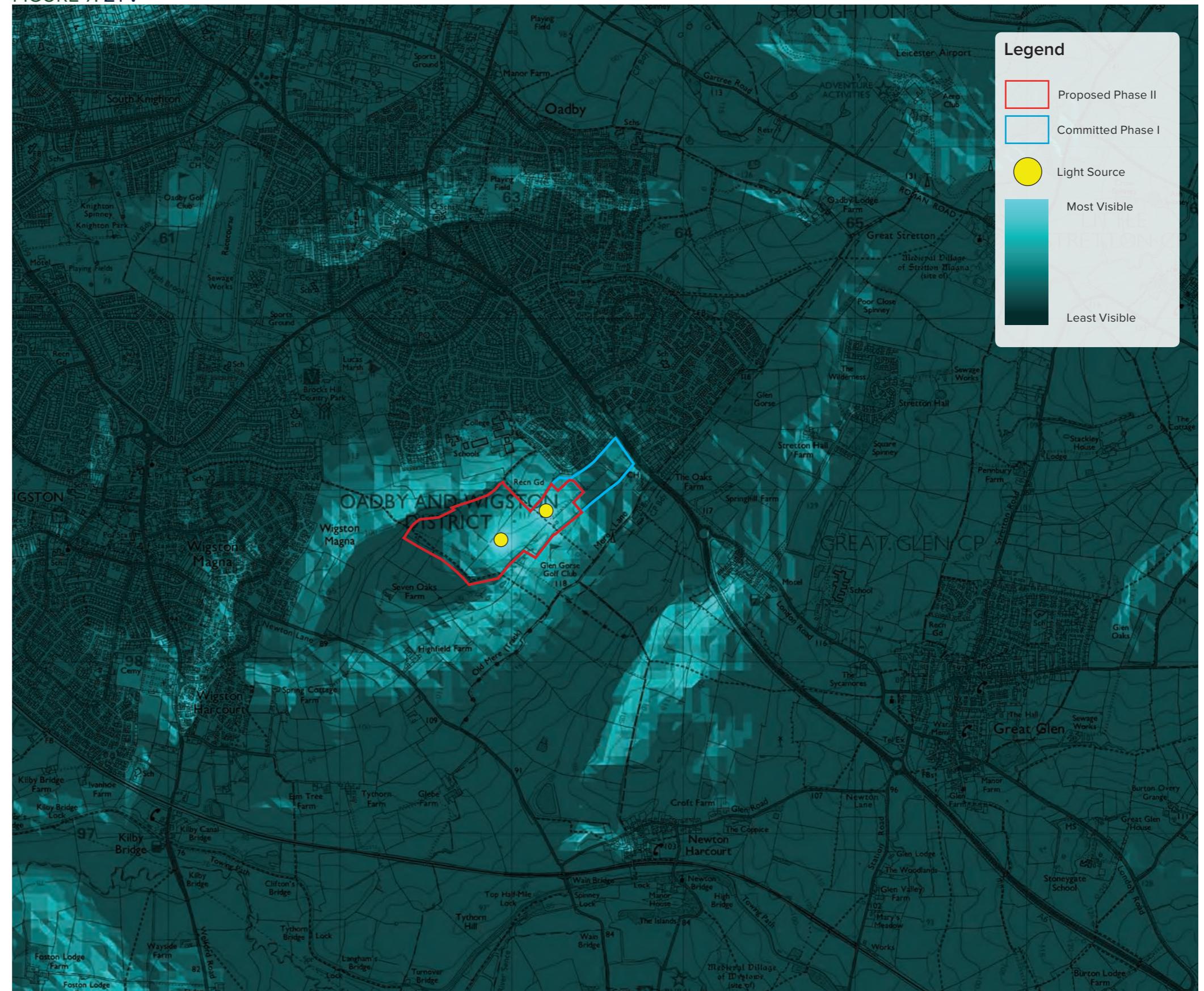
Visual Amenity

The visual amenity of the site and its surroundings has been appraised through the preparation of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) that indicates the extent of visibility of the Phase II site and an appraisal of illustrative views.

The ZTV is presented at Figure 7. Notably, it does not take into account screening provided by vegetation or buildings, and simply reflects the topography of the study area, but has been verified through fieldwork. The lighter areas represent locations where there would be a potential view of the site on that basis with the darker areas representing those areas where there would not.

Views of the site are extremely well contained by the existing urban area of Oadby to the north. Further visual containment will be provided by the imminent Phase I development to the north east. To the south and east, the topography and vegetation, notably that associated with the golf course, effectively limit views to the immediate surrounds and public footpaths that cross the site. The southern western field of the Phase II site is more visible to the west on the east facing valley side. However those views are significantly restricted by the topography and existing vegetation structure in the area.

FIGURE 7: ZTV



North

The committed Phase I will screen views of the site from Glen Road and the majority of the nearby residential properties in Coombe Rise.

The existing urban area exerts a prominent urban influence in views from Coombe Park, and Illustrative **View 1** also highlights the high degree of visual containment provided by the pavilion and the hedgerow trees around the periphery. There could be limited glimpsed views of any development on the Phase II site through gaps in the trees, but a further buffer can be provided through public open space provision and landscaping, notably along the public footpath corridor to the south west.

East

There are no views of the site available from Mere Lane and the bridleway that runs along it. Indeed, the lane is for the most part lined by mature vegetation that effectively directs views along its alignment. Moreover, as the Phase I appeal Inspector highlighted, “*the golf course would remain as a significant physical and visual separation between Mere Lane and the new development, which would minimise the apparent encroachment of the built up area into the largely rural ambience of the lane.*” That is evident in Illustrative **Views 4, 6 & 7**.

Even where the public footpaths cross the golf course towards the Phase II site, views of the site are effectively screened by the local topography and vegetation on the golf course. Once the footpaths enter the site the views open up, but they are still generally contained by the local ridgeline that runs north east to south west through the site, and/or the hedgerows and tree belts within and around the site’s boundaries.

South

The ZTV indicates that more distant views are potentially available from Newton Harcourt and the nearby public rights of way to the south east, and Newton Lane to the south. However, from these locations the site is entirely screened by the topography and layering of the intervening vegetation structure, notably that associated with Mere Lane and the golf course (as illustrated in **View 3** from a public footpath close to Newton Harcourt).

West

The majority of the edge of Wigston Magna is lined with mature vegetation that effectively restricts any views towards the site. Open views of the countryside are available from the permissive path along the edge of the urban area to the Brocks Hill Country Park, and from the public footpath that leaves the urban area and crosses the valley to pass along the southern site boundary.

However, the local topography and the layering of the trees and hedgerows very much restricts views of the site itself (Illustrative **View 8**). The south western field does become more prominent in views as the footpath descends into the valley (Illustrative **Views 9 & 10**), but existing urban elements in Oadby are already prominent in those views, and the site itself is framed by the landscape structure. Moreover, the proposed location of the development areas within the Phase II site, reinstatement of hedgerows, and supplementary tree planting, as set out in the emerging Masterplan, will screen and filter views of the proposed development and ensure that any adverse impacts are effectively mitigated.

Within the Site

The northern part of the Phase II site is extremely well contained by the existing urban area and existing landscape framework associated with Coombe Park, the golf course and the tree belt in the centre of the site. The sense of containment will be further enhanced once the Phase I development has been built out (Illustrative **View 2**).

Wider views to the south are available from the public footpath that passes through the centre of the Phase II site, notably from the top of the low ridgeline close to Coombe Park. Even there, however, the views are still contained by the golf course and the layering of the well treed hedgerows along the site’s boundaries and in the wider surrounding area (Illustrative **Views 13 & 14**).

Looking north from the footpath that runs along the southern site boundary, a number of vegetated field boundaries combine with the topography to screen much of the wider site and edge of Oadby from view. However, the influence of the settlement edge to the north, particularly the school buildings that sit on top of the slope, becomes more pronounced moving further west (Illustrative **View 11**).

Summary

No views have been identified that should be specifically retained or protected. Indeed, none of the views of the site available from public vantage points in the surrounding area are considered particularly sensitive, notably because existing housing or other urban elements are commonly visible, albeit often set amongst the existing vegetation structure.

A comprehensive landscaping scheme that retains the existing landscape structure and supplements it with new hedgerows and tree planting set within public open space will provide an appropriate setting for the proposed development. This will help to assimilate it into the landscape and screen and/or filter what limited views there would be of the development from public vantage points in the surrounding countryside.

The treatment (density, orientation, height and materials) of the fringes of the development will also be important to ensure it can be successfully integrated into the existing settlement edge. The retention of existing vegetation, supplemented with additional tree planting, will provide further softening of the development when viewed from the surrounding area.



1

View from Coombe Park



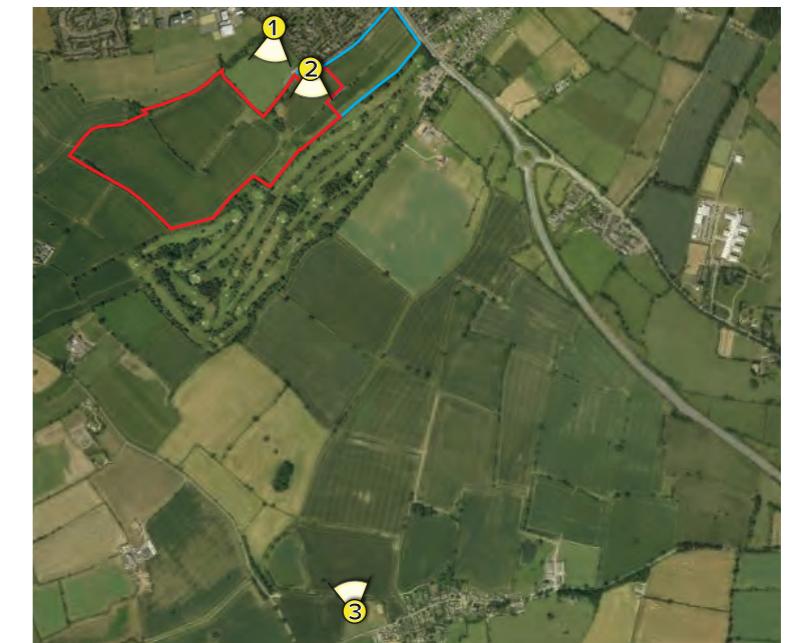
2

View of northern part of site close to Phase I Sports Provision



3

View from Newton Harcourt





4
View from golf course



5
View as public footpath enters site



6
View from golf course



7
View of site boundary from golf course





8
View from edge of Wigston Magna



9
View from public footpath



10
View from public footpath approaching site



11
View from public footpath in site



12
View from public footpath in site



13
View towards golf course



14
View towards Wigston Magna (screened)

