

# Landscape & Visual Technical Note

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Project: Land at Whitford Road, Bromsgrove (5167)

May 2020

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd have been instructed by Catesby Estates plc to review the submitted Landscape and Visual Chapter (LVC) for the development at Whitford Road, Bromsgrove.
- 1.2. In light of the age of the submitted LVC it has been deemed appropriate to review this material to ensure that a no significant changes have occurred since the original submission. While there are not any anticipated changes to the application, there is a need to ensure that the application submission is up-to-date. Therefore this Technical Note carries out a review of the below;
  - Further site visit and updated Photo Record contained within Appendix 14.2 of the ES.
  - Updates to any superseded or out of date published planning policy or documentation; and
  - A review of the submitted LVC and LVIA assessment.

## 2 Baseline Assessment

The application site lies on the western edge of Bromsgrove, adjacent to the Fox Lane/ Whitford Road corridor. The Assessment Site comprises of 23.4 ha and currently comprises of grassland and pasture divided into two land parcels by an existing hedgerow which bisects the northern portion of the Assessment Site. Figure 14.1 Site & Setting, illustrates the Assessment Site within its context.

### National Policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 2.1. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019. The document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The document places an emphasis on the promotion of sustainable growth whilst also protecting the environment.
- 2.2. Paragraph 7 states that: ***"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development."***

2.3. Paragraph 8 states that: ***“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (...)” including an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve 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 11 states that: ***“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.***

***For plan-making this means that:***

- a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;***
- b) strategic plans should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other development, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:***
  - I. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or***
  - II. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.***

***For decision-taking this means:***

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or***
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:***
  - I. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or***
  - II. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”***

2.5. The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, as set out in paragraph 124.

2.6. Paragraph 98 considers the importance of public rights of way, their protection and enhancement.

2.7. Design is dealt with in Chapter 12 which sets out the objectives for achieving “well-designed places”. Para 127 states that: ***“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 (such as increased densities);***
- 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;***
- e) Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and***
- f) Create spaces that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and wellbeing with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder and fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.***

2.8. Chapter 15 deals with the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. In particular para 170 states 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); and***
- 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.***

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 2019

2.9. Those categories within the PPG that are of relevance to landscape and visual matters in relation to this site are set out below.

Design: Process and Tools

2.10. The PPG states that well-designed places can be achieved by taking a pro-active and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process. The guidance sets out processes and tools that can be used through the planning system. The guidance is to be read alongside the National Design Guide.

- 2.11. As set out in paragraph 130 of the NPPF, permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.

National Design Guide

- 2.12. The importance of design is a key focus within the guide as is the local and wider context and character of the site.

Green Infrastructure

- 2.13. The NPPG highlights the multifaceted benefits delivered through Green Infrastructure and recognises how it can be used to reinforce and enhance local landscape character and contribute to a sense of place.

Landscape

- 2.14. Finally, the NPPG refers to the NPPF and the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the provision of strategic policies to provide the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. Adverse landscape impacts are to be avoided and mitigation measures employed where necessary.

- 2.15. The NPPF has been of material consideration as part of the previous assessment of the site and its setting, and the proposals are considered to be in line with the updated guidance and principles contained within the NPPF and PPG 2019.

Local Policy – Bromsgrove District Plan Adopted 2017 (2011-2030)

- 2.16. The Local Plan provides the spatial framework for guiding development and change across the District for the period up to 2036. The Plan establishes the key principles which will guide the location, use and form of new development and alongside other Development Plan Documents; these will aid the determination of planning applications. The Policies Maps depict land allocations and other land use designations and the policy reference is detailed on the Policies Maps for ease of cross reference with the Local Plan.

- 2.17. Of relevance are BDP 21 Natural Environment and BDP 24 Green Infrastructure.

Both national and local policy guidance seeks to ensure that proposed development should promote good design which responds to the character of the setting ensuring that the proposals are integrated within their context.

Landscape Character

- 2.18. There has been no update to either the national or local landscape character assessments and therefore these remain as stated within the Landscape and Visual Chapter. In terms of the wider landscape character, within the Natural England National Character Assessment, the site is located within the Arden Character Area (NCA97). At a more local level the Worcestershire County Council's published Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance, the site sits within both the Character Area 10.6 Principal Settled Farmlands and Character Area 10.7 Principle Timbered Farmlands.

- 2.19. On review of the updated national and local planning policy, and the existing published landscape character assessment it is considered that there would be no increase in value and / or sensitivity of the site. Aspect prepared a character assessment of the Assessment Site and its immediate setting. Aspects assessment has identified 3 separate character areas: Urban, Urban Fringe and the Wider Rural Setting. These character areas are outlined below and illustrated on Figure 14.4 Landscape Character Analysis within APPENDIX 14.1.
- 2.20. Both the Urban and Urban fringe remain on a low sensitivity whilst the Wider rural setting remains as medium locally to medium / high within the wider westerly areas.

#### The Visual Environment

- 2.21. To provide a robust review of the previous assessment a further more recent site visit has been undertaken, in May 2020, to retake these views and provide an updated Photographic Record of the site and the environment in which it is located - these are appended to this briefing note – refer enclosure 1.

### **3 Review of Landscape and Visual Effects**

#### **Landscape Effects**

- 3.1. There has been no change to the development proposals with the photographic record demonstrating that there has been no change to the receiving landscape character or visual environment. The LVC assessments states that within the context of the national character assessment, the proposals represent a highly localised development that will not adversely affect the characteristics of the larger scale landscape character areas. The Arden Character Area NCA is influenced by a number of different components and the proposals, given their context to the existing urban fringe character, will not introduce alien components into the localised setting or adversely affect the overall character of the receiving regional landscape character area.
- 3.2. In terms of the effect of the proposals upon the landscape character areas identified within the two character areas 10.6 and 10.7, it is considered that the proposals will give rise to a low magnitude of change and as such the significance of the effect will be Minor / Negligible. It is considered that the effect will be Negligible at Year One and as the proposed landscape treatment matures, it is considered that the effect will remain Negligible.
- 3.3. In terms of the effect of the proposals upon the three Aspect character It is considered that the proposals will result in a Minor / Negligible significance of the effect during construction reducing to Negligible. In relation to the Urban Fringe at construction the effects will be Moderate / Minor reducing to Minor at Year 10. The Wider Rural setting will remain as Minor.
- 3.4. Overall, the site is not covered by any specific landscape designations and is not considered to represent a “valued landscape”. Therefore, the conclusions reached within the LVC that the proposals can be integrated without harm to the receiving landscape character at a regional or local level remains.

## Visual Effects

- 3.5. In terms of the effect of the proposals upon the visual environment, it is considered that the proposals will result in a degree of change of broadly moderate significance, which is neutral in nature. The topography of the western boundary affords a high degree of containment to the Assessment Site, ensuring that views of the proposals are largely localised. Furthermore, as the proposed landscape treatment begins to mature over time, it will form a high quality and robust landscape setting to the development, ensuring that by year 10 the proposals will benefit from a high degree of visual integration.
- 3.6. It is illustrated by the updated Photographic Record appended to this report (refer Enclosure 1) that there has been little to no change to the surrounding landscape and visual amenity and therefore the conclusions identified within the LVC still remain.

## 4 Summary

- 4.1. As set out above, both national and local planning policy have changed, however, they do not result in any increase in value and sensitivity of the site. The site is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations.
- 4.2. The conclusions within the LVC state that it is considered that the application site and receiving environment have the capacity to accommodate the proposals. The proposals will not result in significant harm to the landscape character or visual environment. As such, it is considered that the proposed development can be integrated in this location and is supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.
- 4.3. Therefore overall, it is considered that the assessment and conclusions stated within the Landscape and Visual Chapter are in line with the updated national and local planning policy and that the effects stated within the LVC remain.

Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd

May 2020

Enclosed:

Viewpoint Locations Plan & Photographic Record – May 2020

**Enclosure 1**  
Updated Photographic Record – May 2020