

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Addendum Statement

for

Land between

Haverhill Road and Hinton Way

Stapleford

Cambridgeshire

on behalf of

Axis Land Partnerships

December 2020

Quality Control

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Addendum Statement

for

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on behalf of

Axis Land Partnerships

The Landscape Partnership is registered with the Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute, and is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment

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Contents

Report

1	Introduction	3
2	Landscape and Visual Appraisal	3
3	Balance of effects from retirement village and semi-natural park	6
4	Conclusion	8

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Landscape Partnership (TLP) produced a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) issued in March 2020 on behalf of Axis Land Partnerships to assess the effects of an outline planning application comprising a proposed retirement village together with a semi-natural green space on land between Haverhill Road and Hinton Road, Stapleford, Cambridgeshire. The LVA was submitted as part of Application 20/02929/OUT.
- 1.2 Greater Cambridge Shared Planning have provided two sets of Landscape Consultation Responses from Landscape Officer (LO) Carol Newell. These were posted on the South Cambridgeshire District Planning Portal on 17th August 2020 and 7th December 2020. A further shorter note of 21 September 2020 is incorporated within the middle of the combined consultation responses.
- 1.3 This Addendum provides a response to the comments from the LO as they relate to the LVA and landscape and visual aspects of the proposals.

2 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

- 2.1 The 'Additional comments' dated from December 2020 largely relate to comments on the submitted LVA. The comments are based on the two component parts of the application proposals, namely Area A - the retirement village and Area B - the landscape semi-natural park. This approach reflects the LVA which identifies different levels of sensitivity, magnitude and effect for Areas A and B. This is considered a reasonable approach since the susceptibility to change of the site from the Area A and Area B proposals are different. However, to aid an overall assessment of the planning balance it is also worth considering to what extent the landscape and visual effects that would arise on one part of the site would be offset by proposals on the other part of the site. This overall balancing of landscape and visual effects has not previously been considered by either the LVA or the LO, but is now provided in Section 3 below.
- 2.2 The comments provided by the LO focus on selected aspects of the LVA and proposals. It is noted that there is no disagreement or specific comment in relation to the following matters concerning the LVA:
- Methodology – the consultation response states that the LO has evaluated the site 'in association with the submitted methodology'.
 - Selection of Viewpoints used in the LVA – NB the proposed viewpoints were subject to consultation with the LO in advance (see para 2.5 of the LVA).

- Extent of visibility of proposals
 - Coverage and content of LVA
- 2.3 There is no comment from the LO on assessed levels of sensitivity in the LVA in respect of landscape character, site features and visual receptors.
- 2.4 There is some comment on the assessed levels of effects in the LVA on landscape character (at the site-based scale) and selected views to the north-east and south-east in relation visual effects. It is assumed that the substantive areas of difference of judgement between the LVA and LO relate to these areas which are mentioned in the consultation response. Other aspects of judgement provided in the LVA relating to landscape character at a larger scale, site features and other visual receptors are not specifically referred to by the LO.

Area A-the retirement village

- 2.5 The LO states she disagrees with the LVA assessment that the effects of the development (allowing for mitigation) would be Major/Moderate Adverse at Year 1 and Moderate Neutral at Year 15. It is not stated by the LO which scale of landscape unit this is based on. However, these levels affect as they appear in the LVA correspond with the effect on the Site scale (LVA para 7.10 and the entry for the Site at Table 7.1). A High magnitude of change is assessed in the LVA within Area A as this would involve a complete change in character from greenfield to residential. However, such a degree of change is typical for such a change in character and is therefore not unexpected or unusual. The LO states that the development would be a *'major changeand a prominent new feature in the landscape to clear on the edge of the village'*. The change as assessed by the LO is *'Major'*, one step up from the LVA at Major/Moderate. The LO does not state in the review her assessment of the sensitivity of Area A which would influences the level of effect. The LVA states this as being Medium/Low.
- 2.6 The LO does not state what she considers the benefits of the proposed mitigation within Area A would be. The main planting proposals which provide mitigation of the retirement village are provided within Area A (see Parameters Plan: Landscape) and would comprise areas of New Structural Planting to the site perimeter. This would in TLPs our opinion reduce the adverse effects on the landscape character of the site and local area. The LO comments that views to the site are limited due to the presence of roadside hedges, which would include those adjacent the site along Haverhill Road. The mitigation planting provided within Area A and also partly within Area B would serve to assimilate the built development into its setting over time. It is also worth noting that while Area A would form an extension to Stapleford along Haverhill Road, the pattern of growth of Stapleford has involved progressive development (softened in time by planting) along the local roads including Haverhill Road and Hinton Way.

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- 2.7 The LO assesses the proposals against the Statements of Environmental Opportunity within NCA 87 E. Anglian Chalk). TLP accept that the introduction of the retirement village would be contrary to some of these 'opportunities' which primarily relate to landscape management. This would be typical of any development within NCA 87. However, the adverse effects on the smaller part of the total application site would be compensated for by the improvements within the much larger part of the site by conversion to a semi-natural park. These changes would support aspects of the Statements of Environmental Opportunity SEO1, SE O2 and SE04, including providing a greater assemblage of seminatural grasslands to enhance biodiversity and increased recreational opportunities for nearby residents. These positive aspects of the proposals on the SEOs' is not commented on by the LO in relation to Area B and should be factored into the benefits of the proposals.
- 2.8 Comments relating to the existing character of the settlement of Stapleford and existing residential development being detached or semi-detached properties are correct. The LO in particular comments on the scale of the largest single building and that a 12 m height would be overbearing and incongruous to the edge of the village. However, since the application is in outline it is possible that concerns over massing and height could be addressed through the submission of subsequent detailed proposals and reserved matter stage. This could include architectural solutions including stepping the central building down (where it would be more visible) and by incorporating accommodation within the roof space. Furthermore, the proposed structural planting within Area A could help offset the scale of a larger central building as seen from surrounding locations within the locality.
- 2.9 In relation to visual effects the LO agrees with the LVA to the limiting presence of roadside hedges, surrounding woodland and the restricted number of public rights of way with views towards the site. However, she notes that the scheme would be particularly visible from the north-east and south-east. These locations are represented by LVA Viewpoint J (from The Magog Down) and Viewpoint K (from Bridleway S2). The LO does not specifically state her differences from the levels of effect assessed within the LVA, but rather states that the effects even after mitigation would be '*significantly adverse, unacceptable and contrary to policy NH/2 and HQ/1*'. The LO does indicate if the level of effect would vary between Year 1 and Year 15.
- 2.10 The LVA records a Major/Moderate adverse effect from Viewpoint J which would reduce to Moderate Adverse at Year 15 with the establishment of mitigation planting largely located within Area A. The proposals would be visible within the distant views from Magog Down, which comprise two panoramas including: one to the north over Cambridge and one to the west over the Granta Valley. Views towards to the edge of Stapleford are currently part of the distant view to the west. The proposed development would be clearly noticeable from this location initially with mitigation would reduce over time. Views from Bridleway S2 to the south-east towards the site are part of a wide
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sweeping 360° panorama which already includes the edge of Stapleford. The proposals would extend development to a limited degree to the east of the village giving rise to a Moderate Adverse effect at Year 1 and reducing to a Minor Adverse effect as the proposed planting along Haverhill Road establishes by Year 15. Therefore, the LVA accepts there would be localised significant visual effects from the development within Area A but that these relatively few and time limited.

Area B-Landscape semi-natural park

- 2.11 The LO is in agreement with the LVA assessment of the quantum of effects on landscape character within Area B. This includes a Major Neutral effect at Year 1 and a Major Beneficial effect by Year 15. This level of effect is again based at the Site based scale in terms of landscape character (LVA para 7.10).
- 2.12 In the initial comments of August 2020, the LO stated, *'I welcome the creation of the country park to the north the site. The applicant has indicated a number of landscape features which reflect the policies enhancement strategies.'* The policy referred to is Policy CSF/5 within the Area Action Plan (LVA para 5.13-5.14). In addition, there was positive support in relation to Policies NH/2 and HQ/1 where the LO stated, *'the landscape enhancement measures proposed within the country park would be acceptable and welcomed.'*
- 2.13 No comments are provided by the LO on the visual effects arising from Area B. However, visual effects as assessed in the LVA are in the main Minor or Negligible and therefore of limited significance in the decision-making process. This is in part due to the limited visibility of Area B from public locations. The main benefit in terms of visibility would arise following access been provided into Area B when the land would be set out as an accessible semi-natural park.

3 BALANCE OF EFFECTS FROM RETIREMENT VILLAGE AND SEMI-NATURAL PARK

- 3.1 It is accepted by both the LVA and the LO that there would be some adverse effects arising from the retirement village -Area A. In TLPs opinion these would be most notable in the early years and would reduce by Year 15. In TLPs opinion the effects on landscape character at the Local scale (up to 1 km distance) are also important to consider. The LVA assesses the effects at the Local scale would be Moderate Adverse at Year 1 and Moderate Neutral at Year 15. Significant effects, Major/Moderate Adverse would occur at the Site scale, but this level of effect is to be expected from any comparable development due to the change of use.
- 3.2 It is also accepted that there would be some benefits arising from the provision of a semi-natural park -Area B. These are agreed between the LVA and the LO at the Site scale as being Moderate

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- Neutral at Year 1 and increasing to Moderate/Major Beneficial by Year 15 (by the LVA) and Major Beneficial (by the LO). The LVA also identifies a Moderate/Major beneficial effect at the local level by Year 15.
- 3.3 The semi-natural park is an integral part of the application. While it provides some visual mitigation of the built proposals, most notably in locations to the east approaching along Haverhill Road and from the Magog Down, the principal areas of mitigation planting for built development are provided within Area A.
- 3.4 Nonetheless, the provision of the semi-natural park is a major positive part of the application proposals which would bring a range of enhancements in terms of landscape character, biodiversity and public access/recreation. These proposals would make a substantive contribution towards Policy CSF 5 by supporting objectives: f, g, k and m. The provision of the semi-natural park and its contribution towards Policy CSF 5 would not be delivered without the retirement village.
- 3.5 In terms of providing a balance of landscape and visual considerations the benefits derived from Area B should offset (at least in part) the adverse landscape and visual effects of the retirement village.
- 3.6 In terms of landscape character, the proposed retirement village would represent an incursion into the open countryside and an extension of Stapleford. This would affect the smaller and lower lying part of the site adjacent to Stapleford. However, the improvements to Area B would involve a notable landscape improvement in character terms over the larger and more elevated part of the site.
- 3.7 In TLPs judgement (based on the Site scale) and including the whole application site the balancing of a Major/Moderate Adverse (Area A) with a Moderate Neutral effect (Area B) would result in a **Major/Moderate Adverse effect overall at Year 1**. However, by Year 15 the overall balance would change from combining a Moderate Neutral effect (Area A) with a Major/Moderate Beneficial effect (Area B) giving rise to a **Moderate Beneficial effect overall at Year 15**.
- 3.8 It is noted that the LO consultation response considers landscape effects of the retirement village to be Major even allowing for landscape mitigation. However, the LO also considers the proposals for Area B to be a Major benefit. Since the geographical extent of Area B is much greater (c. 4 times to size) it is not unreasonable to consider that there would be at least an overall Neutral effect.
- 3.9 In terms of visual effects, it is noted that the majority of the planting mitigation is located within Area A and that this will provide visual mitigation from a number of viewpoints (including locations along Haverhill Road and from the south-east on Bridleway S2. The planting within Area B would partly assist in reducing the effects from Magog Down (Viewpoint J) but this would be secondary to
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that indicated within Area A. In summary, the visual effects arising from Area A would not be notably reduced by the mitigation planting provided within Area B.

- 3.10 Therefore, the balancing effects of combining Area A and Area B together will more relate to landscape character effects rather than visual considerations.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 It is accepted by the LVA that the retirement village would bring some adverse effects in landscape and visual terms, but these are concentrated in the short-term.
- 4.2 There are some differences of opinion between the LO and the LVA in relation to some of the levels of effect that would arise from the proposals within Area A – the retirement village. These are focused at a site based scale and for a limited number of selected viewpoints to the north-east and south-east.
- 4.3 The LVA and the LO are in agreement that the proposed semi-natural park would bring major or major/moderate beneficial effects to landscape character in the medium-term (Year 15).
- 4.4 It is appropriate to consider the balance of landscape and visual effects between the retirement village and semi-natural park. In TLPs opinion there would be a net benefit in the medium-term in landscape terms across the whole of the site resulting from the proposals.