

Green Belt Review and Landscape And Visual Report

Land at and to the Rear of Peeping Tom Public House,
Burton Green

January 2014

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 A Green Belt review was undertaken of the suitability of Land at and to the Rear of the Peeping Tom Public House (the Site) to accommodate housing.
- 1.2 This review of the Site was undertaken to coincide with the consultation on the Emerging Local Plan published by Warwickshire District Council (November 2013) which is been used to identify a selection of Sites to release from the Green Belt, and subsequent ability to accommodate housing in the future.
- 1.3 A partial Green Belt Review was undertaken by the Council (November 2013), however this did not focus on the Site but rather on a wider landscape parcel in which it sits (BG6). This strategic assessment concludes that *"this parcel plays an important role in maintaining the wider strategic Green Belt around Coventry and has a significant role to play in maintaining the open setting of Burton Green. It is however acknowledged that certain aspects of the parcel have been compromised by residential development."*
- 1.4 This landscape parcel encompasses a large area of land without acknowledging the specific landscape and visual characteristics of individual sites within it. Although the initial Green Belt assessment is sufficient at a strategic level, further work has been required to determine if the Site can accommodate housing without compromising the permanence and openness of Green Belt land. As such, a more detailed assessment of the Site's contribution to the Green Belt has been undertaken.

2.0 SITE LOCATION & CONTEXT

- 2.1. As illustrated with reference to **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, the Site is located outside the south-western extents of Coventry City on the north-eastern edge of the settlement of Burton Green. Burton Green extends in a linear elongated manner along Cromwell Lane from the northern boundary of the Site continuing this pattern of development along Hob Lane and Red Lane to the south. The Site is approximately 1.7 hectares in area and comprises two pastoral fields currently in use as horse paddocks and divided north-south by a belt of mature canopy trees.
- 2.2. A side-road (public footpath) via Cromwell Lane adjoins the Site along its northern boundary, from which access to the adjacent residential properties to the north is obtained.
- 2.3. A large pond defines the north-eastern boundary adjacent to an established hedgerow which follows the eastern boundary across the Site, beyond which are the rear gardens of properties along Cromwell Lane, and a playground adjacent to the Peeping Tom Public House. These boundaries are well defined by mature planting (approximately 10m) and provide a high degree of physical and visual enclosure for these properties.
- 2.4. The southern and western boundaries of the Site are also defined by established treebelts which include a number of mature canopy trees. Beyond these contained boundaries, the character of the landscape opens out to medium to large scale agricultural fields.
- 2.5. Land use surrounding the settlement of Burton Green typically includes agricultural fields, woodland blocks and scattered farmsteads. In addition to this, the following land uses are present locally:
- A National Grid Power Station is situated approximately 650m south-west of the Site.
 - Nailcote Hall Golf Course lies to the north-west of the Site, the closest extents of which are approximately 680m from the Site.
 - Nailcote Farm complex lies approximately 600m north-west of the Site.

Landscape Character

- 2.6. The Landscape Character Assessment approach is a descriptive approach which seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. This approach recognises the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just 'special'

landscapes. The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, landscape management or development.

National Character Areas

- 2.7. Natural England has produced a Countryside Character Map of England which includes broad-brush descriptions of the different character areas. The Site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 97: Arden.

NCA 97: Arden

- 2.8. Arden is described as comprising predominantly farmland and former wood-pasture, and extends from Dudley Unitary Authority (UA) in the west to Coventry UA in the east, Staffordshire in the north to Stratford-on-Avon District in the south. Burton Green is roughly located within the central-eastern part of the NCA.
- 2.9. Land use is noted as mainly residential and agricultural, with industrial coal mining active in the north-east of the NCA. Key landscape features include **“mature oaks set within hedgerows, distinctive field boundaries, historic parklands and narrow river corridors” (page 1)**
- 2.10. Relevant key Characteristics include:
- “Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.
 - Mature oaks, mostly found within hedgerows, together with ancient woodlands, and plantation woodlands that often date from the time of enclosure. Woodlands include historic coppice bounded by woodbanks.
 - Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands. [...]
 - Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands [...]
- 2.11. In addition to the above, brick and timber are noted as common building materials throughout the NCA, and common oaks the dominant tree species, present within towns and villages and as part of hedgerow systems.
- 2.12. Environmental opportunities include the management and enhancement of valuable woodland, hedgerows, field boundaries and enclosure patterns, and the creation of new networks of green infrastructure.

County Landscape Character Areas

2.13. The Warwickshire Landscape Project was set up in 1897, to provide a set of guidelines on maintaining diversity and beauty, and conserve landscape features. Of relevance to the Site are the Arden Landscape Guidelines.

2.14. The Site is situated on the eastern edge of an 'Ancient Ardent' character area. An area of 'Arden Parklands' is located to the north and east of this, and is therefore of relevance to the Site.

Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines: Ancient Ardent

2.15. Ancient Ardent is described as **"a small scale farmed landscape with a varied, undulating topography, characterised by an irregular pattern of fields and narrow, winding lanes"** (page 17).

2.16. Characteristic features include:

- "A varied undulating topography.
- A network of winding lanes and trackways often confined by tall hedgebanks.
- An ancient irregular field pattern.
- Hedgerow and roadside oaks [...]" (page 17)

2.17. In relation to views, the guidelines state:

"Views are restricted by thick roadside hedgerows and are often short, overlooking two or three fields to a wooded skyline. Occasional distant views are afforded from hilltops and ridgelines revealing a varied, wooded topography." (page 16)

Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines: Arden Parklands

2.18. Arden Parklands is described as **"an enclosed, gently rolling landscape defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees"** (page 23)

2.19. Characteristic features include:

- "Middle distance views enclosed by woodland edge.
- Belts of mature trees associated with estatelands.
- Large country houses set in mature parkland.
- Many ancient woodlands, often with irregular outlines.
- Remnant deerparks with ancient pollard oaks.

- Thick roadside hedgerows, often with bracken" (page 23)

2.20. Under 'Development Guidelines' the following are of relevance to all Ardent character areas:

- "Avoid the removal of hedgerows, especially along footpaths, bridleways, parish boundaries and woodland edges
- Promote the management of hedgerows and landscape features" (page 39)

2.21. Guidelines specifically relevant to Ancient Ardent include:

- "New hedge planting should reflect the irregular field pattern and include only mixed native species
- Encourage the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks" (page 42)

2.22. Guidelines specifically relevant to Arden Parklands include:

- "Conserve and strengthen primary hedgelines and manage these more positively as landscape features" (page 48)

2.23. Species noted as characteristic of Arden include Field Maple, Common Alder, Sessile Oak, Pendunculate Oak, Hazel and Hawthorn (page 54).

3.0 GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

3.1 Under National Planning Policy Framework (2012), Green Belt is a functional designation, its purpose as stated at paragraph 79 being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and as such the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. More specifically Green Belt serves the following five purposes as stated at paragraph 80:

- **“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;**
- **to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;**
- **to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;**
- **to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and**
- **to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”**

3.2 The fifth purpose relates specifically to brownfield land and as the Site is located on greenfield land, it has therefore been assessed against the four remaining Green Belt purposes.

3.3 Following a Site visit and a review of baseline material and in evaluating the contribution of the land to the Green Belt, the following criteria (**Table 1**) was used to assess the contribution of the Site to the first four purposes of the Green Belt:

Table 1: Contribution the Site makes to the Green Belt Purposes

Threshold	Assessment
High	Significant Contribution to Green Belt Purpose
Medium	Some Contribution to Green Belt Purpose
Low	Limited Contribution to Green Belt Purpose

3.4 The landscape and visual objectives for each of the four purposes of the Green Belt are set out in **Table 2** below:

Table 2: Landscape and visual objectives relating to Green Belt purposes

Green Belt purposes	Landscape and visual objective
To check the unrestricted sprawl of	Maintaining settlement identity, and

large built-up areas	strong, defensible, Green Belt boundaries
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	Maintaining settlement identity (including actual and perceived separation between settlements)
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Maintaining perceived separation of town and country, including strong, defensible Green Belt boundaries
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Protecting areas of landscape which contribute to setting and character of historic towns and historic features within settlements

Assessment against the Characteristics of the Green Belt

- 3.5 The NPPF states that the key characteristics of the Green Belt are '**their openness and their permanence,**' (paragraph 79). In defining new boundaries to the Green Belt, it must be ensured that these characteristics are not diminished for the areas remaining within the Green Belt designation as a direct result of development on the Site.
- 3.6 An assessment has been made of the openness of the Green Belt in that particular location and to what extent the removal of the Site will have on the perception of openness in the remaining designated area.
- 3.7 In addition, the Site and its location has been described demonstrating its relationship to existing elements, such as motorways and rivers, as well as visual barriers, such as ridgelines and areas of woodland. This is to help assess the impacts of the development upon the openness of the remaining designated areas and to help identify boundaries that may be considered to be '**permanent**'.

Definitions

- 3.8 When considering the ability of the Site to meet each of the purposes of the Green Belt, the following definitions should be considered.

Openness

- 3.9 Openness is taken to be the degree to which the area is unaffected by built structures. It is considered that, in order to be a robust assessment, this should be considered from first principles, i.e. acknowledging existing structures that occur within the area, rather than seeing them as being 'washed over' by the existing Green Belt designation.

Sprawl

- 3.10 Disorganised and unattractive extension to developed area (perhaps lacking defensible boundary).

Defensible boundaries

- 3.11 The NPPF states that, when choosing boundaries, '**local authorities should defined boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent,**' (paragraph 85).

4.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

Land at the Rear of the Peeping Tom Pub

Visual Influence

- 2.1. As illustrated with reference to **Figure 2: Site Appraisal Plan**, the Site is set within mature natural defensible boundaries to the south, west and by the rear gardens of residential development to the east and north. Within the Site, two pastoral fields are divided by a mature hedgerow (approximately 10m) which provides both a physical and visual buffer across the Site.
- 2.2. The enclosed nature of the Site effectively contains it in views from the wider landscape. From within Burton Green (along Cromwell Lane), the Site is well contained in views with the exception of a partial near distance view through vegetation adjacent to the Peeping Tom Public House. From this location, the Site is seen in the context of existing residential development beyond the pub car park/playground. The most western boundary of the Site limits any distance views out into the countryside from this location.
- 2.3. From the north and west when travelling along the public footpath, views into the Site are curtailed by existing mature vegetation associated with rear gardens of residential properties with partial views into the Site obtained from immediately adjacent to the northern boundary. Beyond this, views into the Site are filtered by a mature treebelt when travelling along the public footpath to the west within the open countryside. From this location the Site is seen beyond a mature treebelt boundary which follows a north-south direction along Cromwell Lane. The Site is therefore effectively contained within this context.
- 2.4. From the wider area, potential visibility of the Site is restricted to a broadly rectilinear area defined by Hodgetts Lane to the south-west, Nailcote Lane (B401) and Duggins Lane/railway to the north and Cromwell Lane to the east. Within this area, views are influenced by subtle changes in topography to the north where the landform falls away to the railway line restricting views of the Site and by intervening trees and hedgerows across the medium to large scale fields.
- 2.5. As a result the Site is effectively only visible in near distance views immediately adjacent to the Peeping Tom Public House to the east, immediately adjacent to the northern boundary along the public footpath and glimpsed through a dense treebelt to the west from further along this footpath. From elsewhere within this wider parcel of

land, the Site is curtailed from view.

- 2.6. Visual receptors who experience views of the site comprise those immediately adjacent to the Site, including fixed residential receptors along Cromwell Lane to the north and east, transient recreational users of a short section of the public footpath immediately adjacent to the northern and western boundary of the Site and from those using the Peeping Tom Public House and carpark.

Landscape Value

- 2.7. The wider parcel of land (BG6) assessed as part of the initial Green Belt assessment undertaken by the Council in November 2013, identified the function of this parcel (in Green Belt terms), as a strategically important area of Green Belt which maintains the setting and Character of Balsall Common, Burton Green and Kenilworth and Coventry. However, in the context of this landscape parcel, and at a Site specific level, the Site does not contribute significantly to the importance of the Green Belt in terms of its openness, primarily due to its robust boundaries and sense of physical and visual enclosure. It is considered to form an isolated pocket of greenfield land immediately adjacent to existing residential development and therefore is experienced in this context, rather than forming part of or being experienced as an area of open countryside whose character exists beyond the Site boundary.

Table 3: Review of Contribution of the Site to the Green Belt

Purposes of the Green Belt	Discussion	Contribution to Green Belt Purpose
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	<p>The western boundary of the Site is formed of a robust landscape structure; however, the development of the Site would extend the linear form of the settlement beyond the existing residential properties within Burton Green.</p> <p>Immediately beyond the village boundary to the north, a residential property adjoins the western most extents of the developed edge along Cromwell Lane. Beyond this, another residential property extends into the countryside development of the Site which combine to form a deeper settlement edge along Cromwell Lane. The development of the Site would</p>	Some

Purposes of the Green Belt	Discussion	Contribution to Green Belt Purpose
	<p>therefore follow this pattern along the western most boundary of the Site, limiting the degree to which it forms an isolated pocket of development outside the linear form the settlement.</p> <p>The western and southern boundaries of the Site effectively curtail any further development into the countryside.</p>	
Prevent nearby towns from merging into one another	<p>There is an existing physical link between Burton Green village and Coventry City formed by residential properties whose gardens both back onto Cromwell Lane (village boundary) to the north of the Site. Any further development within Burton Green would therefore reflect this characteristic.</p> <p>The enclosure provided by existing mature boundaries within the Site means that the potential for the development of this Site to result in coalescence between Burton Green and another settlement is limited</p>	Some
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Due to the Sites close association with the existing built edge along Cromwell Lane, it is considered that the perceived edge of the settlement is the western most boundary of the Site when seen from the surrounding landscape. This boundary therefore effectively limits any potential to encroach upon the countryside.	Limited
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The Site does not form part of the historic setting of the village.	Limited
Overall Contribution to the Purposes of the Green Belt		Limited to Some

5.0 SUMMARY

- 5.1 It is considered that in landscape and visual terms, there is potential to establish residential development within the Site. The development of the Site would go beyond the existing settlement boundary; however it would go no further than the existing residential property at the end of Cromwell Lane (PROW) along the northern boundary of the Site, which effectively terminates the built edge along Cromwell Lane in views from the west. Any development would be contained within the Site's defensible boundaries which would therefore reduce the potential for adverse effects on the perception of the openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.2 The introduction of development would inevitably introduce development into a greenfield site, however the physical and visual containment provided by residential properties to the north and east along Cromwell Lane, and the robust landscape structure created by the mature treebelts to the west and south would enable the Site to appropriately accommodate housing with very limited adverse landscape and visual effects.
- 5.3 Following a review of the Site's contribution to the Green Belt, it is considered that the Site is as suitable (in Green Belt terms) due to its high degree of containment, as the Council's 'preferred' Site at Land at Burrow Hill Nursery. Notwithstanding its suitable location within a brownfield site, Land at Burrow Hill Nursery is partially exposed in filtered views from the north due to its location on the summit of Red Lane.