

Warwick Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire

Landscape and Visual Overview

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This overview report has been prepared by Tyler Grange LLP (TG) on behalf of Richborough Estates, in response to desktop analysis and preliminary fieldwork undertaken in June 2014, in order to advise upon the feasibility of development of the site in terms of landscape character and visual amenity, as well as providing a review of the existing Green Belt context. It is to be read alongside **Development Principles** plan (Ref: 2193/P01).
- 1.2. The work does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) or a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). It is intended to support representations and inform the requirements for a future planning application.

2.0 Site Context

- 2.1. The site is located at the southern periphery of Kenilworth, a town and civil parish in Warwickshire, England, approximately 6 miles (10 km) southwest of Coventry, 4 miles (6 km) north of Warwick.
- 2.2. The land extends to approximately 37.5 hectares and currently comprises a network of fields, which are primarily used for arable crops or silage rotation. These fields are medium scale and both irregular and regular in shape. The land parcels are bounded by timber post and rail fencing and gappy mature hedgerows which are interspersed with hedgerow trees.
- 2.3. The site is also severed by the north-south alignment of the Coventry to Leamington railway line.
- 2.4. To the north, the site is directly bordered by the residential development associated with Newey Drive and the adjoining Kenilworth Cricket Club. To the north-east, the site is defined by both the Coventry to Leamington railway line and Bullimore Wood (ancient woodland); and, the eastern boundary is curtailed by the presence of the A46 Kenilworth Bypass.
- 2.5. To the south, the site adjoins the vegetated course of Cattle Brook and to the west, the boundary is defined by Warwick Road and the existing development associated with Wootton Grange.
- 2.6. The landform has subtle undulations, with a gentle slope running north (83m AOD) to south (62m AOD); centred on OS grid reference SP 29378 70032.
- 2.7. The wider site retains a degree of rurality in terms of land use due to its location at the edge of the settlement, but has more distinct urban influence to the north, given the developed backdrop of the Kenilworth, scattered development to the west at Wootton Grange, as well as the presence of the railway line and the A46 corridor to the east.



3.0 Planning Context & SPD

Policy Context

- 3.1. The site falls within the administrative borough of Warwick District Council and is covered by the policies of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 (adopted on the 21st September 2007), with a replacement plan currently being prepared (2011-2029). Consultation on this runs for a period of 6 weeks beginning on Friday 16th May until Friday 27th June 2014. An accompanying evidence base of documents is also available.
- 3.2. It is currently subject to a Green Belt designation (Rural Area Policies – RAP1-16). Policy DAP1 – Protecting the Green Belt, time expired on 20th September 2010; however, the landscape is still protected by national planning policy provision (the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance).
- 3.3. Located beyond the current settlement boundary, it is important to consider Policy DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape, which establishes that development will only be permitted that *“protects important natural features and positively contributes to the character and quality of its natural and historic environment through good habitat/landscape design and management.”*
- 3.4. Under Policy DP3, development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that they *“protect and enhance the landscape character of the area, particularly respecting its historic character.”*
- 3.5. Residential development is located to the immediate north and west of the site. The amenity of these properties will need to be taken into consideration in order to satisfy planning policy protecting the setting of housing areas (Policy DP2 - Amenity).
- 3.6. Other local policies within the current Local Plan relating to landscape character and visual amenity that will need to be considered as part of any site promotion / emerging development proposals include:
 - Policy DP1: Layout and Design
 - Policy DP5: Density
 - Policy SC13: Open Space and Recreation Improvements
 - Policy SC15: Public Art
 - Policy UAP1: Directing New Housing
 - Policy RAP1: Directing New Housing
 - Policy DAP3: Protecting Nature Conservation, Geology and Geomorphology
 - Policy DAP4: Protection of Listed Buildings
 - Policy DAP11: Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens
- 3.7. The applicable landscape and visual policies deal mainly with protecting and enhancing the natural environment, protecting trees, woodlands and hedgerows, protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the landscape, achieving high quality design within new developments, and providing landscaping as an integral part of the overall design.
- 3.8. In addition to the above policies, the following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) also need to be taken into consideration:
 - Open Space SPD (June 2009); and
 - Residential Design Guide (April 2008).

3.9. Other relevant evidence base considerations are set out below:

Coventry Joint Green Belt Review (January 2009)

- 3.10. Within the study, the northern half of the representation site lies within area 'K6'. This arbitrary parcel lies within the 'Arden Landscape Character Area' and 'Arden Parklands Character Type'. Trees and hedgerows within K6 provide some visual enclosure, with some longer views possible to the south and Leek Wootton.
- 3.11. The findings determine that *“Residential boundaries seem well established, although there may be some opportunities for minor infill. This area appears to be an important strategic gap between Kenilworth and Leek Wootton. We recommend K6 is retained within the Green Belt.”*
- 3.12. The associated landscape value was considered to be 'High'.

Options for Future Urban Expansion in Warwick District – Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning (November 2012)

- 3.13. Whilst the site does not appear to be located within the Council's preferred direction for growth (south east of Kenilworth), the November 2012 document produced by Richard Morrish Associates for WDC (entitled 'Options for Future Urban Expansion in Warwick District Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning'), did not consider the land parcel at Warwick Road, but established that the landscape in that area was not specifically located within an area defined as being *“where proposals for development could lead to physical or perceived settlement coalescence”*.

Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning Addendum (March 2014)

- 3.14. WDC commissioned an addendum to the original study in response to representations for five additional sites that had previously been discounted, this included land at Warwick Road, Kenilworth.
- 3.15. The report determines that development of the site *“would constitute a notable extension to the existing settlement footprint at Kenilworth and would significantly reduce the section of open countryside between Kenilworth and Leek Wootton. It would run contrary to other purposes of Green Belt in that it would encroach into countryside, would impact on the setting of Kenilworth and will not assist urban regeneration.”*
- 3.16. The Appendix B study provides additional assessment notes and a consideration of the likely landscape and visual effects. The magnitude of landscape change for the residential development is *“anticipated to be medium-low, but could be medium-high for the rugby club pending detailed design. The magnitude of visual change could be high – especially in views from the south and substantial mitigation works would be required and then successfully and appropriately managed for the long term. The impact for near neighbours to the north and north-west is likely to be medium given that they presently adjoin open countryside. However present outlooks appear to be restricted by existing topography and vegetation cover and it is not clear that any particularly important views will be affected.”*
- 3.17. The overall conclusion states that *“The representation site will intrude into Green Belt but landscape and visual impacts might be mitigated with appropriate design and commitment to long-term landscape enhancement.”*
- 3.18. The study is clearly preliminary in its appraisal and conclusions, and confirms that *“The process of impact assessment for each of the study sites has required a broad brush approach with assumptions about the final form and density of development that might be proposed at each site”* and, that *“Further evaluation of landscape and visual impacts will also be necessary as part of an iterative planning process for detailed development proposals”*.

4.0 Landscape Character

- 4.1. At a national level the site lies within the 'Character Area 97 - Arden' and at a district level, the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines (1994) considers the site to represent the 'Arden Landscape Character Area' and the 'Arden Parklands Character Type'.
- 4.2. The character attributes of the 'Arden Parklands' LCT sub type are summarised as being:
- Large arable fields, often poorly defined by low gappy hedgerows;
 - Primary hedgerows are associated with highways, bridleways, footpaths and parish boundaries; and, often form a key structural component within the landscape;
 - Wooded enclosure formed by the presence of large ancient woodlands and belts of trees;
 - Old deer parks have a particularly important historical dimension which adds variety and cultural interest; and
 - Heathland was once a common feature on poorer sandy soils.
- 4.3. More specifically, the following guidelines are given for the LCT:
- Existing parkland should be retained and enhanced;
 - Conserve and enhance primary hedgelines and manage more positively as landscape features;
 - Identify opportunities for re-establishing heathland;
 - Retain and enhance the effect of wooded enclosure; and
 - Species selection along woodland edges should favour native trees and shrubs.
- 4.4. Whilst the character information set out above does provide some context relevant to the promotion of the site, it does not address the characteristics specific to the site. In response to fieldwork, further observations have been made with regards to the site and its immediate surroundings:
- The majority of the site is essentially flat and lies at around at 83m AOD, although topography drops away to approximately 62m AOD towards the southern boundary;
 - The surrounding urban boundary includes a school, playing fields, allotment gardens, cricket pitch and existing post war residential development that help form a reasonable transition to the countryside;
 - The site comprises a disused paddock and four medium-large scale arable fields, with one to the east of the Leamington/Kenilworth railway line (which is vegetated and within cutting). The triangular field parcel to the east shows evidence of former ponds and contains two clusters of notable trees. It is also enclosed by Bullimore Wood (ancient woodland);
 - Some internal hedgerows have been removed over time;
 - To the west the boundary with Warwick Road is defined by an overgrown 'hedge' interspersed with trees, with the redbrick development at Wootton Grange beyond;
 - Glimpsed views are available from portions of the site north, towards the spire of St. John's Church; and
 - To the south at the junction with Wootton Grange, the site is defined by an internal shelter belt. Beyond this is the line of the A46 and the vegetated Cattle Brook. Planted species include birch, ash, cherry, poplar, dogwood, holly, hazel with a height of up to 9-12m.
- 4.5. It is evident from the fieldwork, that the site is influenced by both the urbanising elements and severance of the railway embankment, the post war residential backdrop and the A46 corridor, as well as the rural fringe nature of the open agricultural landscape to the south.
- 4.6. The landscape is clearly transitional, but does not contain the distinct parkland or heathland characteristics associated with the Arden Parklands LCT.

5.0 Visual Circumstances

- 5.1. Visually, the site is relatively well enclosed through the presence of housing to the north, the A46 corridor to the east and the layering effect of hedgerows and woodland blocks in the wider landscape. The approximate extent of the visual envelope (VE) is set out below:
- To the north - the well treed boundary associated with the Kenilworth Cricket Club and the residential properties associated with Newey Drive restrict views beyond, as does the presence of Bullimore Wood to the north east. Glimpsed distant skyline views are available towards the spire of St. John's Church some 430 metres to the north;
 - To the east – views are limited by the vegetated backdrop associated with Bullimore Wood and the A46 corridor;
 - To the south – views are more extensive, although filtered by the layers of vegetation and wooded ridgelines. The visual envelope includes the rising land associated with Hill Wootton and glimpsed views of the settlement edge at Leek Wootton (some 450m to the south); and
 - To the west – the unmanaged hedgerow associated with the length of Warwick Road filters most views; however, glimpses through extends the visual envelope towards Little Woodcote and the wooded backdrop associated with Woodcote Lane.
- 5.2. Potential visual receptors include residential owners and users of the surrounding roads (principally Newey Drive, Warwick Road and Lindsey Crescent), users of the railway line (operated by London Midland), users of the A46 and the agricultural workers and/or visitors associated with the adjoining agricultural land.
- 5.3. There are no public rights of way (sensitive recreational receptors) crossing the site itself or located within the immediately adjoining landscape.
- 5.4. Predicted visual effects would therefore be localised.

6.0 Suitability of the Site for Release from Green Belt

- 6.1. A review of the site's performance and suitability for release is summarised below in relation to the principal Green Belt objectives as set out within the NPPF (the Framework), with reference to the key purposes of Green Belt land and with consideration of paragraph 81 of the Framework, in terms of positively enhancing Green Belt.
- 6.2. In terms of the observations about Green Belt within the 'Considerations for Sustainable Landscape Planning Addendum', the study stated that *"Proposed development as illustrated in the representation concept plan would constitute a notable extension into the Green Belt and would be contrary to the functions of Green Belt. However the proposed residential portion of development has some potential to fit with the overall settlement pattern at Kenilworth, would appear to have few landscape constraints and presently proposes appropriate green infrastructure provision that in time could provide for a high quality residential development and a successful urban/rural interface."* (my emphasis)

To check unrestricted sprawl

- 6.3. The principal consideration is the sprawl of the existing urban edge of Kenilworth and potential coalescence with the village of Leek Wootton, which is located some 450m from the boundary of the site to the south (1km from the proposed development edge). Whilst the proposed built development results in an additional maximum land-take of approximately 37.5 hectares, the scale of the proposals is such that it could not be deemed as contributing to urban sprawl. The existing surrounding landscape features and characteristics of the Arden



Parklands LCT provide a strong degree of filtering and permanence in the long term which is robust and capable of absorbing this scale of development. The land holding is also contained within robust and defensible boundaries (Warwick Road, Bullimore Wood, the A46 and the southern shelterbelt).

To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 6.4. In terms of the merging of settlements, a key consideration is the strength and permanence of existing boundaries. As set out above, the site is both physically and visually contained, with limited inter-visibility with adjoining Leek Wootton to the south.
- 6.5. Further physical growth of the Kenilworth in this location, when limited at the established southern building line of Wootton Grange Farm, would result in development that was largely inconspicuous in the surrounding landscape, given the surrounding highway network and the presence of a strong framework of intervening vegetation which would assist in diminishing any perception of coalescence on the local landscape and visual receptors.
- 6.6. The settlement fringe location also requires consideration in relation to the Framework, where sustainable development and associated benefits enables the proposals to be accommodated substantially within a well defined framework of transport infrastructure and established landscape features. In this case, it means that the hedgerow boundaries can be used efficiently for development in association with opportunities for strengthening the landscape and environmental quality of the site through the provision of connecting Green Infrastructure.

Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 6.7. The existing framework of vegetation and limited number of receptor locations restricts the perceived sense of openness, and this limited inter-visibility between the site and the surrounding built form, highways network and other receptors emphasises the degree of containment. The character of the landscape is transitional to the north, and where it becomes more rural to the south, there is little sense of permeability in terms of public access and recreational opportunities.
- 6.8. The containment and retention of the strong framework of vegetation, and the delivery of new woodland planting (in accordance with the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines) would further limit the extent to which any proposed development would introduce uncharacteristic features into the landscape, thus any sense of visual encroachment into the wider open countryside would be negligible.

Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 6.9. Available information on the historic landscape does not determine any specific role that the site plays in providing an important setting or approach to Kenilworth. Clearly, there are some views north to the spire of St. John's Church, but these can be retained as part of any forthcoming development option.
- 6.10. Bullimore Wood is ancient woodland which will need to be safeguarded and the stone bridges over the line (opened in 1844) are notable features worthy of retention. Aspects of this landscape are expected to be ancient in origin, but no rare or unique landscape features have been identified at this stage.

Paragraph 81 of the Framework (NPPF)

- 6.11. As set out at paragraph 81 of the Framework, there are also opportunities to be explored in terms of positively enhancing the landscape context of the site. In association with a sensitive development response, the following objectives could be established and presented as part of the landscape strategy response:

- The improvement of public access for recreation and informal open space in line with Green Belt objectives. New native planting could reflect the characteristics of the local landscape character; and, the detailed design, specification and maintenance of areas of woodland and heathland habitat could bring required species diversity;
- The ability to restore and manage landscape features associated with the Arden Parklands LCT, safeguarding the historic landscape framework for future generations. This could include the control of access to Bullimore Wood (ancient woodland) and the provision of a more appropriate buffer / woodland transition; and
- Creating opportunities for new visual experiences and vistas across the landscape to St. John's Church and the backdrop of Bullimore Wood.

7.0 Landscape Themes

7.1. In response to the desktop and fieldwork undertaken, a series of landscape themes have emerged which could be used as guidance to inform the appropriate promotion and development of the site. The landscape principles are illustrated on the **Development Principles** Plan and include:

- Existing trees, hedgerows and shelterbelts within the site could be largely retained and incorporated into a green infrastructure network (Policy DP1 and DAP3), which through management and supplementary woodland planting could actually improve upon the existing level of enclosure and screening within the site, providing a strong green structure for the development layout, as well as ensuring the development is not detrimental to the character of the Arden Parkland LCT;
- Utilise the established built development precedent at Wootton Grange Farm and the internal shelterbelt to define the limits of any proposed development parcels;
- Respond to Natural England guidelines that suggest a minimum off-set from ancient woodland of 15m. This prevents disturbance / protection of RPA's, has the ability to secure the control of access and space to offer an improved woodland transition zone;
- The reinstatement of historic hedgerows lost to agricultural intensification;
- The provision of a rural lane buffer alongside Warwick road, to assist in maintaining the character of the approach;
- Orientation of development to create an active frontage and focus upon the retained Kenilworth Cricket Club;
- Retention of skyline views north towards the spire of St. John's Church; and
- Any built development components associated with the proposed rugby club / pitches to be located closer to the established settlement edge.

Plans:

2193/P01: Development Principles Plan