

## **P/2017/1133 - INGLEWOOD - LANDSCAPE COMMENTS**

### **SUMMARY**

1. I have some reservations about whether the proposed lighting, as depicted in the photomontages, is accurate. I recommend that specialist advice is taken to assess this. However, assuming that the lighting is accurately depicted, I agree with the findings of the LVIA (and the implications for the ES), that the impact on landscape is **not of significance**.
2. I have some concerns regarding:
  - hedgerow management, as set out in the proposed farm practice, potentially eroding the landscape character of the periphery of the site;
  - the landscape treatment of the access roundabout and am of the opinion that a more open treatment to the area around the road corridor could potentially better reflect local landscape character;
  - the sense of place and transition into the countryside. The layout, density, status and appearance of the dwellings is too similar throughout the site and is an extension of the grain of development found in Goodrington. Subdivision of the site into sub-neighbourhood areas with varying levels of density and status would help to increase “sense of place” and a more successful transition into the pattern of development generally found in the countryside, and seen in the character of Galampton and Waddeton. This is particularly relevant for the parts of the site to the south and east of the school.

### **LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION**

#### **Pre-application consultation**

I have been party to extensive pre-application consultation that has helped to develop these proposals. This has involved carrying out desk based and field assessments. I have made a number of site visits accompanied by the landscape consultant and a number of visits on my own.

I am, as a consequence, familiar with the site and its immediate and wider context and I am confident that the LVIA produced in support of the Environmental Statement and Planning Application has fully appreciated the likely landscape impacts.

#### **Scope**

The overall approach taken in identifying landscape issues and addressing them through mitigation has been welcomed. In particular, the aim to address the likely visual impact on the South Devon AONB and addressing this through mitigation that is positive for the local landscape character. Also, the particular attention that has been given to lighting and the concern over the possible erosion of the relatively dark skies of the South Devon AONB.

#### **Review of the LVIA**

I have reviewed the LVIA and have made a site visit to assess the visual effects from the main viewpoints. The site visit took place on the day and evening of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The weather was clear with high cloud and the conditions allowed me the chance to experience the impact of existing lighting on views at a time that the sky was at its darkest.

In regard to the execution and findings of the LVIA, I am content with the following:

- The methodology used to carry out the assessment is appropriate,
  - there is some confusion over the date of the Torbay LCA referenced 2007 or 2017, however this has no impact on the findings.
- That a full understanding of the landscape context, in terms of value and character, has been demonstrated.
- That the landscape receptors and visual receptors are appropriate and reflect an appreciation of the impacts likely to arise from the proposed development.
- That the susceptibility of landscape has been assessed appropriately
- That the value attributed to the landscape and visual receptors has been assessed appropriately.
- Magnitude of change (excluding lighting) has been assessed appropriately

#### Magnitude of change resulting from lighting

With regard to assessment of the likely magnitude of change, I am content that changes likely to result from the development are correctly assessed. However, in terms of lighting, I am not a lighting expert: whereas I am able to assess the likely impact of the magnitude of change resulting from the increased lighting, I am not able to confirm whether the depiction of the lighting on the visuals is accurate. I recommend that a specialist is asked to assess whether what is shown in the photomontages is correct. However, if what is illustrated in the photomontages is an accurate depiction of what could be expected in reality, and I set this against the baseline which I can see in the field, then I am able to confirm that the magnitude of change is accurately described. See Annex 1 for further discussion on lighting.

#### Mitigation

The proposed mitigation, which includes tree planting in the form of belts of woodland planting, woodpasture and reinforcing hedgerows is largely appropriate. I have concern regarding the how some of the hedges are reinforced and the potential adverse impact this will have on landscape character, this is discussed elsewhere and I see no reason why this cannot be resolved with minor changes.

I see no reason why the planting should not establish and grow successfully. The land is of high quality with good soil, a long growing season, and adequate rainfall. The nearby tree planting around the development north of the Brixham Road has established well. As long as measures are taken to avoid damaging the soil, I see no reason why trees should not establish and grow well and adequately screen the new development in an acceptable time. However, good quality planting is necessary to mitigate the development, in particular the belts of planting and clump planting to

form the woodpasture in the fields to the south and west and it would be extremely advantageous if this could be planted at an early stage in the building phases.

### Conclusion

I am happy to agree with the conclusions that the landscape impacts with regard to the ES will not be significant.

I have some concerns, these include the following:

- **Consent sought**

The application is for outline consent and access only, the masterplan being indicative. I am concerned that layout and character suggested may become diluted at reserved matters stage. To prevent this I think that design quality parameters should be set, either by the applicant or through planning conditions.

- **Local distinctiveness/transition into the countryside**

Through the incorporation of the primary school and general treatment of the spaces between the school and the Brixham Road, the indicative layout successfully gives the development a sense of place. However, this could be further improved if there was greater distinctiveness in the grain of the residential areas, with variety in scale, density and status.

The layout, density, status and appearance of the dwellings is far too similar throughout the site and is an extension of the grain of development found in Goodrington. I am of the opinion that subdivision of the site into sub-neighbourhood areas of differing character would help to further increase “sense of place”, make the area more distinctive and create a more successful transition into the pattern of development generally found in the countryside and seen in the character of Galmpton and Waddeton. This is particularly relevant for the parts of the site to the south and east of the school.

- **Proposed Farming Practice**

I have some concern regarding the landscape impact of the proposed farming practice. The proposed positioning of the stock fencing at 2.5 and 3.5m away from the hedge is far greater than required by Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and will have the effect of altering the scale of the hedges and enclosures such that the field pattern will no longer match in the farmed landscape but will stand out. This will not help mitigate the scheme, nor will it increase the amount of “edge”, it will simply increase the depth of field margin. I suggest that this aspect of the proposals is reconsidered and that either, alternative ways are found to improve the bat foraging habitat, or a more balanced solution that reinforces rather than erodes landscape character is adopted.

The landscape character assessments of the area identify these concerns in the following:

- Torbay LCA sets out key characteristics of LCT3B Lower Rolling Farmed Settled slopes being “A rolling **well farmed landscape** with an irregular pattern of field boundaries and occasional hilltop woodland”
- Forces for change identified in the South Devon LCA. Continuing pressure for development, particularly housing expansion, due to the LCT’s proximity to Galampton, Paignton, Totnes and Dartington, Ivybridge and Plymouth. Development in these areas would affect the rural character of the LCT and sense of tranquillity.

- **Access roundabout/green infrastructure**

The character of the access roundabout and the land immediately around it is derived from engineering requirements of vehicle turning. This results in a universal, modern, highways character which does not help to conserve local distinctiveness and sense of place.

This could be addressed by attempting to reflect the character found just to the south of Windy Corner. Here the highway verges are large and open and the road edges have a soft grassy character. The whole effect is like passing through a Common and it has a rural feel and has coastal connotations.

Adopting a similar approach at the site entrance by increasing the size and changing the shape of the roundabout so that it is an “about” but not necessarily round. Pushing back the roadside planting to create a feeling of space, managing in a more extensive way, possibly edging in a way that avoids kerbs.

The effect of this would be to break the divisive nature of the road through the landscape, create a feeling of place, link with existing local character, reinstate a more rural character and provide an area for recreation. All the above will create a sense of place and have the effect of slowing down traffic.

- **Green Infrastructure**

The proposed green infrastructure is generally very well considered and provides good circulation, access and connections with the wider context for people, and creates a positive framework to support the development, in part reinforce landscape character and help mitigate ill effects. Some concern over the farmland management, the position of livestock fencing in the areas that will continue to be farmed and the likely over-conspicuous presence of fencing.

Use of parkland trees to help screen the development and improve habitat is welcomed. Details need to look at ways of protecting tree clumps and minimising unattractive, visually disturbing fencing. Metal estate fencing could possibly be considered. The character needs to relate to the high status agricultural character radiating from .... Rather than the character of a municipal country park.

The green infrastructure plan stops at the site boundary and doesn’t show how green space connects with the context. The area around Brixham Road being an example of where green space around the road corridor could diffuse the separation between areas created by the road

## ANNEX 1 External Lighting

The effect of light pollution from the development is of concern because this may have an adverse effect on the special qualities of the South Devon AONB. South Devon emerging LCA describes LCT 3G river valley slopes as having key characteristics of: *“A strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies except in areas impacted by light pollution from larger settlements”*.

My assessment of the baseline situation is that the relatively dark skies of the AONB are currently polluted by lights from Torquay, Stoke Gabriel and, in particular, by lights from moving vehicles on the Brixham Road. The lights from vehicles are not only bright but their separation and movement provide a tool with which to judge distance and scale. Without the vehicle lights it would be difficult to assess the position of the lights in the landscape and they would appear to be connected to Torquay.

My judgement of the magnitude of change in light pollution resulting from the development relies on comparing the baseline in the field with the baseline as depicted in the photomontages and the proposed situation as depicted in the photomontages. It assumes that the level of additional lighting as result of the development is of the correct colour and brightness. Unfortunately I am not able to confirm this and recommend that specialist lighting advice is sought.

Assuming that the effect of lighting shown in the photomontages is accurately depicted, I am content to agree with the findings of the LVIA that the effects of lighting at night time are likely to be minor adverse. My own observation would add that, when seen from the AONB, the position of the residential units and the landscaping are likely to mask the headlights of vehicles using the Brixham Road and thus remove what is, in my opinion, one of the most disturbing aspects of the current light pollution on the AONB.

However, opportunities to reduce light pollution further should be adopted and the following considered:

- I question the need for public outdoor lighting? There are examples of authorities in the country that have switched off street lighting in recent years to save energy and costs. Who is requiring outdoor lighting and why?
- There is a potential that light pollution will also result from outdoor lights installed by property owners and I would suggest that measures are put in place to control this.
- The colour of the light, as seen in the baseline situation, appears to influence perception of the distance of the light source from the viewpoint, with yellow white light appearing further away than blue white light. I suggest that, if outdoor lighting is required, it is of yellow white in colour.

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