

LAND AT ORCHARD FARM, PERSHORE, WORCESTERSHIRE

APPEAL PURSUANT TO OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION
FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STATEMENT OF CASE

On behalf of FORMULA LAND LTD.

Date: 3rd July 2024 | Pegasus Ref: P22-2506

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1. INTRODUCTION.

Terms of reference

- 1.1 The Pegasus Group, and specifically the Environment Area of Expertise, is advising Formula Land in respect of the above site, on landscape and visual matters. The application is currently lodged with Wychavon District Council, and no decision has been made on it. Accordingly, at this point in time no Reasons for Refusal (RfR) are available from the Council for review, albeit it is anticipated that deemed reasons will follow in due course.
- 1.2 Consequently, this landscape and visual Statement of Case (SoC) is based on issues raised by Wychavon DCs Landscape Officer, in her Consultation Responses.
- 1.3 It has been prepared by Jeremy Peachey BSc. M.LD, CMLI. Jeremy is a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (1994) with 30 years professional experience. He is an Executive Director of The Pegasus Group, and Head of the Environment Area of Expertise. He is involved in all areas of this sector of the Company's work, with specific expertise in landscape and visual impact assessment, and design.
- 1.4 He has given evidence on landscape and visual matters at numerous appeals since 1998, for a variety of development types and scales. Many of these have been residential led on greenfield sites on the edges of established settlements, often involving matters such as Green Belt, AONBs (National Landscapes), conservation areas and various Gap/Separation policies.

2. CURRENT OBJECTIONS.

Introduction

- 2.1. As noted above, in the absence of a specific RfR, this SoC is based around the issues raised by the Landscape Officer's Consultation Response (27th November 2023) and a subsequent Response (12th February 2024) following the submission of additional material requested in the initial response.
- 2.2. In no order of priority, the issues are set out below.

Impact on the Setting of Tiddesley Wood

- 2.3. The setting of Tiddesley Wood has been taken into account in the development parameters for the site, which have been transparently landscape and visually led. The current composition of the setting of the wood comprises: the scale and character of the woodland itself; the open grassland between the woodland edge and the existing settlement (of which the site is a part); and the existing settlement edge itself. As such, the site forms part of the local setting of this part of Tiddesley Wood. This is acknowledged within the LVIA at para. 5.11.
- 2.4. The "Wooded Estatelands" LCT (Landscape Character Type) of which the site and adjacent areas form a part, has been subject to change in recent years in order to accommodate residential expansion on this edge of Pershore. The proposed development will be entirely consistent with other recent forms of development on the rising topography and be set back some considerable distance from the edge of Tiddesley Wood. This will ensure that the current composition/setting of the Woodland will be subject to a level of minor modification as opposed to fundamental (or any other sort) of change.

Visual Impact on views from the south-east and from The Cotswolds National Landscape

- 2.5. As part of the LVIA process, a series of 20 no. viewpoints that are representative (and agreed as such) of the visual envelope of the site have been considered with respect to the likely magnitude of change in the view and the effects of visual mitigation. This includes some additional viewpoints as requested by WDC's Landscape Officer post application submission. The conclusions are that the very vast majority of the adverse visual effects will be localised. This is a point that is recognised in the Consultation Response.
- 2.6. Views from areas to the south-east of the site, in the vicinity of the River Avon, have all been considered in detail in the LVIA, at viewpoints 9, 10, 11 and 15. Several of these (9, 10 and 11) have been further tested as part of the LVIA process via a series of Long Landscape Sections (LVIA Figure 9) which have been used (iteratively) to develop the landscape and visually led development strategy with specific regard to both the horizontal (spread) and vertical (height) built form parameters; together with the location and extent of mitigation planting.
- 2.7. With regard to longer distance views from Bredon Hill within the Cotswolds National Landscape (viewpoints 19 and 20), the greater distance here is an important consideration

in that the site forms a very small part of a wide expansive panorama that the settlement of Pershore also contributes to. Likely visual effects from these more distant locations are negligible adverse, where the proposed development will read as small and consistent extension of the existing settlement.

Impact upon the Rural Character of the area

- 2.8 Neither the site nor the local/wider landscape is the subject to any specific landscape related planning designations; and nor are they located within any statutorily protected landscape.
- 2.9 Matters of landscape value, susceptibility and sensitivity have all been considered thoroughly as part of a LVIA process, prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third Edition (GLVIA3).
- 2.10 The site and its local/wider landscape are also not considered to be a valued landscape for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 180 (a), and there is no reference as such in the WDS Landscape and Visual Consultation Response to that effect.
- 2.11 The site and its local landscape also lie directly adjacent to the existing urban edge, and from where the site can be seen, it is seen within that context.
- 2.12 On this basis, the prospect of a genuinely “rural” character of the site and its local landscape are somewhat diluted, and this is an important factor in the assessment of likely landscape effects.
- 2.13 With respect to Tiddesley Wood itself, being a prominent local landscape feature, it understandably increases the sensitivity of the local landscape, however there will be no direct landscape impacts on this Woodland – indeed the proposed development seeks to protect and enhance its integrity both physically and in terms of its wildlife and biodiversity credentials.
- 2.14 Elsewhere, the proposed development seeks to provide comprehensive Green Infrastructure in the form of wildflower meadows; woodland copse and woodland belt planting; additional hedgerow planting; and water features. This mosaic of landscape features, consistent with locally characteristic landscape features, provides substantial mitigation and site-specific landscape enhancements.

Harm to the existing Settlement Character and Pattern

- 2.15 The settlement character and pattern of this south-western part of Pershore has extended in a south-westerly direction over time and is now characterised by residential development on rising slopes above Pershore Cemetery.
- 2.16 The proposed development will be consistent with this chronology, in all respects. The perceived difference with regard to the proposed development is that development would, in this case, extend closer to the edge of Tiddesley Wood. However, it will not encroach right up to the woodland, but leave a substantial grassland belt around it which remains an important part of the character of the settlement edge into the local and thereafter wider landscape, and vice versa.

Potential Lighting Impact

- 2.17 Whilst lighting levels reduce beyond the settlement edge here, as described in the LVIA, it is also the case that they do in the very vast majority of other settlement edge settings. Greenfield sites on the edges of settlements are by definition, not lit, but because of their disposition, they typically are not “dark” landscapes, and that is the baseline position here.
- 2.18 The proposed development will be lit to adoptable standards for residential development and design and will read consistently with the adjacent established residential areas. There will be no unique or elaborate lighting features as part of the proposed development such as floodlighting to a sports facility; car parking lighting or tall mast lighting. If there was, then that would make the proposed development different, however this is not the case.

Harm to the setting of The Millennium Way Long Distance Footpath

- 2.19 A short section of The Millennium Way extends across the site, linking Defford Road and the settlement edge with Tiddesley Wood. The current setting of this section of the Millennium Way as it crosses the site is agricultural and gives a sense of having left the settlement edge and transitioning into the wider landscape.
- 2.20 It is acknowledged that this setting will change in part. In order to address this, proposed development has been set back to the north and to the south of the route of the Footpath to specific parameters asset out on Figure 10 of the LVIA (between 20–45 metres). As such, whilst new development will be visible from the footpath, it will be subservient to the scale of the retained open space either side of the Footpath. Elements of landscape design in these setbacks will not be so dense as to enclose the route of the footpath.
- 2.21 As such, the overall setting of this section of The Millennium Way across the site, whilst having been subject to change in part, will remain both an open and landscaped one, and not an urban one.

Impact on Views towards The Cotswolds National Landscape

- 2.22 The existing visual links between the site and the Cotswolds National Landscape have been considered in the LVIA with specific reference to viewpoints 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. In these panoramas, the varying extent to which these visual links are available from publicly accessible locations are illustrated.
- 2.23 Some views from the site towards The Cotswolds will be partially obstructed; but it is not the case that all views will be lost – far from it. In some views, the ridgelines of Bredon Hill will be retained in part e.g. viewpoint 3; and in the vicinity of viewpoints 4 and 5 within the retained extensive open spaces between the western edge of the proposed development and Tiddesley Wood, existing visual links between the Long-Distance Footpath and National Landscape will generally be retained.
- 2.24 Elsewhere, more elevated views will be retained e.g. views 6 and 7; and in addition to these, the proposed open spaces that occupy the elevated northern sections of the site, will



provide a series of additional views towards the Cotswolds as part of the open space experience.

Topographical Disturbance

- 2.25 Changes to the site topography is inevitable on a sloping site – anywhere. Here, the vast majority of the development platforms lie on the shallower slopes of the site. It is only on sections of the western, northern, and north-eastern development cell edges that there will be more noticeable change in topographical terms, together with part of the site frontage down to Defford Road.
- 2.26 A balance of cut and fill on site is achievable, and the more accentuated level changes are localised, and will not alter substantial tracts of the site itself. Landscape earth modelling together with planting can be used where applicable along parts of the western, northern and north-eastern edges of the development envelope to create “non-engineered” design solution and provide an additional positive dimension to the landscape design as sloping sites often can. Some detailed landscape sections have been prepared accordingly ref. Pegasus dwg, P22-2506_EN_0015_C_001.
- 2.27 With particular reference to the western flank of the development cell that comprises the north-western part of the overall envelope, changes in level here can be likewise designed to soften the interface between built form and existing ground levels, to positively respond to the retained open pastoral setting of this edge of Tiddesley Wood, including both its landscape and visual character.
- 2.28 In terms of visibility of the proposed units, the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan is aligned with the Preliminary Cut and Fill Assessment Plan, such that all conclusions as drawn in the LVIA remain.

Impact on the Rural Character of the Defford Road Frontage adjacent to the Site

- 2.29 The proposed access arrangements along Defford Road will necessitate the removal of a number of trees and associated hedgerow vegetation, as set out in detail in the LVIA and the Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Notwithstanding this, the best specimen trees will be retained, and the entire frontage will be re-planted with a native woodland hedgerow/belt such that the existing vegetation loss, will be replaced over time to reinstate the green frontage either side of the site access. This is a point acknowledged in the WDC Landscape and Visual Consultation Response.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

- 2.30 Any assessment of cumulative effects must accept that all existing built form is part of the landscape and visual baseline. Cumulative effects must however deal with other potential similar developments that may come forward, and this includes the current application

directly to the north of this site, on land at Holloway, Pershore, application ref. W/24/00270/FUL, comprising residential development of 120 units.

- 2.31 This application post-dated the one the subject of this appeal, and as such, any cumulative landscape and visual effects were not able to be considered in the Orchard Farm LVIA submitted.
- 2.32 The Holloway proposal is located in the same Landscape Character Type as the Orchard Farm proposal (“Wooded Estatelands” LCT); and it is also likely to be visible in a number of the same locations as the Orchard Farm proposal. Consequently, this merits a consideration of landscape and visual cumulative effects. Due to the recent nature of the other application, this has not yet been possible but will be included in the Landscape and Visual Proof of Evidence.
- 2.33 However, given the relative disposition of both proposals, directly adjacent to the existing urban edge; the simple landscape compositions of both sites; and the proposed mitigation strategies that are in place, it is not considered that any such cumulative effects are likely to be unacceptable.

SWDP Policy 25: Landscape Character

- 2.34 SWDP Policy 25 is heavily focussed on matters of landscape character, and for development proposals to acknowledge what generates that character, and the need to conserve and enhance it. This is why the landscape and visually led approach has been adopted, and why the proposed development has been laid out in the way it has.
- 2.35 There is clear reference in all respects to the “Wooded Estatelands” LCT, and this has been embedded in the strategy that is comprehensively described, with reasoning and justification, within the submitted LVIA., with particular reference to the way in which the development proposal will protect and conserve both the physical fabric and setting of Tiddesley Wood.
- 2.36 The likely landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development have been both identified, analysed and mitigated, and on this basis, it is not considered that the proposed development is unacceptable in landscape and visual terms.

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