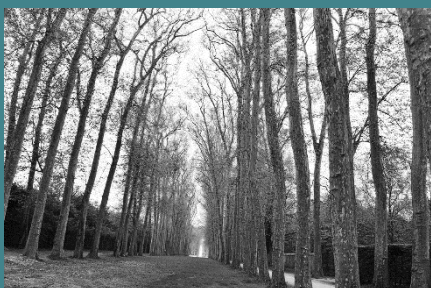


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SUMMARY Proof of Evidence Landscape and Visual Matters

Timothy Jackson BA (Hons), Dip LA, CMLI

APPEAL REF: APP/B3438/W/24/3351035
LPA REF: SMD/2021/0610

Client

Bloor Homes NW Ltd

Project

Land to the east of Froghall Road, Cheadle

Date

January 2025

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Approved/Date
	FINAL	TJ/07/01/25	TJ/07/01/25

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 My name is Timothy Richard Jackson. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and a Senior Director in the multi-disciplinary environmental design company FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). I have over 33 years' experience of landscape and development projects from initial conceptual design and assessment through to final completion and long-term aftercare.

2.0 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 An external independent review (for SMDC by consultants *Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking* (CD3.13)) of landscape and visual matters at the planning application stage substantially agreed with the landscape and visual effects assessed and described in the LVA submitted with the planning application. Despite this and a comprehensive and well considered approach to the design and layout of the proposed development and an Officers recommendation to approve the planning application, the Planning Committee overturned the recommendation and refused permission. I address landscape and visual matters relevant to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's (SMDC's) Reason for Refusal (RfR) No. 2.

3.0 THE APPEAL SITE – LANDSCAPE CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

3.1 A summary of the landscape baseline analysis confirms:

- The Site landscape and that of its immediate context includes no national, local or other landscape designations. It is also agreed with the Council's Landscape Witness that the Site and its immediate context does not constitute a '*valued landscape*' in the terms of para 187a of the NPPF (LSOCG para 4.16).
- The published landscape character assessment studies describe the broader landscape context of the Site as being principally undulating farmland with more distinctive smaller wooded valleys situated more removed to the north, east and south of the settlement.
- The district wide study ('Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment of Staffordshire Moorlands' (LSCASM) (2008) (CD9.4)) recognises that the landscape is; not particularly sensitive to change; generally, requires a combination of maintenance and enhancement; and is generally well structured yet should be monitored for urban expansion, with woodland and trees used to absorb new development and screen settlement edges.
- Within the '*Cheadle Setting*' appraisal of the LSCASM study, the Site lies outside and well beyond the areas defined as '*Important Landscape Setting to Settlement*' and it is also not visible from the '*Significant View*' identified in this study.
- In landscape and environmental terms, the Site occupies one of the least constrained settlement edge landscapes surrounding Cheadle (See my Appendix B).
- The Site itself comprises two improved pasture fields that fall towards the south and south east. It includes a number of hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees in varying condition. It is closely related to the existing settlement edge, which is relatively stark, exposed and open and imparts a strong influence on the landscape immediately surrounding this northern part of Cheadle. A Listed Building (Broad Haye Farmhouse) lies immediately to the east of the Site, with farmland to the north.

- The Landscape Value of the Site and its immediate context has been assessed in accordance with recognised guidelines (Landscape Institute TGN 02-21) to be Medium and this is also agreed by the Council's Landscape Witness (LSOCG para 4.16).

4.0 THE APPEAL SCHEME

- 4.1 The Appeal Scheme will deliver new residential development, together with new Green Infrastructure (GI), landscape, public open space, vehicular and pedestrian access and sustainable drainage measures. Taken together, the Parameters Plan, Illustrative Masterplan and DAS provide the decision maker with clear information about the scale, nature and design quality of the proposed development and associated landscape proposals. The scheme has been designed to respond to and respect its settlement edge setting and context and the existing landscape features and characteristics, both within and surrounding the site.
- 4.2 The majority of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees will be conserved and managed and the removal of the existing hedgerow and limited trees to the Froghall Road frontage will be more than offset by the new native hedgerow and tree planting to be undertaken. This will deliver a notable increase in the number of new native trees, hedgerow, and other plants across the site, in line with the LSCASM guidelines. The Council's Tree and Woodland Officer raised no objection to the Scheme and recognised that; *'there is ample opportunity to accommodate a significant amount of residential development on the Site without impacting upon the trees which must be retained'* (CD3.28; page 3; second para).
- 4.3 A proposed broad open landscape swathe in the east and south of the site will maintain a suitable stand off and separation to the Listed farmhouse. The strategic landscape and GI proposals will extend to approximately 39.5% of the total site area.

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 5.1 It is agreed with the Council's Landscape Witness that the landscape effect of the Appeal Scheme at the national ('Potteries and Churnet Valley' NCA) and district ('Ancient Slopes and Valley Farmlands' Landscape Type) scales will be respectively Negligible and Minor Adverse.
- 5.2 At the localised scale, comprising the Site and its immediate context, the Appeal Scheme will result in a residual Minor/ Moderate Adverse landscape effect, at Year 15. This reflects a number of factors, including the agreed value of this landscape (medium); the ability of this landscape to be able to accommodate new development, also taking into account the strong open influence of the existing adjoining development; and the well-considered layout, parameters and design of the Scheme, which includes a significant, robust and respectful landscape solution.
- 5.3 The Council's Landscape Witness considers this residual landscape effect of the Appeal Scheme on the Site and its immediate context to be Moderate Adverse. In either judgement, this does not in my opinion indicate a significant adverse impact upon the character of this settlement edge landscape.
- 5.4 In respect of the visual effects of the Appeal Scheme, these will principally relate to immediate views from the adjoining and nearby properties, PROW Cheadle 40 (and Kingsley 94) and Froghall Road; and more distant views from stretches of PROW Cheadle 38 and 39 to the south east of the Site.

- 5.5 For those properties immediately backing on to the Site there will inevitably be obvious visual change arising from the Appeal Scheme yet there is '*no right to a view*' and it is agreed with SMDC (LSOCG paragraphs 4.29 and 4.30) that there will be no unacceptable effects upon the residential visual amenity of these properties.
- 5.6 In relation to the views for users of PROW 40 where it adjoins the Site, the landscape and public open space proposals on the southern and eastern sides of the Site will be effective in visually filtering and screening these views, which presently include close and clear views to the existing Broad Hayes Park and Hammersley Hayes Road properties. The broad swathe of open landscape and planting proposals around the eastern and southern parts of the Site will maintain clear visual separation to Broad Haye Farmhouse (Listed Building) to the east of the Site. This outer swathe of landscape and open space will also assist in assimilating and filtering the more distant views towards the Appeal Scheme from the PROW (Cheadle 38 and 39) to the south east.
- 5.7 In overall terms, the visual effects of the Appeal Scheme are not extensive or unusual and are generally confined to a relatively limited number of receptors. Where visible, the proposed development will be seen alongside the existing relatively open settlement edge and will not be perceived as an uncharacteristic or discordant development within the views. In fact, the new landscape and planting proposals that form an important part of the Appeal Scheme will, increasingly over time, filter and screen views and will provide a positive landscape design solution and improvement to the existing settlement edge.
- 5.8 With the exception of slight differences in two visual effects judgements (LSOCG; Appendix B) , the Council's Landscape Advisers (CD3.13) agreed with the visual effects assessment in the LVA.
- 5.9 Overall, the effects of the Appeal Scheme on landscape and visual resources and receptors will not lead to any significant harm in these terms.

6.0 POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 The proposed development addresses and responds positively to the relevant policy context and any effects upon landscape character and visual effects are limited, localised and not unacceptable in these terms.
- 6.2 In respect of Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan policy DC3 (*Landscape and Settlement Setting*), the Appeal Scheme will not lead to a 'prominent intrusion' into the countryside. The Appeal Scheme will remain closely allied to the existing adjoining development and settlement edge and will be readily perceived alongside and as an integral part of this development edge of Cheadle. The Appeal Scheme will also not result in a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence.
- 6.3 In fact, the Appeal Scheme will have no discernible impact on the areas identified as being '*important to the landscape setting*' of Cheadle or to the important ('*significant*') views as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence (see '*Cheadle Setting*' plan; CD9.4 and my Appendix B).

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Site occupies a settlement edge position, strongly influenced by the relatively exposed and open existing housing and development; with further ongoing development close to the south. It does not lie within a designated landscape or a landscape recognised as being of any particular value or interest. It also lies outside and well beyond those areas identified in the Council's Landscape and Settlement Character evidence base as being important to the landscape setting of Cheadle. In landscape and environmental terms, it occupies one of the least constrained areas surrounding Cheadle.
- 7.2 It is agreed with SMDC, that the Site and its immediate context is not a 'valued landscape' in NPPF paragraph 187a terms. It is further agreed that the Site and its immediate context is of Medium landscape value.
- 7.3 Further to this, there was also a very good level of agreement between the Council's Landscape Advisers and the submitted LVA on the effects of the Appeal Scheme at the application stage and this informed the Officers recommendation to approve the scheme. Despite there being some further differences in the levels of effects with the Council's Landscape Witness for the Appeal, these remain relatively limited.
- 7.4 Inevitably, in order to meet development needs, greenfield sites are required for new homes and it is therefore implicit that some degree of adverse effect and harm will arise in landscape and visual terms. In this instance, it is evident from the published studies; the site specific analysis; and the response of the Council's Landscape Advisers, that this Site does have the capacity and is capable of assimilating new residential development, whilst mitigating and minimising the degree of harm to an acceptable level.
- 7.5 I conclude that the proposals will result in limited and localised adverse landscape and visual effects and will deliver other medium and longer term landscape and GI benefits. The proposed development will establish an appropriate development and landscape solution and it will not cause significant and demonstrable harm in landscape or visual terms.
- 7.6 I conclude on landscape and visual grounds that there are no justifiable or valid reasons to withhold planning permission for this proposed development.

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