

Landscape & Visual Appraisal

Construction of 16 Dwellings including 40% affordable housing and associated infrastructure



Land East of Ugley Village Hall, Ugley

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to predict and review the nature of potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity resulting from a development proposal. The report builds on the initial work undertaken by Nigel Cowlin Landscape Assessment & Design, relating to a larger parcel of land, this preliminary strategic landscape study is provided at appendix A and Landscape survey & analysis figure 1 to 8, at appendix B.
- 1.2. The application is for 16 new dwellings on Land to the East of Ugley Village Hall in a former Gravel Pit. The computerised view shed analysis and mapping zones provided in Nigel Cowlin' initial work are used to understand the where the site is visible from. Site visits were also undertaken June and August 2023, and July 2024.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. The planning application proposes 16 new dwellings including 40% affordable providing a mixture of 1–4-bedroom houses, in a traditional vernacular style. The houses are a combination of semi and detached properties that are characteristic of the surrounding dwellings.
- 2.2. The existing entrance off Pound Lane is proposed to be upgraded and utilised as the vehicle access. The internal layout complies with the Essex Design Guide and has appropriate fire and refuse access. All the properties have on plot parking and four additional visitor spaces are provided. A pedestrian access onto the B1383 is proposed which will give direct access onto the pedestrian/ cycle links and the bus stop which has an hourly Monday- Saturday service.
- 2.3. The above elements are shown on the drawings and explained by the reports that comprise this planning application.

3. Site Context

- 3.1. The site is located to the east of Ugley Village Hall on the junction of B1383 and Pound Lane. Ugley is an established village with a village hall, Church and employment uses such as the quarry and the residential unit at Orchard House.
- 3.2. To the west of the site is the B1383 (Cambridge Road), beyond which the land is defined by gently undulating farmland leading up to Bollington Hall Farm, with large rectilinear open field in the lower valley side.
- 3.3. The site falls within the built form of this part of Ugley parish, which includes houses that front the B1383 and look toward Bollington Hall. Some of the properties are Listed Buildings. Most notably this includes the prominent and striking Grade II* Orford House which is a C18th grand scale house, directly overlooking the valley. Bollington Hall and associated farm cottages sit on the middle valley side within the land holding. Wade Hall and Wade Hall Barn (both Grade II Listed Buildings) occupy a similar position within the farmland, a little to the north of Bollington Hall.
- 3.4. Landscape characterisation studies broadly divide the area into Settled Chalk Valleys and Wooded Plateau Farmland landscape character types (Landscape East). The Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2006) more specifically identifies this area as a convergence of the Debden Farmland Plateau and Broxton Farmland Plateau, with the Stort Valley setting of Manuden adjacent to the west
- 3.5. The ZTV show that site is not visible from the North and East and has limited visibility from the south and West which is largely screened by existing vegetation and buildings.
- 3.6. There are no Public Rights of way within the site. There is though a network of footpaths within the wider landscape to the east and west. As noted above there are no viewpoints from the east and those from the west are limited due to the location of the site within a group of built form and the existing boundary vegetation which is proposed to be retained.
- 3.7. The site currently has an existing gated access off Pound Lane, which is proposed to be use and upgraded to facilitate access for the proposed dwellings. The site is a redundant gravel pit, which means that its level has been reduced notably from the natural ground level. The historic use of the site means it is not viable for re use as farmland and has therefore been underutilised for several decades.

4. Policy Context and designations

- 4.1. National landscape designations: None
- 4.2. Local landscape designations/ policy: None
- 4.3. Built Heritage designations: As noted above there are designated heritage assesses with the existing built form in this part of Ugley Parish. However, none of these directly abut the site.
- 4.4. Ecological/ habitat designations: None
- 4.5. Other relegation designations/ policy: None

5. Landscape baseline conditions:

National Character area profile:

- 5.1. The Site is located within National Character Area 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (NCA 86) as defined by Natural England. This is a national scale assessment which provides the broadest scale overview of landscape character. The detail of more local scale landscape character assessment studies is of more relevance to the appraisal of development proposals of this scale.

Regional Landscape Character:

- 5.2. The East of England Landscape Framework (Landscape East 2010) places The Site as within the Valley Settled Farmlands landscape character type. This character type is described as 'Settled, often busy landscapes which occur along the sides of the sinuous valley corridors that cut through the East Anglian clay plateau.'
- 5.3. As with the national scale assessment above, this is a very broad scale landscape assessment providing some overview, but it does not provide the level of detail relevant to the scale of the development and context at hand.

District/ Unitary Landscape Character:

- 5.4. Landscape characterisation studies broadly divide the area into Settled Chalk Valleys and Wooded Plateau Farmland landscape character types (Landscape East). The Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2006) more specifically identifies this area as a convergence of the Debden Farmland Plateau and Broxted Farmland Plateau, with the Stort Valley setting of Manuden adjacent to the west.

Conclusions on landscape value:

- 5.5. The site is not characteristic of the wider landscape being contained by existing buildings and vegetation and separated from the wider countryside by the B1383 for the purposes of this LVA the site is considered to be of 'Low' landscape value. The characteristics and qualities found are therefore not indicative of a 'valued landscape' as referred to in paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

6. Visual baseline conditions.

- 6.1. Zone of Theoretical Visibility ZTV mapping has been employed to provide an overview of potential visibility based on terrain modelling.

ZTV (extent and nature)

- 6.2. The ZTV modelling was initially done for a larger piece of land. This shows that there is no visibility of the site from the east and that the application site is only visible from the immediate proximity from the north and south. From the West views are achievable from a greater distance, but these are limited.

Field study ZVI findings

- 6.3. Due to the bowl shape of the site ie reduced ground levels compared to its surroundings, views into the site are very limited and it makes a very limited contribution to the wider setting.

Potential construction effects:

- 6.4. Given the modest scale of development and that there are no construction complications it is considered that there would be no materially notable construction phase impacts to consider.

Potential operational effects:

- 6.5. As residential development, there are no unusual operational activities or products that would give rise to other notable landscape and visual effects.

7. Primary mitigation

- 7.1. The development has been located within the former gravel pits and is inward facing to minimise its visual presences. The existing vegetation will largely screen it from outside views. Although there are gaps in the low-level cover in some locations. It is therefore proposed to plant under the existing vegetation to fill the gaps and mitigate the impact on these occasional viewpoints.

8. Landscape effects

Landscape receptor Character of local landscape setting

- 8.1. As noted above the site is not characteristic of the landscape character area it falls within, being a former gravel pit with reduced levels and its surroundings largely consisting of existing built form. It therefore reads as part of the settlement and not part of the wider landscape area. It is therefore attributed low value and has a low susceptibility to change and low sensitivity.
- 8.2. The proposed development is also of a modest scale introducing only 16 dwellings within an area of existing built form. Its overall impact on the local landscape is therefore also judged to be low.

- 8.3. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The following sets out how this application meets those objectives:

Visual effects:

- 8.4. As noted above there're are limited views into the site and these are mostly only from the immediate vicinity being the pavement on the B1383 and Pound lane to the south. See pictures on the next page.



(view of site from Pound Lane)



(view of site from B1383)

- 8.5. The visual outlook from these locations is largely of the thick existing boundary vegetation which is to be retained. These viewpoints are considered to be of medium value.
- 8.6. If the vegetation were to be removed the susceptibility of this visual receptor would be High however if they are retained it is considered to be Low. Therefore, as the boundary vegetation is proposed to be retained and reinforced the level of effect on these viewpoints is considered to be Low.

9. Summary & Conclusions

- 9.1. This study has appraised and addressed potential landscape and visual impacts for a proposed development of 16 dwellings within the former Gravel pit to the east of Ugley Village Hall.
- 9.2. The findings of this are that the site is not characteristic of the wider landscape due to its contained location within the existing built form and its former use as a gravel pit, which has resulted in its levels being reduced. It also has established vegetation that contains it on all sides.
- 9.3. This means that there are very few visual receptors to the site and the effect on the landscape character is predicted to be negligible.
- 9.4. Provided the boundary hedges are retained it is also considered that the impact on views from the roads and footpath adjacent to the site will be limited. For this reason, it is considered that the development of this site will not have an obvious harmful effect on the area.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Landscape Strategy text

Appendix B: Landscape survey & analysis figures 1-8