

Ref: NC21.687-Landscape strategy text.docx
Date: 9 November 2021

PRELIMINARY STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE STUDY

Bollington Hall Farm

This note provides high level landscape and visual appraisal & landscape design input for promotion of land for a major development. The landscape and visual appraisal component is an initial exploratory exercise reviewing constraints and opportunities and leading to recommendations for shaping of the development. This has informed the master planning stages and provides supporting text, mapping and diagrams.

This work has been informed by desk and field study carried out and interpreted by Chartered Landscape Architects experienced in landscape assessment and landscape design issues relating to planning and development.

Desk study work completed:

1. Review of local landscape character publications and any attributed value/quality for the local landscape setting;
2. Review of local planning policy context checking for statutory and local planning designations regarding protection of the landscape;
3. Review of nearby heritage assets such as Parks & Gardens, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments; and
4. Zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) mapping.

Field survey work completed:

1. Site visit to confirm form and features of site;
 2. Observation of context to review and refine understanding of local landscape character;
 3. Checking potential visibility of the proposed development from public vantage points (guided by the above ZTV mapping); and
 4. Collection of viewpoint photography records.
-

Landscape context analysis

Bollington Hall Farm occupies the gently undulating east facing slopes of the broad valley directly north of Stansted Mountfitchet. The land extends for around 2km along the valley side, as well as into the valley bottom to the east and onto the plateau top to the west. This valley is formed by part of a network of tributary streams which merge on the east edge of Stansted Mountfitchet and flow into the River Stort on the other side of the town. It is one of a series of neighbouring north to south flowing valleys in this part of north-west Essex. The most pronounced of these is formed by the River Stort, which lies just over the hill to the west of Bollington Hall Farm.

Bollington Hall Farm is an arable farm with large rectilinear open fields in the lower valley side and then irregular shaped fields framed by woodland blocks on the high ground. The field pattern retains some of its historic shaping, but most of the fields have been formed from the combining of two or more smaller fields, as part of modern farming practices.

To the east, the land holding borders alongside the busy B1383 (Cambridge Road). This traces the eastern edge of the valley bottom, heading north from Stansted Mountfitchet. There is loose and patchy settlement alongside to the east of the road. This is part of Ugley parish, and it includes houses overlooking the road with an aspect towards Bollington Hall Farm. 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.

The north-eastern extent of the landholding includes the extensive Broom Wood. This is an Ancient Woodland site, but it has been largely replanted in recent times with mixed conifer and deciduous plantation species. Several

P:\10.3 Current Projects\596 UGL Bollington Hall\2. Planning\2.3 Applications\App 002 Ugley Village Hall\2.4.02 Draft Plans & Reports\Reports\Landscape Assessment\NC21.687-Landscape strategy text.docx

other blocks of woodland punctuate the skyline on the upper valley side and plateau top of the farm. This includes Houghtey Wood, which is a better-preserved example of Ancient Woodland.

The land is crossed by a network of Bridleways, connecting east-west between adjacent valleys and north-south along the middle valley side. This includes a section of the Harcamlow Way. When walking these paths the land has a somewhat remote feeling, especially on the higher ground away from main settlement areas, but it is also a little inhospitable in wide open land in the lower valley area near to the B1383.

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.

Computer aided analysis indicates potential visibility extending east across the facing valley side at Ugley, and south in the intervening land to the edge of Stansted Mountfitchet. The new Bluebell Drive development is prominent in the scene here. To the north, visibility is greatly constrained by Broom Wood. Potential visibility is also noted beyond the local valley landscape across to the other side of the neighbouring Stort Valley to the west, and onto high ground, towards Henham, across the next valley to the east.

Field survey work shows that there would be no notable visibility from the high ground near Henham and limited visibility from the near valley side at Ugley. However, there is potential for development on the higher parts of the site area to be prominent on the skyline in views from the west side of the Stort Valley above Manuden. This would be an undesirable intrusion into this otherwise separate valley scene. Further visibility analysis has demonstrated that constraining development within the site area, to below the 100m contour, would protect against this. Accordingly, the visual influence of a development in this area would be restricted to the immediate valley context, most commonly visible when travelling along the B1383 (Cambridge Road) adjacent to the east. Properties facing on to Cambridge Road in this vicinity would have a relatively open view except where there is intervening roadside vegetation.

Landscape led development recommendations

There appears to be capacity in this landscape to accommodate a discrete settlement in the middle valley side. Here its influence would be entirely contained to the close parts of the valley setting and there would be no direct harm to the setting of nearby towns or villages.

Recommendations to achieve best fit with the landscape setting:

- Development should be contained to below the 100m contour. Development of this higher ground would likely to lead to undesirable sky lining influences, seen from across the Stort Valley west of Manuden.
- There should be a set-back alongside the B1383 (Cambridge Road). This low-lying land provides an opportunity for accommodating drainage features and a buffer of parkland green space for existing properties facing across Cambridge Road (in particular the Grade II* Listed Orford House).
- Use the existing and historic field pattern as basis for shaping the development. This would help to form a development in tune with its landscape context and comfortably contained within a landscape framework.

- Create an extensive network of linked open spaces around the new settlement, defined by a framework of field hedging and trees. This would mimic the traditional pattern of smaller land parcels around historic settlements, as well as providing a containing and softening setting in which to accommodate the new development. The strength of the existing woodland blocks provides a great start to this.
- Plant new woodland blocks to enhance the framing and containment of the development in keeping with the underlying landscape pattern.
- The most embedded open spaces within the new settlement would be most suited to accommodating recreation ground and formal parkland type facilities. More outlying areas could include allotments, community orchards, and informal parkland / semi-natural green spaces. Some 'rewilding' of areas may also be beneficial for biodiversity net gain.
- Retain other outlying areas as productive arable farmland on upper edges of the Stort Valley, overlooking Manuden. This would ensure the conservation of this separate landscape area.
- Manage embedded and adjacent woodland areas as part of the public open space network.

Survey & analysis figures (separate A3 document)

Figure 1	Location map
Figure 2	Designations map
Figure 3	Landform elevation map
Figure 4	Landscape character maps
Figure 5	Zone of theoretical visibility map (whole area west of B1383)
Figure 6	Zone of theoretical visibility map (area below 105m contour)
Figure 7	Zone of theoretical visibility map (area below 100m contour)
Figure 8	Landscape analysis

Landscape strategy

Drawing 21.687-P201 provides an indicative landscape strategy based on the suggested development masterplan. This plan demonstrates how the development could be accommodated within an attractive landscape framework; both presenting the development as embedded and softened within its setting, whilst creating an interesting and pleasing environment for the new community to enjoy. The list of key features includes:

- The development would be surrounded by a network of parkland and green spaces within a framework of field hedges replicating the traditional structure of the local landscape. Some of these would be replacing previously lost field boundaries, some would be retained surviving field boundaries, and some would be new additions in keeping with the historic field patterns. This enclosure of open spaces would mimic the patterns of smaller land parcels commonly found around historic settlements, as well as providing a containing and softening setting in which to accommodate the new development.
- A buffer of wooded parkland would be provided on the eastern edge, alongside the B1383 (Cambridge Road). This would provide separation and screening from the busy road, as well as giving attractively framed approaches into the new settlement. It would also act to protect the setting of existing properties facing across Cambridge Road (in particular the Grade II* Listed Orford House). The parkland corridor on the inner edge of this could accommodate a series of surface water drainage attenuation pools along the route of an existing stream in the valley bottom.
- The western edges of the development contain the main provision of open spaces. There are amenity green space / park areas within and immediately adjacent to the development. In addition, 'rewilding' areas

are proposed as a country park / common land style outward progression from the amenity green spaces. These would act as a buffer and transition to the countryside on the high plateau landscape beyond. Existing and proposed woodland blocks here would enhance the framing, backdrop and containment of the development in keeping with the prevailing landscape pattern on the valley side. They would also provide a supplementary and contrasting type of accessible natural green space for the new community.

- Arable farmland would be retained on the highest parts of the plateau above the neighbouring Stort Valley, overlooking Manuden. This would ensure the conservation of this as a separate untouched landscape area away from the development.
- Where possible main streets would be tree lined and green corridors would connect through the development areas.
- Play site distribution throughout the development is based on the established 'Fields in Trust' guidance. This results in 6 LEAP sites, 3 MUGAs and 2 NEAPs.
- The range of spaces and extent of semi-natural green space or 'rewilding' areas would provide good opportunities for biodiversity net gain.

Drawings (separate A3 documents)

- 21.687-P201 Landscape Masterplan
- 21.687-P202 Play Areas Plan