

Summary Proof of Evidence: Landscape and Visual Matters

James W. Atkin.

Land north of Browns Lane, Tamworth
On behalf of Summix Developments Limited

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Appeal Ref: APP/K3415/W/24/3340089 | LPA Ref: 18/00840/OUTMEI & 24/00004/REF

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1. Introduction

Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1. My name is James Atkin. I hold the position of Senior Director (Landscape) in the Lichfield Office of the Pegasus Group. The Company undertakes all aspects of town planning, urban and landscape design and environmental planning. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Landscape Design and Plant Science and a Diploma in Landscape Management, both from the University of Sheffield. I am also a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (2005).
- 1.2. I have over 23 years professional experience specialising in the application of landscape and visual assessment. I have authored landscape and visual impact appraisals and assessments, based on best practice guidance, both in the UK and in the international context. I have also provided expert witness services, presenting evidence for appeal in respect of written representations, hearings and public inquiries; this relates to sites across the UK and a range of sectors.
- 1.3. As an inherent part of this work I apply an iterative process of landscape and visual appraisal and assessment to inform masterplanning principles to ensure landscape and visual constraints and opportunities are recognised and an appropriate scheme of mitigation applied.

Terms of Reference

- 1.4. This Proof of Evidence is written on behalf of Summix Developments Limited (the appellant) and addresses landscape and visual matters in respect of land to the north of Browns Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire (the appeal site).
- 1.5. The appeal site is primarily located in the administrative area of Lichfield District Council, however the application boundary of the site, related to the location of the proposed access, overlaps the neighbouring administrative area of Tamworth Borough Council.
- 1.6. My evidence relates to an appeal against Lichfield District Council's (LDC) refusal to grant planning permission of an outline planning application (LPA reference 18/00840), including:
"...Outline planning permission for up to 210 dwellings, public open space, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage, and associated infrastructure – with all matters reserved except access."
- 1.7. The outline application was submitted with a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) addressing the proposed development, prepared by Pegasus Group (CD-1.2.2) (the PG LVIA), which includes technical information in terms of baseline situation, analysis of constraints and opportunities, and subsequent assessment of impacts and effects.
- 1.8. Pegasus Group have been commissioned to consider the proposed development and the reasons for refusal set out in the decision notice, subsequently presenting evidence in respect of landscape and visual matters.
- 1.9. Principles and good practice for undertaking, and/or applying the principles of, LVIA are set out in the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA)



Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (2013) (GLVIA3)¹. The concepts and procedures set out in this guidance have been adopted where appropriate.

- 1.10. The professional judgements which are presented in this proof of evidence for this appeal (LDC references 18/00840/OUTMEI and 24/00004/REF) have been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

2. Overview of the Appeal Site

- 2.1. The appeal site extends to ca. 12.65 hectares (ha) and comprises two medium sized fields of broadly regular shape, both previously in arable use at the time of the original application, but since reverting to rough grazing land.
- 2.2. The site is located on the north-east edge of Tamworth where it occupies an area of land that falls gradually to the north between levels of ca. +81m above ordnance datum (AOD) on the settlement edge of Tamworth, down to ca. +71m AOD at the lower points on the northern boundary. The slope is broadly even across this fall. Outside of the appeal site, to the east, the landform rises to a broad low plateau at ca. +80m AOD before it falls more steeply into the valley of the River Anker. To the west, landform has a more gradual profile, undulating across a relatively lower plateau with a more gradual fall toward the valley for the River Tame.
- 2.3. The PG LVIA sets out a more detailed description of the landscape and visual baseline, including reference to published landscape character studies (**CD-1.2.2**, paras 4.1 to 4.28).

3. Main Issues

- 3.1. In respect of the main issue to be addressed at this appeal in respect of landscape and visual matters, this relates to the matter of physical and visual separation between Tamworth and Wigginton and also the nature of the proposed access within the administrative area of TBC.
- 3.2. Consequently, this evidence has addressed:
- i. The nature of the existing landscape between Tamworth and Wigginton (including the appeal site and nearby residential developments) with reference to the physical landscape attributes which are present;
 - ii. The extent to which these contribute to the existing physical separation between Tamworth and Wigginton currently and how this would change as a consequence of the proposed development;
 - iii. Considering visual separation, the location and current experience of visual receptors in the area from where 'visual coalescence may or may not be perceived';

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (April 2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition

- iv. The extent to which visual coalescence would occur from these locations; and
- v. The physical characteristics of Brown's Lane currently and the extent to which the proposed access would be consistent with this or, if not, the extent to which this would constitute an unacceptable impact.

- 3.3. This evidence has highlighted the process of landscape and visual analysis which was applied to the design evolution and is presented in the submitted PG LVIA (**CD-1.2.2**). In particular this reiterates the analysis of the landscape and visual baseline and subsequent development of a landscape and green infrastructure strategy. That strategy recognises the local landscape context and adopts an approach to mitigation as an inherent part of the proposed masterplan.
- 3.4. That strategy includes a contained area for proposed built form along with robust landscape buffers in key parts of the appeal site which, along with additional landscape planting, will physically and visually contain the development envelope. The strategy also maintains the western field enclosure of the appeal site as open and agricultural in character, consequently maintaining physical separation between the proposed development (and Tamworth) and Wigginton.
- 3.5. In the absence of any physical coalescence, there remains scope for the perception of merging, or visual coalescence, from certain receptors groups and locations. This evidence demonstrates that for many parts of the landscape the proposed development will not be visible, but where built form will be visible, this will not cause the settlement areas of Tamworth and Wigginton to merge.
- 3.6. In respect of the proposed access, the proposals are consistent with the existing street scene along Brown's Lane where there are other road junctions of similar scale and nature and various other consistent features in terms of tree planting and verges. Were the residential development within Lichfield District not to come forward, the access would not be entirely out of character and would read in a similar way to that of former cul-de-sac's which fronted out to the adjacent countryside.
- 3.7. On balance, landscape and visual matters in respect of coalescence between Tamworth and Wigginton, and impacts on the character of Brown's Lane are not considered to be sufficient to support refusal of the application.

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