

Landscape Briefing Note

Ingatestone, Island Site

9th March 2018

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed by Simons Developments to provide landscape advice for the potential development for employment use on land enclosed by Roman Road (B1002), Ingatestone and adjacent A12.
- 1.2 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) is not a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) but seeks to introduce the principle of development into the context of the existing landscape character, visual environment and landscape related policy to assess the ability of the site to integrate potential future development.
- 1.3 It is assumed that any subsequent application for the development of this site would be accompanied by a full LVIA that provides a detailed assessment of the potential effects of specific development proposals upon the receiving landscape character and visual environment.

2 BASELINE ASSESSMENT

- 2.1. The site is located on the south-western edge of Ingatstone built-up area. It consists of a vacant field located between the Roman Road (B1002) and the A12. The site is close to the built-up edge of Ingatstone, however, it is not directly adjacent to it due to the presence of the surrounding roads.
- 2.2. There are no listed buildings in close proximity to the site, the closest being Adam and Powis' Farmhouse and Kettle's Farm House, both located to the west of the site.
- 2.3. The site is a not currently built on and is covered by the Green Belt and by the Special Landscape Area
- 2.4. At a larger landscape scale, the site is located on a slope going from the village of Fryerning to Ingatstone and is surrounded to the south, south-west and east by the other hillsides that are part of the small valleys formed by the Wid River and its tributaries.
- 2.5. The site comprises an area of disused field comprising patches of overgrown rough grassland and enclosed by established scrubland and by dense native tree hedges.
- 2.6. Other than the patches of overgrown rough grassland, the internal components of the site offer little in the way of landscape value. However, the more established vegetation structure and mature tree hedges along the boundaries provides a high degree of containment and visual separation from Roman Road (B1002), immediate adjoining fields to the west and east and surrounding residential developments.
- 2.7. A number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are located within the vicinity of the site which provide links between Ingatstone, the villages of Fryerning and Mountnessing and the wider countryside. The closest footpath from the site is the Public Right of Way (PRoW) 274-36 located to the north along the eastern side of the A12. This later provides links to other PRoW located within the vicinity of the site. The site is not publicly accessible.

Landscape Policy

- 2.8. The site is currently situated within the London Metropolitan Green Belt. This designation is covered by several saved policies in the adopted Replacement Local Plan (August 2005) and Draft New Local Plan (February 2016). Within the adopted Local Plan, the site is also located within a Special Landscape Area. It is considered that the landscape related policies include:
- Policy C8 – Special Landscape Areas
 - Policy C12 – Landscape Improvements
 - Policy GB1 – New Development
 - Policy GB2 – Development Criteria
 - Policy GB28 – Landscape Enhancement

Landscape Character

- 2.9. At national level, the site is located in the centre of the Northern Thames Basin Character Area (NCA111). This assessment provides a useful introduction to the landscape of the region but is too broad to apply at a more site specific level.
- 2.10. The Essex County Council Landscape Character Assessment identifies the site as being located within the Brentwood Hills Character Area.
- 2.11. At a more site-specific level, Aspect has undertaken an initial assessment of the landscape character of the site and its immediate setting. This assessment identifies that the site is located within a settlement fringe landscape along the A12. The site is surrounded by existing roads and by arable fields to its north and west. The established vegetation structure lining the site boundaries provides a robust edge to the site and creates a strong degree of separation between the site and its wider setting. The proximity of existing residential development to the east gives an urban edge character to the site. The extent of vegetation within the context of the site affords a strong degree of physical and visual containment.
- 2.12. In terms of landscape quality, it is considered that the site is influenced by its proximity to the A12 to the east and by the existing urban edge detracting from the remoteness and tranquillity of the site. The established vegetation

associated with the site and its immediate context, coupled with the sites topography ensures that the site is not apparent within the wider setting and as such does not contribute to the scenic quality of the area. There are no features associated with the site that are considered rare or representative in landscape terms.

- 2.13. Taking into account that there are no Public Rights of Way within the site and that it is not publicly accessible, it is considered that the recreational value is none. There are no known historic associations with the site or its immediate setting. The site is located within the designation of a Special Landscape Area which is a local designation. To that end, it is considered that the value of the site is medium / low.
- 2.14. The site is distinctly separate from the wider Green Belt and Special Landscape Area designations, which has limited intervisibility with the site due to the existing landform. The presence of the A12 along its eastern boundary also contribute to the character of the site. To the north and to the east, the sites localised setting is already largely developed and located within an urbanised landscape. It is considered that the value of the site is medium, based on the above analysis.
- 2.15. In terms of susceptibility to change as a result of proposed mixed use development, it is considered that the settlement edge landscape, with the existing built edge, together with the established vegetation structure and the presence of urbanising features, means that the site has some capacity to accommodate change.
- 2.16. It is considered that the site has a medium susceptibility to change as result of sensitively designed mixed use development. To that end, it is considered that the localised landscape character, in which the site is set, is of medium sensitivity.

Visual Environment

- 2.17. A visual assessment of the site and its setting has been undertaken that concluded that the site is visually contained due to its topography and existing boundary vegetation.

- 2.18. The existing vegetation located the site boundaries restricts views into the site from the roads and public footpaths surrounding it and affords a strong degree of separation and visual containment. Based on the visual assessment, it is considered that any glimpsed views of development would only be seen in the context of transient receptors moving along the road corridors and within the context of the urban edge.

3. Potential Landscape and Visual Effects

Effect upon Landscape Character

- 3.1. The context of the immediate sites setting is already characterised by the neighbouring built form associated with Ingatestone. The retention and reinforcement of the majority of the existing boundary planting and internal planting where appropriate will ensure that a robust green edge to the site is maintained, although it is noted some vegetation will require to be removed for access and visibility of the end users. The introduction of a sensitively designed employment use scheme could be integrated without significant harm to the existing key characteristics of the sites setting. The proposed development of the site would be perceived within the context of existing residential properties, road corridors and other urbanising features ensuring that they were not introducing new or alien components into the fabric of the landscape. The use of a considered and appropriate palette of materials, which have been informed by the local vernacular will ensure that the proposed development can be integrated into its setting. The incorporation of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping will also assist the integration of the proposals creating a high-quality environment in which to work.
- 3.2. It is therefore considered that the proposed development of the site for sensitively designed employment use can be integrated without significant harm to the existing landscape character of the site and its localised and wider setting.

Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 3.3. Within the context of the existing visual environment, it is considered that the site can integrate appropriately designed development without compromising the amenities or qualities of the localised setting. As concluded within the visual assessment, views of the site are localised, with the primary receptors being the users of the road corridors surrounding the site.
- 3.4. Within these views, the site is not readily apparent, with the existing landform and boundary vegetation affording a high degree of visual and physical containment to the site, restricting internal views.

- 3.5. It is considered that there are no long distance views of the site, which is afforded by a strong degree of containment by the existing built-up area of Ingatestone and the existing landform. The presence of the established vegetation cover within the localised site context and the retention of boundary tree hedges where appropriate will ensure that carefully designed built form will not appear prominent or overbearing.
- 3.6. It is noted that there will be some vegetation removal to necessitate the proposals and allow for some visibility for the proposed employment uses from the adjoining road corridors. The retention and enhancement of the majority of the landscaped boundaries will however soften the proposed built elevations and assist in the successful integration of the built form. The retention of these features will also ensure that any built form is afforded an appropriate set back from the road corridor.
- 3.7. Therefore, it is considered that the development of the site for employment use can be integrated without significant harm to the visual environment and related receptors. Any views of the proposed development would be highly localised and seen within the context of existing built form.

Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

- 3.8. It is acknowledged that the development of this site would extend built form into a previously undeveloped field covered by the Green Belt and Special Landscape Area designations. The site is, however, well related to the existing urban edge.
- 3.9. It is therefore considered that, if designed appropriately, the development of the site would constitute a logical urban addition to Ingatestone. The site presents opportunities to provide sustainable land for employment use development within the localised context of the western part of Ingatestone that can be integrated without significant harm to the wider landscape setting.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd have received instruction on behalf of Simons Developments to provide landscape advice for the exclusion of the site from the London Metropolitan Green Belt, demonstrating that that site is capable of accommodating employment use development.
- 4.2. In terms of landscape quality, it is considered that the site is influenced by its proximity to the A12 and to the existing urban edge, detracting from the remoteness and tranquillity of the site. The established vegetation associated with the site and its immediate context, coupled with the sites topography ensures that views of the site from the wider setting will be limited and as such the site does not contribute to the scenic quality of the area. There are no features associated with the site that are considered rare or representative in landscape terms.
- 4.3. The context of the immediate site setting is already characterised by the neighbouring built form associated with Ingatestone. The retention and reinforcement of the existing boundary planting where appropriate will ensure that a robust green edge to the site is maintained and will effectively screen the majority of views from its immediate setting.
- 4.4. The use of an appropriate palette of materials and a carefully considered layout will ensure that the proposed development can be integrated in this location and appear as a natural addition to the existing urban grain. Views of the proposed development will also be localised and will not give rise to significant adverse effects. Currently, views towards the site are characterised by a degree of built form associated with its immediate setting. The proposed development will not introduce new components that would appear alien or out of character within the context of these views and will not appear dominant or overbearing within the context of the adjoining streetscene.
- 4.5. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development of the site for employment use development can be successfully integrated within this location, and is supportable from a landscape and visual context and the site would be appropriate for taking forward.

Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd 9th March 2018