

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ISSUES SCOPING REPORT

Land South of the B1002
Ingatstone, Essex

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This brief report provides a review of the landscape setting and context for proposed residential development on land to the south of the B1002 High Street, Ingatestone. This report gives advice on landscape and visual issues - incorporating a review of Green Belt issues, as may be relevant to the planning case.

2. Approach

- 2.1 In relation to this case we have undertaken a basic desk study and an exploratory site visit was undertaken. For the desk study exercise we have checked for local planning designations, reviewed local landscape character assessment studies and have undertaken zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) mapping tests. Site visit work included a walkover of the site itself and exploration of the local roads and public rights of way.

3. The Proposals

- 3.1 The land owner is applying for outline planning permission for residential development and open space with access off the B1002 High Street.
- 3.2 The proposals include for an area of public open space (POS) to the front of the site alongside the B1002. The proposals intend to retain an existing large Oak tree to the front of the site and incorporate it within the POS.
- 3.3 The proposals are shown on the following drawings:
- Feasibility Layout 17-2714 / SK1, GRAFIK, Nov 2017

4. The Site and Context

- 4.1 The site is a rectilinear area of paddock and grazing land that is currently in use for the grazing of horses. The site is located on the northern edge of the village of Ingatestone, immediately to the south east of the B1002 High Street. The site occupies a location between the existing settlement edge to the south west of the site, and a string of ribbon development along the B1002 to the north east. It is approximately 1.75ha in size and slopes very gently from 70m AOD along the B1002 to 66m AOD on the eastern boundary. There is a large mature oak tree at the front of the site alongside a semi wet/dry pond. The site occupies a location immediately alongside the village gateway, which is marked by a change in speed limit and a pair of white ornamental gates.
- 4.2 The existing settlement edge to the south west of the site is delineated by existing houses on Docklands Avenue. These houses back onto a tree lined gravel access track which runs along the site's south western boundary. This track leads along the boundary of the site to Rays Farm, a small Grade II listed farm house, and Rays Farm Barns, a cluster of commercial units to the south east of the site. Alongside the western corner of the site are four existing residential properties. These houses are included within the settlement boundary. These houses all front onto the B1002 and have rear gardens which extend back to meet the site. To the north east of the site, ribbon development extends along the B1002 for approximately 280m. This is made up of typically large detached properties on generous plots which all front onto the B1002. Other than the property immediately alongside the site, the rear gardens

- of these houses all reach a similar distance back from the B1002, forming a singular domestic garden boundary that backs onto the adjacent arable farmland. The residential property Parklands has a much shorter rear garden than the remainder of this row of houses, and the site wraps around its plot to include the land to the rear of this property. The site does not extend any further into the arable farmland than the remainder of these rear gardens. Immediately opposite the front of the site, to the north of the B1002 are the village sports fields.
- 4.3 A native hedgerow forms the boundary with the B1002 along the north west of the site. Within this hedgerow, a farm gate provides access into the site. A large oak tree and a shallow pond are located to the front of the site alongside the B1002.
- 4.4 The site's south eastern boundary is a combination of a short section of post and wire fence, hedgerow with established trees, and the rear garden boundary of Rays Farm. Beyond this boundary and to the north of Rays Farm and the barns, lies an arable field, which marks the start of the arable landscape surrounding Ingatestone. This farmland extends north, to the village of Margeretting, some 2km north east of Ingatestone. The Great Eastern Railway Line runs along the eastern edge of the adjacent field, and is mostly in cutting. Trees and other vegetation have established along it in parts, which help to screen views of the trains and railway infrastructure.
- 4.5 The wider landscape to the east of Ingatestone contains the River Wid. The river has formed a wide valley landscape that gently falls to the river and then rises on the opposite slopes to the village of Stock, forming a wide and gentle arable valley that is broken up by established woodland blocks. The village of Ingatestone, and the site, are located on the edge of the higher plateau land above the Wid valley. Stock occupies an elevated location on the plateau on the top of the opposite valley side. However, Stock has little visual presence in the landscape as it sits within a wooded landscape and is set back from the top of the valley.
- 4.6 To the south and south west of the site, the urban area of Ingatestone extends between the A12 and the Great Eastern Railway Line.
- 4.7 There is no public access into or across the site.
- 4.8 The site is predominantly well contained, however there are views across the arable countryside to the east of the site across the post and wire fence along the sites eastern boundary. Here, there are views across the valley landscape to the rising landform and wooded landscape on the opposite valley side.

5. Landscape Setting

- 5.1 The Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) Landscape Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates 2006) (Brentwood LCA) identifies the site within the Heybridge Wooded Farmland (F10) landscape character area (LCA F10). Key characteristics of LCA F10 relevant to the site include:
- *Mature, undulating wooded farmland lining the B1002 road and railway corridor.*
 - *Mixture of medium to large-scale predominantly arable fields with mature treed field boundaries.*

- *Single mature trees and vegetation-lined ditches.*
- *Strong linear settlement pattern though the centre of the area, becoming more scattered at distance from the road/railway corridor.*
- *Landmark halls and churches.*
- *Narrow, often tree-lined rural lanes.*

5.2 And the visual characteristics as:

- *Open views to urban edges of Brentwood, Mountnessing and Ingatestone.*
- *Open views into the valley of the River Wid from fields within the northern half of the area.*
- *Views to wooded horizons both within the area and within adjacent Landscape Character Areas.*
- *Framed views to landmark church towers and halls (such as Ingatestone Hall) and also to Mountnessing windmill.*

5.3 The BDC LCA Landscape Strategy for LCA F10 is:

'Conserve - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.'

&

'Enhance - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.'

5.4 The BDC LCA suggested landscape planning guidelines for LCA F10 are:

- *Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.*
- *Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.*
- *Maintain views to landmark churches and halls and also to wooded horizons.*
- *Maintain open views into the Wid valley from the northern part of the character area.*
- *Ensure that new farm buildings are sensitively designed and located within the landscape in accordance with existing landscape character.*
- *Seek measures to screen visually intrusive urban edges around Brentwood, Mountnessing and Ingatestone.*

5.5 It is considered that the site is generally characteristic of the Heybridge Wooded Farmland landscape character area, however given its small scale, containment and its distinction from the surrounding arable farmland, it is also regarded as being isolated from it.

5.6 There are views from within the site across the River Wid valley to the higher ground to the east at Stock. Vegetation along The Great

- Eastern Mainline railway filters these views. Built form associated with the ribbon development to the north and Ingatestone to the south of the site contain views in these directions and enclose the site in these directions. The presence of surrounding built form is apparent from within the site and the site's edge of settlement location is a key aspect to its character.
- 5.7 Ingatestone village forms a clear linear settlement contained to the north west by the A12 and to the south east by the railway line. From within the landscape to the south of the site, the existing southern edge of Ingatestone forms a feature that reinforces the settlement's position within the landscape. Built form on the edge of the settlement is visible, although at times this is screened by the established vegetation along the railway line. The railway line forms a clear barrier to the settlement, with Ingatestone appreciated as a settlement that is to the north of this feature.
- 5.8 The wider landscape surrounding the site is a wooded agricultural landscape, made up of medium to large-scale arable fields, marked by mature trees. The site is located on the edge of the elevated land to the west of the River Wid. To the east of the site the landform falls towards the valley floor of the River Wid, before rising again towards the village of Stock.
- 5.9 In the context of the site's immediate location to the existing developed edge of Ingatestone, its containment and its lack of designations, it is considered that the immediate area of the site is relatively ordinary countryside of no heightened value.

6. Policy Context and Planning Designations

- 6.1 The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt where development is subject to national and local planning policies.
- 6.2 Being within the Green Belt may give some impression of heightened value for the landscape of the area. However, Green Belt is a specific development control policy device rather than any recognition of landscape quality. Therefore, the Green Belt designation should not influence landscape and visual appraisal considerations. Brentwood Borough Council produced their Green Belt Study in March 2016 (BBC Green Belt Study). This study focuses on the NPPF defined 'purposes' of Green Belts.
- 6.3 There are no Listed Buildings within the site. The closest to the site is Rays (List Entry Number 1207624, Grade II) listing which is located to the south west of the site.
- 6.4 The nearest Conservation Area is located within the urban area of Ingatestone, approximately 350m south west of the site.

7. Assessment of Effects

- 7.1 The fundamental character of Ingatestone and the approach into the settlement would remain largely unaffected by a development here.
- 7.2 The proposals would introduce a new junction onto the High Street, but this would not be uncharacteristic of the road and context on the existing settlement edge. The overall character of the settlement pattern would remain largely unaltered with the proposals being regarded as a logical area of urban infill.
- 7.3 There would be very little effect on local landscape character beyond the limits of the site itself. This is because of the

- containment of the site and its setting within the edge of settlement, such that it is isolated from the outlying countryside. Within the surrounding countryside, the vegetation cover in the landscape is also quite dense, including numerous woodlands, tree belts and vegetated field boundaries. This would further restrict potential landscape influence of the development in this location. Any effect on the outlying landscape would be minimal as it is so tightly aligned and contained within the existing settlement.
- 7.4 Due to the built up nature of the surrounding area, the visual influence of the site was found to be limited to locations immediately adjacent to the site, and only a few additional isolated locations within the wider landscape to the east. Adjacent to the site, the proposals would be visible from the A1002 High Street along the front of the site, from the playing fields on the opposite side of the High Street, and from the immediately surrounding residential properties. In the wider landscape to the east of the site, there would be some limited visibility of the site from the opposite valley slopes of the Wid Valley.
- 7.5 The A1002 is the main route into and through Ingatestone, connecting it with the villages of Haybridge and Mountnessing to the south, and Margaretting to the north. Users heading south from Margaretting along the B1002 pass the ribbon development to the north of the site on the eastern side of the road as they approach the settlement. These large houses, including their individual driveways and accesses have an urbanising effect on this section of the B1002. This combines with the pavement, bus stop and street lighting along this section of road leading to road users having a sense of arrival within the village envelope much sooner than when they have actually passed into the settlement boundary. The playing fields to the west of the road also add to this sense of arrival, as they present an area of amenity grassland rather than open countryside. For users leaving Ingatestone heading north on the B1002, the appreciation of exiting the settlement occurs once development has dropped away from the road side to the north of the ribbon development. Willow Tree Cottage occupies a prominent 'gatehouse' position to the head of the ribbon development and marks this transition.
- 7.6 The vegetated nature of the existing site frontage acts to screen views of the site itself and of the wider landscape to the east. However, there are glimpsed views of this nature through the farm access gate. This is however, a quick glimpse which is curtailed to some extent by the existing vegetation along the site's eastern boundary. The short section of post and wire fence allows for longer views.
- 7.7 The site itself offers a short respite from built form on the eastern side of the road, however, the proximity of surrounding development makes this difficult to appreciate. The four residential properties immediately alongside the site's south western corner have relatively short and open front gardens. This results in these houses being prominent on the road frontage. This continues the visual link of built form from the ribbon development into the settlement.
- 7.8 Due to the nature of the surrounding ribbon development and the urban area of Ingatestone, views of the site from the B1002 are very limited. The proposals would only be visible from the immediately adjacent section of highway. Here, it is considered that the proposals would be seen in a similar context to the existing houses to the south west of the site.

- 7.9 Assuming that the large oak tree would need to be retained, this would result in the retention of a notable area of open space at the front of the site. It is considered that this open space would maintain the existing pause in built form that the site currently offers on the approach in and out of the settlement.
- 7.10 It is considered that to users of the B1002, the proposals would essentially be regarded as a logical area of infill on a plot of land that would be regarded to many as already being within the settlement. The proposals would not notably alter the existing pattern of development on this stretch of the B1002.
- 7.11 Users of the sports pitches and open space on the north of the B1002, have existing views of residential dwellings along the High Street, and given the open spaces village location, it is considered that the proposals would not be intrusive or incongruous in this location.
- 7.12 The residential properties that immediately surround the site all benefit from good sized rear gardens, and it is considered that a suitable scheme could be delivered that respected the residential amenity of these properties.
- 7.13 Residential property Rays is a Grade II listed building located to the south east of the site and immediately to the west of Rays Farm Barns. This private detached dwelling is set within a large well vegetated plot that contains a number of mature trees both within the plot and on its boundaries. This vegetation would make views of the development from this dwelling limited to views from its western elevation and the surrounding garden area. Here, gaps in the boundary vegetation on the properties western boundary allow views across the site.
- 7.14 Enhancements and reinforcement to the site boundary at this point would be beneficial in establishing a visual separation between the proposals and Rays Farm. Additional hedgerow planting along the boundary would help screen the proposals and reinforce the separation between this dwelling and new dwellings within the site. New development within the site would change the existing open field outlook to the north of the site and would likely be seen as detrimental to the occupiers. However, normal expectations of privacy and amenity need not be compromised even though the overall outlook may have changed.
- 7.15 From the opposite valley slopes to the east of the site, Ingatestone forms a clear linear settlement contained to the south by the railway line. In views from within the Wid valley and on the slopes rising towards Stock, the existing southern edge of Ingatestone is visible, and forms a feature that reinforces the settlement's position within the landscape. Built form on the edge of the settlement is visible, although at times this is screened by the established vegetation along the railway line. The railway line forms a clear barrier to the settlement, with Ingatestone appreciated as a settlement that is to the north of this feature. Glimpses of the rear elevations and rear gardens of houses within the ribbon development to the north of the site are visible as are the arable fields to the east the site. There are some very glimpsed views of the site itself. However, these are filtered by existing vegetation across the countryside and the existing vegetation along the railway line. There are occasionally opportunities for more direct views through the occasional gaps in vegetation. The site nestles into the existing pattern of development within Ingatestone. This is helped by the vegetated nature of the site's boundaries which help assimilate the site into the urban mass of the settlement.

- 7.16 It is considered that in views towards the site from the opposite valley slopes, the proposals would appear as a coherent piece of infill development that sits between the ribbon development to the north, and built form within Ingatestone to the south. The existing contained nature of the site, particularly its vegetated boundaries would limit the visual presence of the proposals. However, reinforcement of the site's eastern boundary, particularly the establishment of a new section of hedgerow along the post and wire fence would be beneficial in securing this enclosure.

8. Green belt

- 8.1 The Brentwood Borough Council Green Belt Study March 2016 is an example of a study which focuses on the NPPF defined 'purposes' of Green Belts.
- 8.2 The site is identified within this study as Site Reference 078 and has an overall assessment of having a 'Moderate' overall contribution to the Green Belt. The findings for this parcel are summarised as:
- 'Development would form an urban extension, with some countryside encroachment. Some minor reduction in gap to Margaretting to NE but not significant due to scale of site if developed.'*
- 8.3 Having reviewed the findings for Site Reference 078 this study finds that it is generally in agreement with these findings on all but the assessment of Purpose 2, to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.
- 8.4 The following paragraphs provide observation notes under the 'Purpose 2' headings and a rationale for this report's findings.

Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 8.5 It is assumed that Margaretting is considered the next 'town' to the north-east of Ingatestone and that it is the gap between Ingatestone and Margaretting which should be considered in this regard. However, Margaretting is actually a small village and perhaps should even be regarded as a hamlet. As such, any closure of gap here would not be regarded in terms of preventing neighbouring towns from merging. Nevertheless, the existing gap from the 'settlement boundary' of Ingatestone to Margaretting is approximately 2km. Development within the site would be approximately 150m closer to Margaretting than the existing 'settlement boundary'. However, this development would only come as far as the existing adjacent ribbon development to the north of the site, which is already likely to be considered simply as part of the existing settlement area of Ingatestone, with the proposals being regarded as a logical area of 'infill'. As such, there may be no actual or perception of a reduction in the gap between these two settlements.
- 8.6 In addition, the layering of field boundary vegetation and the containment of the site to the north by the existing ribbon development restricts intervisibility between the two settlements. Development within the site would not be visible from within Margaretting and so would not compromise this relationship. Development here would benefit from substantial interlying physical barriers between it and Margaretting; there would be no increase in views between the two settlements; and there would be no

- coalescence and separation between the two settlements would be retained.
- 8.7 This suggests a more favourable reflection on the site than the BBC Green Belt Study findings. The BBC study found the site to score a 'Low' for purpose 2, with separation reduced, but functional. This study concludes that in fact, the separation between Ingatestone and Margaretting would be retained, with the development infilling an area between two existing areas of developed land, and not bringing the built form of the two settlements any closer together.
- 8.8 In light of the findings of this report, a score of 'very low' (Separation Retained) is considered more appropriate.
- 8.9 Following this adjustment to the scoring of purpose 2, the application site should therefore be regarded more favourably in relation to Green Belt considerations. It is considered that the BBC Green Belt Study under represents the suitability of this site for development. This study finds that the adjustment to the purpose 2 scoring, results in the overall assessment for this site as having a Low – Moderate contribution to Green Belt purposes, rather than the Moderate grading given in the BBC Green Belt Study.
- 8.10 The site specific LVA study prepared for this development proposal should be given more weight than the BBC Green Belt Study in the normal planning appraisal of the proposed development in relation to the suitability of this site for development.

9. Opportunities for Mitigation

- 9.1 The site is well contained, and the proposals have been developed to allow for the retention of the majority of the existing boundary vegetation, as well as the planting of new trees and substantial vegetation on the site's eastern boundary which would provide further screening of the site and help break up built form in any views from the countryside to the east.
- 9.2 Additional hedgerow planting along the site boundary with the adjacent Rays Farm would help retain the separation from this listed building and the site. It may also be beneficial to consider abutting larger back gardens to boundaries of the site adjoining this Listed property.
- 9.3 The large oak tree to the front of the site should be retained and incorporated within an attractive area of open space at the entrance into the site.

10. Summary & Conclusions

- 10.1 Due to the built up nature of the surrounding area, the visual influence of the site was found to be limited to locations immediately adjacent to the site, and only a few additional isolated locations within the wider landscape to the east. It is considered that due to this built up nature of the surrounding area, which includes the ribbon development to the north of the site, and the settlement edge of Ingatestone to the south, development of the site should be considered as a logically area of infill along the B1002. Development would not extend built form further north along the B1002, nor would it interfere with the existing approach into the settlement. In locations within the landscape to the east of the site, the existing settlement edge, including the ribbon development are already visible. The existing containment provided by the surrounding residential properties and vegetation would essentially

- allow development within the site to nestle into the existing scene with little visual presence in cross valley views.
- 10.2 Some simple design controls and landscape mitigation measures, such as the protection of existing field boundary hedgerows, along with retaining an open space around the mature Oak tree at the front of the site, would help to ensure this development would be as successful as possible in landscape and visual terms.
- 10.3 In regard to the site's position within the Green Belt, it is considered that it should be regarded more favourably in relation to Green Belt considerations and the BBC Green Belt Study under represents the suitability of this site for development. Using the same methodology, our findings are that the overall assessment for this site should be that it has a Low – Moderate contribution to Green Belt purposes, rather than the Moderate grading given in the BBC Green Belt Study.
- 10.4 In overall consideration of landscape and visual issues, this is found to be a good location for development where effects would be modest and local character and amenity should not be notably harmed.