

LAND OFF COSSINGTON ROAD, SILEBY

LPA ref. P/21/0491/2

PINS ref: APP/X2410/W/21/ 3287864

Proof of Evidence of

By Simon Higson

Prepared for Charnwood Borough Council

February 2022

Heatons

The Arc, 6 Mallard Way, Pride Park, Derby. DE24 8GX

tel: 01332 949656 email: consultants@heatonplanning.co.uk web: www.heatonplanning.co.uk

Heatons is the trading name for Heaton Planning Ltd.

– 12 Bridgford Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6AB. Registered No. 4786259

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE-RELATED PLANNING CONTEXT	3
3	SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS	4
4	SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS.....	5
5	SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS UPON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA OF LOCAL SEPARATION	6
6	CONCLUSIONS	7

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	S Higson’s Landscape and Visual Assessment
------------	--

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Qualifications and Experience

1.1.1 I am Simon James Higson, Director of Landscape and Ecology with Heaton Planning Limited (Heatons). Heatons are a planning, environment, and design consultancy, with an experienced team of planners, landscape architects and ecologists.

1.1.2 I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and Chartered Horticulturist with over 20 years of professional experience. I have a BA Hons degree in landscape architecture from Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education (1998) and a master's degree in landscape architecture from Leeds Metropolitan University (2000).

1.1.3 Whilst working in landscape practice I have provided landscape planning, assessment and design advice in relation to a wide range of project work throughout the British Isles, as well as Canada and Africa. I have previously acted both as landscape expert witness and supported other landscape expert witnesses in their preparation of evidence.

1.1.4 I was instructed by Charnwood Borough Council (the client) in December 2021 to act as landscape expert witness for the appeal.

1.1.5 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal in this proof of evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of the Landscape Institute.

1.1.6 I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

1.2 Scope of Evidence

1.2.1 My scope of evidence focuses on the effect of the proposed development on landscape character, views and visual amenity and the Area of Local Separation (AoLS).

1.2.2 This is in response to the first Reason for Refusal set out in the decision notice of 17th September 2021 and the Appellant's Statement of Case.

1.2.3 The proposed development is an outline planning application for up to 170 dwellings. All matters are reserved except access. Details relating to the appearance, layout, amount and scale of development as well as landscaping within the site are to be the subject of subsequent reserved matters approval. However, the Appellant has

provided illustrative material, and I have taken this into account.

1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 I have carried out my own summary Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition. I have used the findings of my LVIA to inform my assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the AoLS.
- 1.3.2 To provide what I hope is welcome consistency of approach, I have used the methodology set out in Appendix 1 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment included with the planning application, produced by Golby and Luck, with the exception of considerations relating to landscape value (where I have used Technical Guidance Note 02/21), 'significance' of effect and other aspects of GLVIA3, where relevant.
- 1.3.3 My re-assessment also accounts for the resolution by Charnwood Borough Council to grant planning permission for the development of land of Humble Lane, east of Cossington (P/20/2393/2).
- 1.3.4 My re-assessment of the LVIA is incorporated into Appendix 1 of this proof of evidence and details my methodology, landscape-related planning context, assessment of landscape effects, visual effects and potential effects upon the character and appearance of the AoLS.
- 1.3.5 This document is my proof of evidence (there will be no separate summary) and follows the same structure as my Appendix 1. Full core document references are included within Appendix 1.

2 SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE-RELATED PLANNING CONTEXT

- 2.1.1 The Appeal site is designated as AoLS in the Borough's Local Plan (2004) and Core Strategy (2011-2028) and is positioned between the villages of Sileby and Cossington.
- 2.1.2 The Appeal site is also outside the defined Limits to Development within the Sileby Neighbourhood Plan and is treated as open countryside (Policy G1).
- 2.1.3 Brook Farm barns and farmhouse, on the southern boundary of the Appeal site, are Locally Listed Buildings. The barn is used for meetings and has a parking area.
- 2.1.4 The Cossington Conservation Area is c220m to the south of the Appeal Site and contains several Listed Buildings, including the Church of All Saints. It is connected to the Appeal site by public rights of way and Cossington Road / Main Street.
- 2.1.5 I have reviewed the relevant landscape-related planning policies which aim to protect the character of the landscape and countryside (CS11), strictly control development within areas of open land (CT/1) and only permit development in AoLS that retain the predominantly open and undeveloped character and do not reduce the already narrow gap between settlements (CT/4).
- 2.1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to protect and enhance valued landscapes (paragraph 174). The proposed development would be considered 'Major Development' using the thresholds set out in the NPPF.
- 2.1.7 I have reviewed the evidence base which includes the Borough Council's Landscape Character Assessment (2012) and published studies relating to the AoLS (2016 and 2019), landscape sensitivity of sites considered for development as part of the Local Plan (2019 and 2021) and the development strategy and site selection (2021).
- 2.1.8 The Council submitted the Local Plan 2021-2037 for Examination in December 2021. Policies Map 1 shows that the Appeal site as not allocated for housing (whilst the land east of Cossington is allocated) and the western boundary of the AoLS is extended westwards (whilst the AoLS boundary around the Appeal site is unchanged).

3 SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

- 3.1.1 My re-assessment concludes that the proposals would have a minor adverse effect on the Trent Valley Washlands National Character Area (NCA) 69 and a minor/moderate adverse effect on the Borough's Soar Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA).
- 3.1.2 However, the effects upon the Local Setting of the Appeal Site and the Appeal Site itself would be major and adverse and overall, I consider these to be significant.
- 3.1.3 I also conclude that the cumulative landscape effects on the Soar Valley LCA would increase to moderate and adverse, when other development projects are considered, including land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington. The cumulative effects on the Soar Valley LCA are on the threshold of significant, due to the consequential coalescence of the two separate settlements, that are key to its character.
- 3.1.4 With reference to paragraph 174 of NPPF, I consider that the Appeal site is part of a valued landscape (using the factors for consideration set out in Technical Guidance Note 02/21) and that the proposals would not provide for its protection or enhancement. Although AoLS is primarily a planning designation, how each area performs against its purpose is assessed using landscape and visual criteria and their qualities, such as maintaining the separation of settlements, are identified in the local plan as requiring protection. I acknowledge that the landscape does not benefit from statutory status.

4 SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

- 4.1.1 My re-assessment concludes major adverse visual effects for local residents at properties with direct views onto the Appeal site on the southern edge of Sileby and recreational users travelling along Cossington Road, as they pass by the Appeal site. Major/moderate adverse visual effects are identified for other general users of the Cossington Road and recreational users of the public right of way network, which connects the parking area at Church of All Saints in Cossington with Cossington Road. Overall I would consider these to be significant.
- 4.1.2 Moderate and adverse visual effects are identified for travellers on passenger trains, users of the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows) and visitors accessing Cossington Meadows from the east. Effects for other local residents within and around Sileby and Cossington (without direct views) would be no more than minor adverse overall.
- 4.1.3 I would also specifically draw attention to GLLVIA representative viewpoints 7 and 6 (with my micro-siting) which I consider to be within the visual setting of the Cossington Conservation Area, with views of the Church of All Saints Listed Building. Changes to the views and visual amenity at this location would be moderate and adverse and on the threshold of significant.
- 4.1.4 There would also be additional cumulative adverse visual effects for travellers on passenger trains, users of the Leicestershire Round (between Ratcliffe Road and Cossington Meadows) and visitors accessing Cossington Meadows from the east, anticipated to be on the threshold of significant due to the potential of the Appeal site to be seen (in combination, in succession or sequentially) with the development of land off Humble Lane, east of Cossington, to varying degrees.

5 SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS UPON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA OF LOCAL SEPARATION

- 5.1.1 The Appeal site is located within ALS-D which provides a gap between Sileby and Cossington, preventing further ribbon development along Cossington Road and ensuring that the integrity of the gap is maintained.
- 5.1.2 The proposed development would have a harmful effect on the visual component of the AoLS openness, which cannot be fully mitigated through siting, landscaping, and design. The proposal would cause a permanent loss of an important and prominent part of the AoLS.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 With reference to Saved Policy CS11, Local Plan Policy CT/4 and Neighbourhood Plan Policy G2, I conclude that the proposals would not protect the character of the Soar Valley landscape or support the maintenance of the separate identities of Sileby and Cossington. The proposals would cause permanent and significant harm to the predominantly open and undeveloped character of the AoLS and reduce the already narrow (actual and perceived) gap between the two settlements.



Heatons

Planning Environment Design

Heatons

The Arc, 6 Mallard Way, Pride Park, Derby. DE24 8GX

tel: 01332 949656 email: d web: www.heatonplanning.co.uk

Heatons is the trading name for Heaton Planning Ltd.

Registered office – 12 Bridgford Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6AB. Registered No. 4786259