

Leconfield Road, Loughborough

Rebuttal to Local Landscape Objections from September 2021

Bowbridge Homes
September 2021



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following rebuttal has been prepared by Golby + Luck Ltd following instruction by Bowbridge Homes to consider the land at Leconfield Road, Loughborough (the site).
- 1.2 This rebuttal is in response to local objections received in September 2021 relating to general landscape issues, and more specifically the buffer depth to the adjoining Burleigh Wood.
- 1.3 The following documents are referenced in this rebuttal:
- Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government - National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the NPPF);
 - Borough of Charnwood Local Plan 2004 Saved Policies (the Local Plan);
 - Borough of Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028 Core Strategy 2015 (the Core Strategy);
 - Borough of Charnwood Draft Charnwood Local Plan 2019-36 – Preferred Options Consultation October 2019 (the Draft Local Plan);
 - Borough of Charnwood Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites for Charnwood Borough prepared by LUC March 2019 (the Sensitivity Assessment);
 - Leicestershire County Council - Loughborough South West Green Spaces Consultation Background & Headline Results November 2011 (the County Green Space Consultation);
 - Charnwood Borough Council Open Spaces Assessment Study 2017 (the Charnwood Open Space Report);
 - Charnwood Borough Design Supplementary Planning Document January 2020 (DSPD); and
 - GOV.UK Guidance - Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development – Updated 5th November 2018.



2 ISSUE 1 – LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENTS

- 2.1 The Nanpantan Ward Residents' Group Response from September 2021 (NWRGR) begins by setting out reasons for refusing application P/20/2199/2 based on findings of the Council's Conservation and Landscape Assessment. It is assumed that this document is the Landscape Officer's consultation response that has already been considered in the Golby + Luck letter to the Case Officer in July 2021.
- 2.2 The remaining comments cover issues already considered in detail in the Golby + Luck Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted with the application, and subsequent rebuttal made to the consideration of the site as Local Green Space in September 2020.
- 2.3 At present the most up to date landscape assessment of the site made by the Local Authority is set out in the Sensitivity Assessment which identified is as having a medium to low landscape sensitivity to change in the form of 2-3 storey residential development.
- 2.4 A further landscape and sensitivity assessment was carried out by the Local Authority in July 2021 that considered sites of increased landscape sensitivity, and sites within Green Wedges and Areas of Local Separation. The parameters of this assessment are clearly set out to include sites identified in Sensitivity Assessment as being of medium to high, and high landscape sensitivity. However, this assessment was carried out in consultation with the Local Authorities Landscape Officer following her comments made in relation to Leconfield Road in April 2021, so there is no reason why this site could not have been brought forward into this study for consideration. The reality is that site was not brought forward and reconsidered, leaving the Sensitivity Assessment as the most up to date landscape assessment of the site produced by the Local Authority, the findings of which do not support the objections put forward in the NWRGR.

3 ISSUE 2 - LOSS OF OPEN SPACE

- 3.1 The NWRGR continues by setting out arguments relating to the open space credentials of the site. As detailed in previous submissions, the site is not open space (informal, or formal). The site comprises privately owned farmland that does not provide any public access or recreation function. The site does comprise open and undeveloped land set within the settlement limits. This function and character is no different to any other greenfield site being promoted by the Local Authority in the emerging Local Plan as a draft housing allocation.



- 3.2 The NWRGR argues that the site comprises the last green space within the Ward yet fails to recognise that the site and settlement adjoins Burleigh Wood, which is clear and open (undeveloped) area of land that provides public access to the local community.
- 3.3 The NWRGR sets out a green infrastructure strategy reliant on the delivery of wider footpaths that cross land under the ownership of the Helen Jean Cope Trust (the owner of the application site). It is unclear how far this strategy can be progressed as to date there has been not contact with the landowner to discuss the feasibility of this project.
- 3.4 The obvious omission to this strategy is that it fails to recognise the existing structure of green space and footpaths that already connect the Nanpantan Ward to Jubilee Wood and Beacon Hill Country Park on the south side of Nanpantan Road. This is accessed via Thirlmere Drive and the cycleway/footpath connection between Leconfield Road and Nanpantan Road within walking distance of the Ward providing unrestricted access to the wider setting of countryside.

4 ISSUE 3 – NATIONAL FOREST

- 4.1 The NWRGR sets out the policy requirements for development within the National Forest. It is a matter of fact that the site is not located within the National Forest as defined in the Local Plan. Therefore, the National Forest planting requirements are not relevant to this site and planning application.

5 ISSUE 4 – BUFFER TO BURLEIGH WOOD

- 5.1 Advice from Natural England and the Government with regard to buffers to Ancient Woodland are clearly defined in the standing guidance published in October 2014 (updated November 2018) that states:

“A buffer zone's purpose is to protect ancient woodland and individual ancient or veteran trees. The size and type of buffer zone should vary depending on the scale, type and impact of the development.

For ancient woodlands, you should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres to avoid root damage. Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, you're likely to need a larger buffer zone. For example, the effect of air pollution from development that results in a significant increase in traffic.

A buffer zone around an ancient or veteran tree should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5m from the edge of the tree's canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter.



Where possible, a buffer zone should:

- *contribute to wider ecological networks*
- *be part of the green infrastructure of the area*

It should consist of semi-natural habitats such as:

- *woodland*
- *a mix of scrub, grassland, heathland and wetland planting*

You should plant buffer zones with local and appropriate native species.

You should consider if access is appropriate and can allow access to buffer zones if the habitat is not harmed by trampling.

You should avoid including gardens in buffer zones.

- *You should avoid sustainable drainage schemes unless:*
- *they respect root protection areas*
- *any change to the water table does not adversely affect ancient woodland or ancient and veteran trees."*

5.2 The buffer zone provided secures 15m of undeveloped land with no material changes to the landform. A small natural play space is proposed with informal timber features that will require limited excavation for installation. These works can be hand dug and fully accord with BS5837 (2012) - Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction.

5.3 A further 5m has been provided for the alteration of landform that excluded built-form and highways, meaning that in total a 20m buffer has been provided from the edge of the woodland. This buffer has been measured to provide a 15m standoff from the edge of the tree canopy and a 20m standoff from the existing boundary fence. The submission from NWRGR is based on an aerial plan that does not appear to be to any recognisable scale.

5.4 The buffer has been agreed with the Local Authority Ecologist. Based on compliance with the standing guidance from Natural England and the level of agreement with the Local Authority Ecologist there is no reason to question the scale and nature of the buffer proposed between Burleigh Wood and the development.

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