

Charnwood Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

July 2021

Introduction

This report presents a landscape sensitivity assessment of a number of sites considered for development as part of the preparation of the Charnwood Local Plan 2021–2037. Its purpose is to consider the landscape sensitivity of sites, and ways that significant adverse impacts can be mitigated. The recommended mitigation measures have informed the Pre-Submission Draft Charnwood Local Plan.

The report has been prepared by officers at Charnwood Borough Council and was produced over the period 2019 to 2021.

The sites that have been considered in this report were submitted to the Council for consideration for development as part of the regularly reviewed Strategic Housing and Employment land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

This assessment draws from other evidence that the Council has commissioned to inform the initial site assessment work carried out as part of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan:

- Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHELAA Sites (2019) prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC):
www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/landscape_sensitivity_assessment_of_shl_aa_sites_march_2019/Landscape%20Sensitivity%20Assessment%20of%20SHLAA%20Sites%20%28March%202019%29.pdf
- Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Study Addendum (2021) prepared by LUC:
www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/charnwood_landscape_capacity_and_sensitivity_assessment_addendum_2021/Charnwood%20Landscape%20Sensitivity2021%20%281%29.pdf#Charnwood%20Landscape%20Capacity%20and%20Sensitivity%20Assessment%20Addendum%202021
- Green Wedges, Urban Fringe, Green Infrastructure, Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Methodology and Assessment Findings Report (2016) prepared by Arup: www.charnwood.gov.uk/greenwedge_als

The assessment follows the principles in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued.

The assessment for each site summarises the main landscape features, identifies those aspects which are vulnerable to change as a result of housing development and recommends mitigation measures. The recommendations for mitigation measures have informed the preparation of the Pre-Submission Draft Charnwood Local Plan in terms of site specific policies as well as informing the capacity and parts of the site that are capable of development without giving rise to significant adverse impacts.

Sites Included for Assessment

The sites included in this assessment are those that have been assessed to have medium-high landscape sensitivity by the Landscape Sensitivity Assessments undertaken by LUC and those that fall within an Area of Local Separation or Green Wedge.

Not all sites falling into these categories are included in this assessment and this is either because a site was discounted from further investigation due to other matters, the assessments undertaken to inform the Draft Local Plan were sufficient, or because the landscape mitigation measures were considered in the round with other issues through technical exchanges with site promoters.

The sites assessed in this report are the following:

PSH027 Land at Bull in the Hollow, Loughborough,

PSH144 Land at Gynsills Lane, Anstey,

PSH189 Barkby Thorpe Lane, Thurmaston,

PSH261 Homefield Road, Sileby,

PSH467 Land off Watermead Lane. Loughborough,

PSH108 Quorn Lodge

PSH387 High Leys Manor Farm, Anstey

PSH389 Groby Road, Anstey,

PSH460 Land at Parkview Nursery, Anstey,

PSH463 Cliffe Road, Birstall,

PSH474 Cossington Road, Sileby,

PSH483 Land south of Ashby Road, Shepshed,

PSH495 Small Ingleberry Road, Shepshed

PSH027 and PSE451 - Bull in the Hollow Farm, Leicester Road, Loughborough



DESCRIPTION

PSH027 lies east of the A6, on the main approach into Loughborough. The landform gently slopes toward the Soar River. The site is bounded on the north by Charnwood Water Reservoir Lake and woodland, a locally designated wildlife priority habitat. The site is scrubby to the west with a peri-urban /suburban feel, is more rural arable to centre and east. The north-eastern wooded area is part of the Local Wildlife Site.

There is a definite sense of leaving the settlement moving southward along this stretch of the A6 and more so moving east along the Public Right of Way (PROW) K32, towards the Grand Union Canal at Woodthorpe Bridge. This PROW forms the southern edge of the site.

Views to and from are filtered when moving east along PROW K32 and there is an awareness of the proximity of new housing to the north east of Quorn and the north of Barrow.

PSE451 is a very small field within PSH027, enclosed by tall hedgerows, comprising of archery clubhouse and stores and immediate grassed area to the east which until recently had been used as an archery target range, as stated above flanked to the south by the PROW K32, to the east by an open expansive arable field. The farmstead itself abuts to the southeast, fronting on to the A6. The site is introverted and contained, with views in and out occluded, except for very brief glimpses along PROW K32.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

No development proposals submitted at time of writing.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites (March 2019) assessed the wider area of land, PSH027, as part of a composite assessment with four other sites. It evaluated the landscape sensitivity of PSH027, to 2-3 storey residential housing, to be low-moderate sensitivity.

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) assessed the site PSE451 as having low to moderate sensitivity, to employment developments, noting there were no significant variations in landscape sensitivity within the site.

Both sites lie within a proposed Area of Local Separation between Loughborough and Quorn, previously designated as a Green Wedge in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and identified for consideration for an Area of Local Separation in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

The proposed Area of Local Separation was evaluated in the Green Wedges, Urban Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The Loughborough/Quorn Proposed Area of Local Separation is identified as PALS-1 in the report, which scored the whole of PALS-1 area as 'weak' for its purpose.

The report states it "*would provide a less critical gap between Loughborough and Quorn*" due to scale and lack of inter-visibility between settlements. While this is the case, the site itself does have some inter-visibility of Quorn as evidenced by walking along the PROW K32. PSH027 is to the north part of PALS-1 and for this area it says it has "*limited visual and functional connectivity with surrounding settlements and greater linkages with the wider countryside*". It concludes it plays a "*lesser role in preventing coalescence between settlements*". At the time of the assessment there were no extension opportunities identified.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- the physical and perceptual separation between Loughborough and Quorn and Barrow;
- the rural setting the landscape provides to Loughborough;
- the long distance views from the site across the Soar Valley; and
- trees and hedgerow.

CONCLUSION

The site contributes to the separation between Loughborough and Quorn. The eastern portion of the site contributes to the landscape setting of Loughborough, as seen from the Woodthorpe Bridge and from glimpse views from the A6.

The development of the PSH027 would result in a moderate reduction in separation; and this would not be significant to the function of the proposed Area of Local Separation, providing mitigation through design ensures built form is not visible from A6.

PSE451 is of less significance for the purpose of the proposed Area of Local Separation.

Should this site be developed for housing, the following mitigation principles should be followed:

- retain and enhance existing hedgerow and groupings of trees;
- avoid high ground which might otherwise result in prominent housing visible from A6 from where there is visibility of built form of Quorn;
- make spatial allowance for high canopy tree species to break up built form to maintain the sense of separation between Loughborough and Barrow; and
- avoid elevated/sloping land where built form would be visually prominent within the wider landscape.

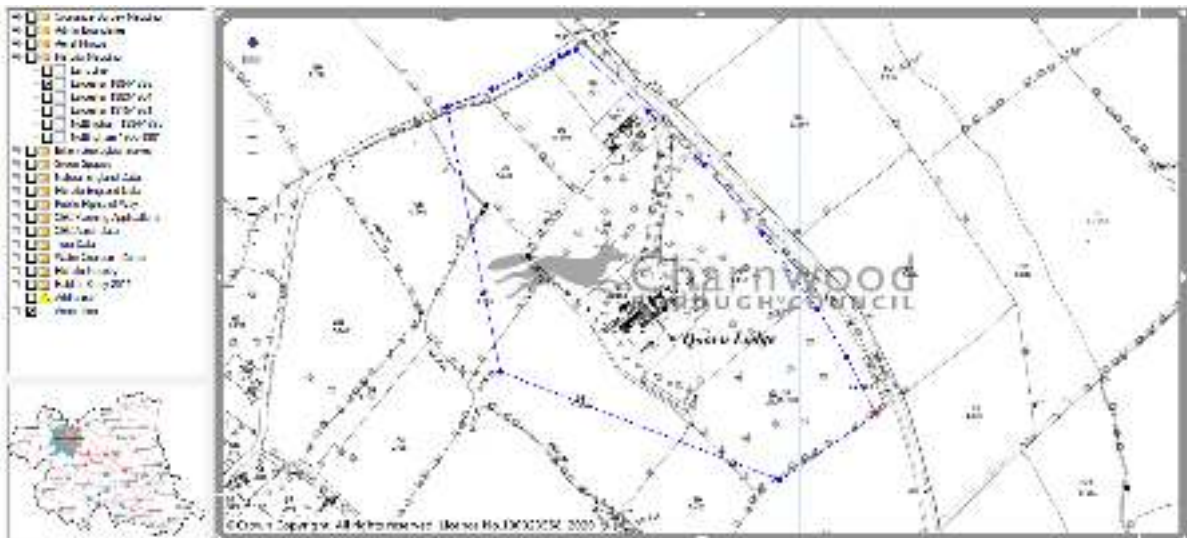
PSH108 Quorn Lodge, Loughborough



DESCRIPTION

The site is rural farmland characterised by wood pasture, an historic form of pasture, which lies to the south-eastern edge of Loughborough. Wood pasture is a valuable part of the UK's natural and historic environment. Sheep currently graze. It presents as a rural pastoral scene. The landform is relatively flat, with very minor gradients. The western perimeter is generously screened by the A6 corridor wooded verge and the Great Central Railway (GCR) embankment vegetation. The eastern perimeter is partially screened by hedgerow.

This is a rich and well treed rural landscape which feels relatively cut off from the settlement of Loughborough notwithstanding the proximity of new housing which lies to the east of the GC railway.



This historic map illustrates pastoral tree distribution. When compared with present day aerial photography we see how tree distribution has declined.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

No development proposals submitted at time of writing.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites (March 2019) assessed PSH108 as part of a composite assessment with four other sites southeast of Loughborough. It evaluated the landscape sensitivity, for 2-3 storey residential housing, to be low-moderate sensitivity. In notes on variations in landscape sensitivity, it acknowledges that the site has weaker association with Loughborough.

The site falls within a proposed Area of Local Separation between Loughborough and Quorn, previously designated as a Green Wedge in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and identified for consideration for an Area of Local Separation in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

The proposed Area of Local Separation was evaluated in the Green Wedges, Urban Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The Loughborough/Quorn Proposed Area of Local Separation is identified as PALS-1 in the report, which scored the whole of PALS-1 area as 'weak' for its purpose.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- the sense of separation between Loughborough and neighbouring settlements;
- the rural setting the landscape provides to existing settlement;
- the setting that the landscape provides to heritage features including historic farmhouses;
- frequent trees and hedgerows including pastoral trees;
- open pastoral character; and
- tranquillity - aural and visual.

CONCLUSION

The site is less important as a separation area between Loughborough and Woodthorpe because it lies to the northeast and Loughborough advances toward Woodthorpe from the north and northwest. Both the GCR and the A6004 are strong linear barriers. The site has much greater importance as physical and perceptual separation between Loughborough and Quorn. This is because it is currently free of built form; it presents and appears as a secluded wood pasture visible as a filtered view moving into Loughborough via the A6 with more open views from the new housing to the northeast.

Development of the site would not influence separation between Loughborough and Woodthorpe. It would though advance the settlement edge of Loughborough toward Quorn. This would be both physical and perceptual.

Physical separation: The land lies between Loughborough and Quorn and is strongly rural in character. The southern tip of the site lies only 398m from the settlement edge of Quorn.

Perceptual separation: As one travels southward along the routes to the east and west of the site there is a sense of having left Loughborough and of being in a rural area. On travelling from the A6 or Quorn toward Loughborough there is a sense of being close to, but on the outskirts of both settlements. There would be no direct inter-visibility from the site of Loughborough and Quorn. However, there is visibility from the new housing at Farley Way and from the site to the new housing which although physically separated by the barrier of the railway is perceived as adjacent.

On the basis of development of 2 storey dwellings, development of any part of this site would advance the settlement edge toward Quorn and would be visible from moving vantages along the A6. This would result in Quorn and Loughborough being perceived as merged.

Due to alteration or removal of the landscape characteristics of wood pasture and erosion of settlement separation it is unlikely that any amount of new housing development could be accommodated on the site without significant adverse landscape impacts.

Mitigation in terms of low single-story standard dwellings to the southern portion of the site is unlikely to eliminate or reduce harm to the landscape character and settlement separation.

PSH389 Land off Groby Road (north and south)



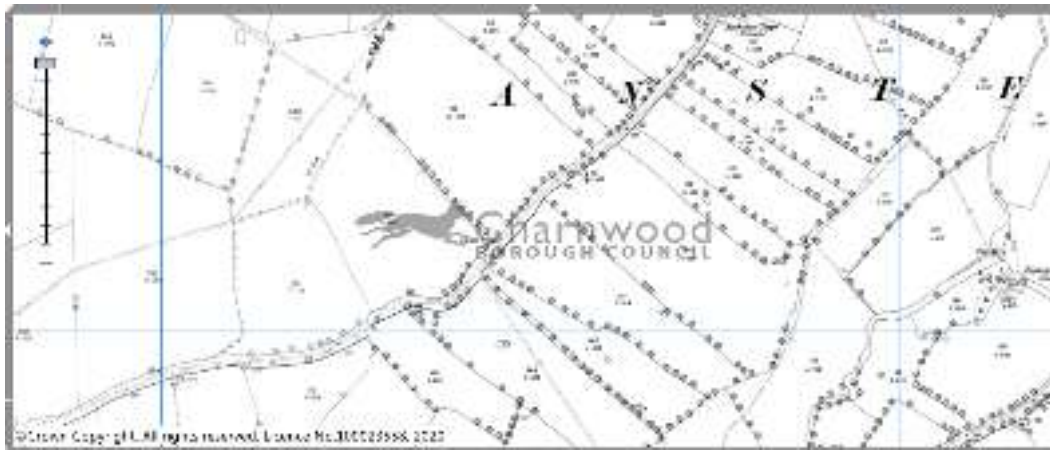
DESCRIPTION

The site is comprised of two extensive areas of land north and south of Groby Road, to the south-southwest of Anstey. The first south of Groby Road wraps around the cemetery. The second is immediately north of Groby Road comprising two fields.

The sites are comprised of medium to large scale arable fields which form the upper valley slopes of the Rothley Brook valley. It is a strongly rural landscape yet close to the settlement. Historically many existing hedges were recorded in this area in the 1884 mapping and represent significant assets worthy of enhanced protection.

The arable fields are bounded by low maintained hedgerow with occasional trees. . The landform rises northward from the brook, with the land to the north of Groby Road being more prominent. . The southern portion provides a sense of separation for Anstey and Groby and Leicester. Views, from the north of Groby Road portion and upper southern portions, are extensive to the south toward Glenfrith beyond the A46 corridor and west toward Groby. Skyline intrusions include pylons supporting major High Voltage powerlines following the course of the brook to the south of the southern portion and two wind turbines to the west of the northern portion. Public Right of Way (PROW) J70 traverses the southern portion in a NW to SE axis and PROW J72 bisects the northern portion in a broadly W to E axis.

Experientially the aural tranquillity is impacted by A46 noise and visual tranquillity by pylons. The perception is of an open rural expansive landscape with a sense of being able to get out of the settlement and experience rural qualities to a moderate degree.



DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The site promoters submitted promotion material including a landscape appraisal by Golby and Luck and a masterplan for the sites north and south of Groby Road in December 2019.



The broad outline was for housing with green infrastructure across both sites with green infrastructure mainly to the outer edge of the site, west of the north of Groby Road site and south of the south of Groby Road site.

This was revised by a fresh submission in November 2020 giving a more detailed illustration of possible housing numbers and this iteration included part of PSH 388 (see next section).

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites (March 2019) assessed a broad area of land which included PSH389. It evaluated the landscape sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing to be moderate sensitivity. .

The southern site, south of Groby Road is located within the Leicester (Beaumont Leys)/Birstall/Thurcaston/ Anstey/Cropston Green Wedge designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and retained in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

A review of Green Wedges was reported in the Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The site falls within GW-1 and reflects the defined characteristics and function of a Green Wedge. There are no zones of weakness identified within the site and it functions strongly for a recreational resource.

The northern site assessed is identified in the report as part of an Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone (GIEZ-3). The report finds GIEZ-3 scores moderate for purpose, and recommends improving pedestrian links between Anstey, Cropston, Thurcaston and the wider environmental assets of Bradgate Country Park and the Charnwood Regional Forest. It also recommends diversification of land use immediately adjacent to settlements to enhance the provision of accessible open space.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- rising prominent landform;
- strong rural character;
- hedgerow and trees; and
- separation of settlements.

CONCLUSION

The southern site actively aids in preventing the coalescence of Anstey with Leicester and Anstey with Groby. It meets the wider purpose of the Green Wedge to a strong extent. It provides a green lung for Anstey in that area and is publicly accessible by a network of PROW which strongly connects it to Groby. It links directly to the Rothley Valley and to PROW J71 which links south Anstey to Leicester. The site provides informal recreation opportunities and is adjacent to a cemetery for quiet contemplation. It is a significant and integral part of the Green Wedge.

The northern site also has some value in providing separation between Groby and Anstey. Development of this site would advance the settlement edge of Anstey closer to Groby. Built form would overlook the southern site and impact on views beyond the Green Wedge. It is traversed by PROW J70 and J72. The north of Groby Road site would be more visually screened and easier to mitigate for developing due to intervening hedgerow.

Development would be visually prominent and would erode the sense of separation for the south of Groby Road site.

The sites are bounded by defensible and readily recognisable boundary features. If developed, the resultant boundary changes for PSH389 would affect the extent to which the Green Wedge meets its purpose in that Anstey would be seen to advance towards Leicester and to a lesser extent toward Groby. The land south of Groby Road functions clearly as a physical and perceptual gap. Reduction in the width of this gap would erode its integrity as it would be clearly visible from Glenfrith housing and associated open spaces. Development would be visually prominent and would erode sense of separation.

Mitigation of development should incorporate:

- retention of hedgerows especially hedgerow trees;
- enhancing the tree planting with high canopy species to be managed to attain unrestricted high canopy - this would help break up built form and provide intervening vegetated backdrop;
- extending existing recreational routes to create an integrated Green Infrastructure network facilitating linkages between settlements, along brooks and recreational destinations e.g. Bradgate Park; and
- enhancing the functions of Green Wedge for settlement separation, distinctive identity and landscape setting;

PSH387 & Part of PSH388 High Leys Farm/Manor Farm



DESCRIPTION

The site is comprised of two areas of land northwest of Anstey. The first PSH387 is a single field to the west of Green Farm Court (PSH387) and the second includes the four fields that extends from it northwest up to the access drive off Bradgate Road for Anstey High Leys Farm (the southern part of PSH388).

The sites are comprised of medium pasture to large scale arable fields. It is a strongly rural landscape yet close to the settlement. Historically many existing hedges were recorded in this area in the 1884 mapping and represent significant assets worthy of enhanced protection.

The field boundaries of PSH387 are very well treed. The landform rises northward with fields adjacent to the access for High Leys Farm sits on the brow of the hill and is prominent. Skyline intrusions across the site are high voltage overhead power lines and include two wind turbines to the west. Public Right of Way (PROW) J72 bisects in a broadly W to E axis.

Experientially visual tranquillity is impacted by the wind turbines. .



West Anstey in Leicester 1884-1886 mapping

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The site promoters submitted promotion material including a masterplan in November 2020 setting out a joint concept incorporating the preceding section site PSH389 with these sites giving a more detailed illustration of possible housing numbers in this assessment.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites (March 2019) assessed a broad area of land which included PSH387 and PSH388. It evaluated the landscape sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing to be moderate sensitivity. It noted that higher ground of PSH388 to have sensitivity of moderate to high and that development for that portion would *“be out of keeping with the existing settlement of Anstey and would be visually prominent in the wider landscape and visible in skylines”*.

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) assessed the whole of PSH388. It identified an overall medium sensitivity for 2-3 storey housing. However, for form, density and identity and setting of existing settlements, the report highlighted the site had medium high sensitivities to this criterion.

A review of Green Wedges was reported in the Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016).

The northern portion of PSH388 abuts the southern edge of the Newtown Linford/Anstey Area of Local Separation designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and retained in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

The Newtown Linford/Anstey Area of Local Separation is identified as ALS-M in the Green Wedges, Urban Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The ALS-M has a purpose score of ‘moderate’ and there are no zones of weakness identified. ALS-M plays an important role in maintaining separation between Newtown Linford and Anstey.

PSH387 and the part of PSH388 assessed are identified in the report as part of an Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone (GIEZ-3). The report finds GIEZ-3 scores moderate for purpose, and recommends improving pedestrian links between Anstey, Cropston, Thurcaston and the wider environmental assets of Bradgate Country Park and the Charnwood Regional Forest. It also recommends diversification of land use immediately adjacent to settlements to enhance the provision of accessible open space.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- rising prominent landform;
- strong rural character;
- hedgerow and trees, some of which may be veterans; and

- separation of settlements.

CONCLUSION

The southern portion of PSH388 would not extend Anstey northward but would create a stronger linear edge in a NE to SW axis with the access road to Anstey High Leys and extend the north-western Anstey settlement edge westward. This would be noticeable from Bradgate Park and for glimpsed views from Bradgate Road. The brook which traverses to the south of the site, in a NW to SE axis provides opportunities for green infrastructure network development and potential link to the PROW J72 which lies to the south.

Site PSH 387 being more visually screened possesses good scope for on-site mitigation along all boundaries such that any development here could be easily accommodated and contained. Retention of field trees would be important as part of the landscape mitigation. The PROW J72 is close to the eastern boundary and brook to the western boundary provide opportunities for green infrastructure network development which could help integrate with any potential development of the southern portion of PSH388.

The sites are bounded by defensible and readily recognisable boundary features. If developed, development may be visually prominent for PSH388 and would erode the perceptual sense of separation between Anstey and Newtown Linford.

Mitigation of development should incorporate:

- retention of hedgerows especially hedgerow trees;
- enhancing the tree planting especially with high canopy species to be managed to attain unrestricted high canopy - this would help break up built form and provide intervening vegetated backdrop;
- extending recreational off existing routes to create an integrated Green Infrastructure network facilitating linkages between settlements, along brooks and recreational destinations e.g. Bradgate Park;
- enhancing the functions of Green Wedge for settlement separation, distinctive identity and landscape setting; and
- careful siting of new built form to minimise the impact on separation of Newtown Linford and on views from the north

PSH460 Park View Nursery Site off Gynsill Lane, Glenfield



DESCRIPTION

The site, a slightly domed brownfield former nursery, lies to the rear of existing houses on Gynsill Lane and is located within Anstey Parish although is closer to Glenfield, Leicester. There is no direct sense of it being part of Anstey and it is more likely to have stronger visual association with Leicester. The land to the west, in Blaby District, has recently been developed. It is accessed from Gynsill Lane via a private track.

The site, a small grass field including a pond, is enclosed by mature hedgerow of high canopy trees and has an intimate characteristic. The land to the north east is woodland. Visually the site is contained with no direct visibility from the southern edge of the settlement of Anstey to the north of A46. Nor is there visibility from Gynsill Lane. The site is experienced as secluded and set apart. A Public Right of Way (PROW) J70 runs along to the east of the site beyond the adjacent wooded land. The PROW terminates SE of the site within a hedgerow at the boundary to Leicester City. Beyond which lies vestigial parts of the Leicester Frith farmland and modern housing. To the north it links across Gynsill Lane towards Groby and Anstey.



Historic Leicester 1903-1904 mapping indicating the land was either woodland or orchard.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

No development proposals submitted at time of writing.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) assessed this site as having low sensitivity, noting there were no significant variations in landscape sensitivity within the site.

It did not reference the Green Wedge function of the site; though it recommended under 'Opportunities for mitigation or landscape enhancement' that future development should amongst other things "retain the sense of separation between settlements to protect their distinct identities."

It noted mature hedgerow boundaries surrounding the sites and the deciduous woodland adjacent to the west as key landscape sensitivities which contribute to the natural character of the landscape and enhance the local landscape structure.

The site is located within the Beaumont Leys/Glenfrith/Anstey/Groby Green Wedge designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and retained in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

A review of Green Wedges was undertaken in the Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The site is within the area identified as GW-1A in the report, forming its SW tip, on the boundary with Blaby District. The report recommended the designation GW-1 be largely retained, including the land covered by this site.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- mature hedgerow boundaries;
- deciduous woodland adjacent to the west; and
- role in supporting the functions of the Green Wedge.

CONCLUSION

The site does not perform as a significant part of the Green Wedge and does not make any significant contribution to the sense of separation from Leicester to the south and Anstey to the north. The site is secluded in nature and has new housing immediately to the west and existing housing on Gynsill Lane to the north.

Should this site be developed for housing, the following mitigation principles should be followed:

- preserving and enhancing the existing pond area; and
- preserving the hedgerow within a wider buffer corridor, which will aid provision of wildlife movement and, if developed as a green route, could aide connection to PROW J70 and thereby to the landscape beyond.

PSH463 Land off Cliffe Road (South of Greengate Road), Birstall



DESCRIPTION

The landscape is gently rolling with the southern field dipping toward the Great Central Railway and very gentle gradient from bisecting hedgerow to northern tip. It is in agricultural arable land-use. The site is secluded by being enclosed by relatively tall well-developed hedgerow and is bisected east to west into two by another hedgerow. There is a small copse of mature trees within the upper portion.

The site is only directly accessible by a field gate off Greengate Lane. There are two other potential points of access though from Henson road and Cliffe Road, albeit this is heavily vegetated for an informal pedestrian access.

The site is bounded to the east by substantial hedgerow along the length of the Great Central Railway which forms a definitive barrier from Birstall settlement. A Public Right of Way (PROW) access over the railway via a footbridge slices through the lower wider portion from east to west, other routes are beaten informal tracks along the hedgerows.

The southwestern portion affords views of Birstall to south and east and to industrial zones of Leicester to the west and some to the uplands beyond.

Perceptually, it feels secluded due to its enclosed rural characteristics.



PROW access is via a footbridge. It is accessible informally via a field gate off Greengate Lane and Henson Road and potentially could be from Cliffe Road.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

No development proposals submitted at time of writing.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) assessed the site as having overall low sensitivity, noting there were no significant variations in landscape sensitivity within the site.

However, it noted key landscape sensitivities as:

- Mature hedgerows and in-field trees, which contribute to the natural character of the landscape.
- The proximity to the Great Central Railway Site of Nature Conservation Interest containing mature deciduous woodland.
- The recreational value of the public footpath crossing the site.

It did not reference the Green Wedge function of the site though it did note that *“the area plays some part in the sense of separation between the settlement edge of Birstall and the business park (within Leicester City) to the west”*.

The site is located within the Leicester (Beaumont Leys)/Birstall/Thurcaston/Anstey/Cropston Green Wedge designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and retained in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

A review of Green Wedges was reported in the Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The report identified the site as GW-1 (C) and stated in their report that it performed “less strongly against the Green Wedge purpose”. The report caveated their conclusion by

saying it “should be retained pending further work by Leicester city council, recognising the importance of this area as part of a cross-boundary strategic designation”.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- the physical and perceptual separation between Birstall and Leicester City;
- mature hedgerows and in-field trees; and
- the proximity to the Great Central Railway Site of Nature Conservation Interest containing mature deciduous woodland.

CONCLUSION

The two fields contribute to the sense of settlement separation between Birstall and Leicester.

A limited area could be developed in the south eastern corner where topography would reduce the impact of development on settlement identity.

Should development take place on this site and its surroundings it will be essential to plan green infrastructure in a coordinated manner with developments in Leicester City. Mitigation measures for this site should include:

- preserving the hedgerow and TPO zones within a wider buffer corridor to aid provision of wildlife movement and, if developed as a green route, this could aid connection to existing PROW and thereby to the landscape beyond;
- preserving and enhancing the Great Central Railway woodland corridor; and
- preserving and enhancing the recreational value of the public footpath crossing the site.

It will be important to work closely with Leicester City as they progress their local plan to understand how the effects settlement identify and other functions of Green Wedge can be satisfactorily mitigated.

PSH474 Land off Cossington Road, Sileby



DESCRIPTION

The site occupies the land between Sileby and Cossington, to the east of the Cossington road, adjacent to Brook Farm. It is typical for the character area of the Soar floodplain, a large open field gently rising toward the east. As viewed and experienced from Sileby the site is seen and experienced as rural and in agricultural use.

While the Midland Mainline railway embankment presents a physical barrier on the east, the landscape visually connects north-eastward beyond. The field is in arable cultivation and is mostly bounded by hedgerows; generally low and regularly managed. The southern edge to the field forms a boundary with Brook Farm farmstead and Derrys Nurseries. This is dominated by conifer trees which densely screen views of the nurseries as well as of Cossington to the south. The associated brook flows from the southeast corner along the irregular boundary then cuts in through Derrys Nurseries.

The Brook Farm Farmstead and tree cover effectively screens off views of Cossington for various points along Cossington Road and as seen through the hedge line at Molyneux Drive, Sileby. The fields to the west of the road confirm the rural characteristic of the scene. The spatial quality from the edge of Cossington to the nursery is confined and

enclosed with little sense of another settlement beyond.



Exposed rural:urban interface – northern boundary of site abutting Sileby



View across site to the east showing landform. To right of frame the railway embankment is visible as well as tree cover of the landscape beyond.



View across site toward Brook Farm and the northern flank of Derrys Nurseries. To left of frame glimpsed through the trees rising landform of the landscape beyond can be seen.

The site has a strong open connection with Sileby which presents a hard urban edge to its northern boundary characterised by a random mix of irregular sequences of low clipped hedges and close boarded fencing of varying height and occasional trees predominate to the east. Sileby, itself has sprawled from its historic core to the northeast, east and west along its B roads while the more compact settlement of Cossington has grown from its historic core slightly to the east and north. The Grade II listed Brook Farm building historically had a closer physical association to Cossington and the brook.

There are no direct views of the site or of Sileby from the edge of Cossington at the Cossington road sign position. Here the spatial quality is confined and enclosed with little sense of another settlement beyond. The land to the east of the road is used as a plant nursery with an ancillary timber yard conveying a peri-urban characteristic. Views of Sileby

and the western edge of the site only become apparent when approaching the entry sign for Sileby at the boundary of village, between the nursery and Brook Farm.

Glimpsed views of the site can be seen from the Public Right of Way (PROW) through the fields on the west of the road toward the site. There are extensive views across the fields toward the rocky uplands of the Charnwood Forest. Views of the site are filtered between the trees. The experience is that of being within a rural countryside setting on the outskirts of the village though there is a strong visual connection with Sileby.

There are currently no public or permissive rights of way, though there is a farm track from the field gate across the site to the east.

Its open expansive character gives a moderate feeling of being in the countryside albeit close to two settlements.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

There is currently an outline planning application P/21/0491/2 Land east of Cossington Road, Sileby for up to 170 dwellings with all matters reserved other than access together with associated landscaping and other infrastructure.

The applicant provided the following documents in support of the application:

- Illustrative Masterplan, Golby & Luck, February 2021
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Golby & Luck, February 2021
- Arboricultural Assessment, FPCR, February 2021



While this is an outline application with layout and landscape reserved, the indicative masterplan gives a worked example of how the developer envisages delivering development. In this worked example the proposal essentially sets out to provide built form to the northern sector and a series of compartmentalised open spaces to the southern sector as a mitigation measure.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) assessed this site as having low to moderate sensitivity for 2-3 storey

residential housing development, noting there were no significant variations in landscape sensitivity within the site.

The site forms part of the Area of Local Separation between Sileby and Cossington designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and retained in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

The landscape sensitivity assessment identifies the role of the site in separation as significant; evaluating this under the criteria for form, density, identity and setting of existing settlement/ development; but this assessment was not intended to provide a full assessment of the Area of Local Separation.

The separation role was, however, evaluated in the Green Wedges, Urban Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The Sileby/Cossington Area of Local Separation is identified as ALS-D in the report. ALS-D has a purpose score of 'moderate' in the report, which sets out that it provides the gap between Sileby and Cossington, preventing further ribbon development along Cossington Road and ensuring that the integrity of the gap is maintained.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- the sense of separation between Sileby and Cossington settlements;
- the rural setting the landscape provides to the existing settlement; and
- the setting of the grade II farmstead heritage.

CONCLUSION

The settlement edges of Sileby and Cossington are physically very close, yet there remains a clear sense of separation provided by the Area of Local Separation. The site is the entire eastern portion of the Area of Local Separation.

The landform of the site as it rises to the east makes it prominent and particularly sensitive to change. The site is the last significant area of open rural landscape between the two settlements of Sileby and Cossington.

Development of this site would have a substantial and critical effect on the purpose of the Area of Local Separation. Development of the site would irrevocably alter the larger more significant eastern part of Area of Local Separation, changing the land use nature and characteristic from open rural agriculture to urban housing and urban green space. The erosion of the Area of Local Separation cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.

PSH483 Land South of Ashby Road, Shepshed



DESCRIPTION

The site is a rectilinear peri-urban field extending southward off Ashby Road on the southern edge of Shepshed. The ground rises up toward the southern hedgerow. Morley Hill and Quarry Reserve, a Regionally Important Geological Site, forms a prominent low backdrop to the south. The field is bounded by hedgerows with sparse tree cover mainly to the south and southwest. The site is of little historic significance and has always been part of the local field system. There are no special features of note.



DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

No development proposals submitted at time of writing.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites (March 2019) assessed a site PSH436, which PSH483 falls within, as part of a wider composite assessment of 13 sites, all bar one of which lie to the south of Ashby Road. It evaluated the landscape sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing to be low-moderate sensitivity. It noted no variation on sensitivity for PSH436 but noted an increased sensitivity for PSH322 which lies south

southwest of PSH436 and PSH405 which lies south southeast of the site, both due to their rising slopes and more visually prominent landform.

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) assessed the site, PHS483 on its own. It confirmed it as having low-moderate sensitivity for 2-3 storey housing, noting there were no significant variations in landscape sensitivity within the site.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- views south toward hills and woodland of the Charnwood Forest;
- rising landform; and
- hedgerows.

CONCLUSION

Development mitigation would require retention of hedgerows with enhancement plus the provision for high canopy strategic tree planting to break up built form for distant views. Any development should also open up and frame distant views to the hill and woodlands which are strong attributes of the Charnwood Forest.

Development should be low density with generous wood pasture parkland to reflect being in the Charnwood Forest.

PSH495 Ingleberry Road, Shepshed



DESCRIPTION

This is a rectangular rural agricultural field to the south of Shepshed bounded on the north by Iveshead Lane sharing a boundary with similar fields to the west and east. To the north northwest lies Morley Quarry reserve. It has an undulating rising landform toward Ives Head Hill to the south.



DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

No development proposals submitted at time of writing.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) assessed this site. It assessed the landscape sensitivity for 2-3 storey housing to be moderate-high, noting there were no significant variations in landscape sensitivity within the site.

The assessment concluded that *“development of the sloping site has potential to be visually prominent and distract from the wider views of Ives Head Hill”*.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- views and visual character especially of Iveshead Hill and northward of the Trent Valley;
- the rural agricultural characteristic, its intactness and separation from Shepshed;
- the sloping landform and its connection to the Charnwood Forest;
- low hedgerows and occasional trees; and
- characteristic and experiential quality of Iveshead Lane.

CONCLUSION

Development of this site would not be possible to mitigate due to the disconnection from the settlement and its rising prominent landform.

Any development would require access off Iveshead Lane, a rural lane. This would have adverse effect on its rural character and require loss or erosion of hedgerows.

PSH144 Gynsill Lane Capacity



DESCRIPTION

The site lies between Gynsill lane, Anstey Lane (A5630) and substantial hedgerow lines which form the administrative boundaries of Blaby District to south west and Leicester city to the south.

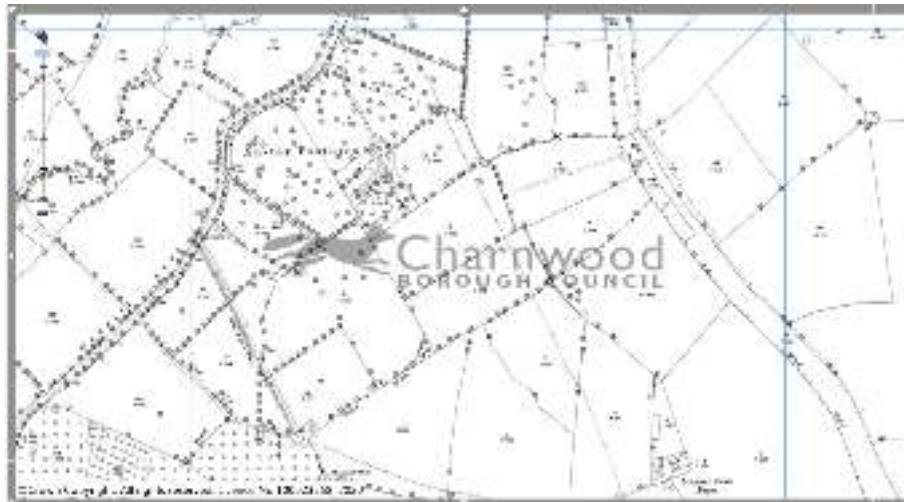
In terms of national landscape character it is part of the Trent Washlands, while regionally, it is part of the Charnwood Forest. The local character is sloping undulating agricultural field system with mature hedgerow. A Public Right of Way (PROW) J70 runs along the western boundary then veers South East terminating at the edge of the open space north of Glenfrith housing areas. This PROW provides active links out from Leicester city toward Groby, Anstey and Bradgate Park.

Existing land use is agricultural with northern and western fields forming a secluded pastoral landscape undulating varied gradient and small scale to the north, given over to cattle or sheep grazing. The larger scale fields to the south are used for arable crops. The land is better draining and rises from the hedgerow at southern end of the Park Pale toward Leicester. It feels remote from Gynsill Lane and more so from Anstey with closer association to the edge of Leicester.

The main vegetation consisting of mature trees is found mainly along the boundary hedgerows for each field and some isolated and scattered groups of trees.

The site used to include a nationally registered ancient oak ATI Id #2574 of national significance having a recorded girth of 9m, arguably the most significant tree within the Borough of Charnwood; and several veteran ash trees but these have been lost due to injudicious tree felling. The site includes an historic park pale of local significance.

Historically, the small fields to the north were wooded pasture in character while the larger southern fields were enclosed by tall mature hedgerow well-endowed with high canopy trees.



Mapping Leicester 1884-1886

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

A concept masterplan for the site for the land south of Gynsill Lane, West of Anstey Lane and Anstey Pastures, Leicester was prepared in November 2020. The proposals seek to yield a miniaturised concept of green infrastructure ‘wedges’ or corridors based on existing hedgerows and other key landscape features between neighbourhood character zones of housing. However this would both physically and perceptually diminish the current separation between settlements and erode the Green Wedge function. The scale reference for these micro ‘Green Wedges’ is not appropriate for the intention of the Green Wedge.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Charnwood Landscape Sensitivity of SHLAA Sites Report (March 2019) assessed the site as having medium overall sensitivity. The assessment notes that

“The site makes a strong contribution to the sense of separation between the suburbs of Leicester to the south and Anstey to the north. And notes the site fall within a Green Wedge”

The site is located within the Leicester (Beaumont Leys)/Birstall/Thurcaston/Anstey/Cropston Green Wedge designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and retained in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015).

A review of Green Wedges was reported in the Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The site is identified as GW-1 in the report and recommended the designation be largely retained. However it recommended that Zones of Weakness GW-1(A) to the south and east of A46 be considered for removal. The review identified that that the Green Wedge as a whole (which also extends to Thurcaston and Cropston) performed moderately against three purposes of Green Wedge and performed strongly as for the purpose of providing a recreational resource.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- the physical and perceptual separation between Anstey and Leicester City;
- relationship of urban edge to surrounding countryside;
- Public Rights of Way through the site to wider area;
- mature hedgerows, copses and in-field trees; and
- Park Pale

CONCLUSION

The site has been found to perform moderately in preventing the merging of settlements; however separation is not visually perceptible from either side the A46. In contrast, the visual connection is demonstrably strong between the site and Groby Lane and vice versa.

The site does perform as a significant part of the Green Wedge and makes a significant contribution to the sense of separation from Leicester to the south and Anstey to the north.

Development of the site poses very significant challenges in terms of safeguarding the functions of Green Wedge however should the site be developed, the following mitigation measures should be considered:

- preserving the existing vegetation principally the hedgerows, copses scattered and isolated trees, particularly on north facing slopes;
- providing of wide green corridors including the enhancement of PROW to form a green corridor extending south to Glenfield and to the Glenfrith green space north of existing housing;
- retaining the northern pastures as wood pasture and locate development south of and lower than the principal ridge; retaining and protecting the stumps of the lost ancient and veteran trees in situ. retain and preserve the park pale and its grassland setting; and
- providing of high canopy tree planting both to the northern edge and to break up built form.

PSH189 Land off Barkby Thorpe Lane



DESCRIPTION

The site consists of 4 arable fields and three smaller pasture fields to the north, all bounded to the east by the Midland Mainline railway to the north by Barkby land, the west by large supermarket and housing and the south by a trailer home site, Inglenook Park and Barkby Thorpe Lane.

The fields are in arable cultivation and mainly enclosed by low hedging, post and wire or fencing. The landform has a gentle slope toward the railway. Trees are sparse in the hedgerow, though a row of trees bisects the site in an east west axis and from a small triangular copse in their western midsection. There is a copse on the northern field.

Views into the site are glimpsed through the southern hedge and from Barkby Lane from the bridges both to the north and south east. The hedgerow along Barkby Lane is quite tall and dense for about half its length, after this there are good expansive views across the site. The trees give it a wooded quality to the site which aid in screening.



Glimpsed view across trailer home to the site beyond



View across trailer home from Barkby Thorpe Lane



View east ward along Barkby Thorpe lane



DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

There is an outline proposal for two small development schemes one to the north west corner incorporating the two pasture fields and the copse and the other in the south eastern corner adjacent to the trailer home park.

These indicative outline schemes will in both cases be highly visible and close off the view of the residual fields of the site. There is however a proposed new link road associated with the Northeast Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension which will more significantly impact the area and form a visual and physical barrier.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites (March 2019) assessed a broad area of land which included PSH189 northeast of the caravan site as part of a composite assessment with two other sites. It evaluated the landscape sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing to be moderate sensitivity. It noted no significant variation in sensitivity across the sites.

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) focused on and assessed the site, PSH189 on its own. It confirmed it as having moderate sensitivity for 2-3 storey housing, noting there were no significant variations in landscape sensitivity within the site.

The site was located within the Syston/Thurmaston (east of Melton Road) Green Wedge) designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) but not carried forward by the

Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy (2015). The Core Strategy stated that areas previously identified as Green Wedge would be considered as Areas of Local Separation.

A review of Green Wedges was reported in the Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The area is identified as ALS-L and the boundary review recommendation *“is that the area of land to the west of ALS-L and north of Barkby Lane (currently part of GW-3) should be included within ALS-L”* because it is currently *“not performing the strategic role of a Green Wedge, the southern boundary of this area would follow Barkby Lane”*. The area covered by PSH189 would be fall within the area recommended to be within the new Area of Local Separation.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- settlement separation;
- trees and copse; and
- views to the east.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the new link road and proposed residential development associated with the North of Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension, which is subject to outline planning application, would be to lessen its rural characteristic and obscure the expansive view to the east. Development would be prominent. The site currently separates Syston from Thurmaston. This separation will be further defined by the proposed new link road. It does not appear to play an important role in separation of Thurmaston from Barkby due largely to the intervening presence of a housing cluster to the east.

The site will largely be dominated by the link road which will take the majority of land and it would require a degree of mitigation in terms of woodland planting to either side. This will provide a definitive physical barrier.

Should this site be developed for housing, the following mitigation principles should be followed:

- woodland planting either side of the proposed link road;
- housing developments to the north and south of the link road ought to respond positively to their respective settlements identity while enhancing design standards;
- trees western edge of the site along the west of the Midland Mainline railway, should be enhanced, providing linear green corridors as public / permissive rights of ways;
- the copse to the north and the east and west treed axis should be retained and enhanced; and
- provision for amenity green space with high canopy tree planting.

PSH261 Homefield Road, Sileby



DESCRIPTION

The site is pasture used currently to graze sheep, and is comprised of several fields bounded by hedgerows, plus a central one of which is under Tree Preservation Order. The landform is that of a shallow dome with gradient rising from entrance off Homefield Road then falling more steeply from the centre hedgerow toward the Midland Mainline railway to the west, more steeply to the north and less steeply to the south. The western boundary abuts with the cutting for the railway line which provides a substantial physical barrier.

There is a Public Right of Way to the lower southern corner linking it to the town centre. In terms of landscape character, it is an example of upper gravel slopes of the Soar Valley.

This prominent dome of land provides extensive long distance views for the central, eastern and northern portions out to ward the north. It is largely visually contained to the west by hedgerow, while to the south and east they are contained by existing built form. There are long distance views to the south and southwest over the settlement. There are localised views in and out of the site from Homefield road and from Highbridge. Key features of the skyline include the church tower. There are some filtered views from Slash Lane and Mountsorrel Lane and the Soar river walkway. Views from Barrow Road are obscured by the railway embankment and dense vegetation. Similarly views from Melton Road are largely obscured by vegetation and landform.



Views across site toward the Charnwood Forest upland from field entrance off Homefield road



Historically it was used as pasture and wood pasture. Historic mapping for Leicester 1884-1886 shows surveyed trees present for the eastern position.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

A planning application P/21/0535/2 for a residential development comprising the erection of 55 dwellings with associated infrastructure, access, landscaping and public open space has been received in March 2021.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites March 2019 produced by LUC assessed a broad area of land which included PSH261 west of the settlement as part of a composite assessment with four other sites. It evaluated the landscape sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing to be low-moderate sensitivity. It noted no significant variation in sensitivity across the sites.

The site is south of the Sileby/Barrow upon Soar Area of Local Separation designated in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and retained in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2015). A review of Areas of Local Separation was reported in the Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Report (March 2016). The report identified the Area of Local Separation as ALS-E and scored it as moderate for purpose of maintaining separation between Sileby and Barrow. No zone of weakness was identified. The site is partially in an area considered to be an extension opportunity area by the report. The report in its boundary review identified an opportunity for an extension of ALS-E to the south and east to ensure wider integrity of the gap is maintained.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- settlement separation between Sileby and Barrow upon Soar;
- domed and sloping landform;
- hedgerow;
- TPO hedgerow trees; and
- open vistas- long distance views.
- Setting to Sileby Conservation Area
- Area of Local Separation

CONCLUSION

In terms of the function of the site as Area of Local Separation, it is not important physically but has got some value for perceptual visual separation from views outwards. Even along Melton Road both vegetation and landform occlude sight of the site.

Development of the site would be a minor adverse impact on perceptual visual separation but would be nil/ insignificant for physical separation. Preserving the hedgerows within wider buffer corridors will aid provision of wildlife movement. Any development would be perceived as infill development in the context of the settlement. Mitigation measures for this site should include:

- retention of hedgerow and vestigial trees – enhance and replant;
- avoidance of built form on prominent elevated dome; and
- through layout and design, minimise the impact of development on the sense of separation between Sileby and Barrow

PSH467 Land off Watermead Road, Loughborough



DESCRIPTION

The site consisting of seven plus fields most of which are in arable cultivation extending from Nanpantan Road in a south-southwest axis to a field boundary some 1159m from the road, with rising landform providing containment from the wider countryside. The landscape scale is varied with small to medium field pattern overlain on an expansive landform. The adjacent settlement edges are well screened and integrated into the landscape by belts of woodland.

The rising rocky outcrops and hill create distinctive wooded skylines in views to the south and south-west. The site itself is visually prominent from Nanpantan Road approached from the east. The site is strongly rural in character and somewhat remote even though it is close to housing to the north and east.

Much of its eastern boundary is along Watermead Lane which becomes a private drive leading to Outwoods Farm, south of the playing fields. On Nanpantan Road it is bounded to the west by a small cluster of large detached houses set in their own grounds.

The northern fields are mostly bounded by low hedgerow with frequent high canopy trees while the southern sector tends to be bounded by low cut hedges with sparse tree cover. The southernmost field has an island treed copse. From the north the landform dips gently toward Wood Brook then rises south south-westerly toward the Outwoods. A large area of ancient woodland lies to the west and abuts the southwestern most tip of the site. The level change is in the region of 35 m. approx. Routes up and down from the site to the Outwoods reveal extensive views over Loughborough to the Wolds beyond. Burleigh Wood is also prominent.

Much of the site is visible from rising land to the west and from key vantages southwest of this, along the Public Right of Way (PROW) and the edge of the Outwoods.



Views from PROW K58 looking eastward over Loughborough to the landscape beyond



View from Jubilee Wood edge



View from Outwood Edge not far from Eileen Nicholson Bench

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The site promoter has provided the following documents, amongst a suite of other evidence in support of developing the site:

- Land at South West Loughborough Landscape & Visual Baseline Report (Golby and Luck December 2019)

- A Vision for South West Loughborough Nanpantan Forest Suburb Vision Document (January 2020)

The Landscape and Visual Report dealt with a larger site comprising of PSH467 parts of PSH106 and PSH25. It referenced the transitional nature of the site from the settlement to the countryside and its wider context in relation to the Charnwood Forest

The documents set out a proposal for a ‘forest suburb’, which evolves from the garden suburb concept for residential development, in response to the sites proximity to the Outwoods and being within the Charnwood Forest.

The site has a size of 31.3ha and the Vision document proposes a developable area of approximately 16ha which would give a net density of 37.5 dwelling per ha. The gross to net ratio and the net developable areas proposed are of a typical when compared to other housing sites.

LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE FINDINGS

The Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008) note Nanpantan Road as an important route into Charnwood Forest from Loughborough. The characteristics of the Charnwood Forest can be seen from Nanpantan Road across the site in the rising wooded rocky outcrop of the Outwoods. It notes that this creates enclosure close to the urban fringe recommending that, where urban expansion is proposed, sites should be considered where visual containment can be best achieved without impacting on the wider landscape.

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of SHLAA Sites (March 2019) assessed a broad area of land southwest of Loughborough. It evaluated landscape sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing to be Moderate to High sensitivity noting that sites *“located on elevated, sloping land (particularly in the western parts of PSH106) have high sensitivity to residential development”*.

The Charnwood Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment Addendum Report (February 2021) focused on the site PSH467 in isolation as having Moderate- High sensitivity again noting that *“more elevated parts of the site to the south-west have an elevated sensitivity to residential development by virtue of increased visual prominence”*. The more sensitive criteria are related to the setting, form and identity and visual quality plus skylines along with perceptual and experiential qualities.

KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The key landscape features that would be sensitive to change:

- the rural setting the landscape provides for Charnwood Forest;
- views from Nanpantan Road
- rising visually prominent landform;
- strong rural character;
- island treed copse;
- relationship with ancient woodland; and
- hedgerow and trees.

CONCLUSION

The site is an integral part of the landscape setting to Loughborough, providing part of the 'gateway' to the distinctive Charnwood Forest landscape to the west and south. The valued landscape and setting of the Outwoods and the wider Charnwood Forest landscape character and designation would be substantially impacted if the site was developed.

Mitigation would normally be applied in terms of design layout, enhancing of existing hedgerow and tree planting and provision of green infrastructure with dual purpose to screen and break up the built form of housing. However, there remains risk of substantial harm to the character and appearance of the landscape which could not be adequately mitigated due to the particular sensitivities in relation to the Charnwood Forest and the rising landform.

Setting of Outwoods and Charnwood Forest from Bramcote Road, Lark Rise and Laburnum Way

The existing intervening hedgerow and Bramcote Park provide some screening of the site from Bramcote Road, Lark Rise and Laburnum Way. In the case of 2 storey housing the visual effect of housing could be mitigated by enhancing or augmenting/ increasing these and by planting tree belts, 15-20m wide both on and off site. The assumption for this to be effective in the long term would be for the intervening land to be retained in agricultural use.

Rural Charnwood Forest setting for Loughborough

Some vantages from Jubilee Woods and Outwoods area looking back towards existing built up area of Loughborough are obscured where there is a combined effect of elevated landform and mature high canopy tree lined hedgerow or small wooded areas. From this direction a case could be made to significantly enhance high canopy tree cover in the form of 15-20m wide tree belts either augmenting the existing line of hedgerow or as stand along woodland.

Mitigation would require low density development overall with clusters of higher density with emphasis on woodland block planting, larger plot sizes accommodating trees and or copse such that high canopy trees would have sufficient space to grow without constraint.,.

Setting of Outwoods and Charnwood Forest from Nanpantan Road

Due to the rising nature of the landform from approximately 137m south of the SW corner of the Nanpantan Road playing fields, the residual effect of development would adversely impact the character and appearance of this valued landscape as the setting for the Outwoods as a key area of the Charnwood Forest for experiential perception and a sequence of views from Nanpantan Road, along Watermead Lane, and routes to the Outwoods.