

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL –CONSERVATION & LANDSCAPE - TREES

APPLICATION NUMBER: P/20/2199/2

LOCATION Land off Leconfield Road, Nanpantan, Loughborough

PROPOSAL Application for Outline planning permission (including point of Access) for up to 30no. dwellings (Class C3) with associated access, landscaping, open space and drainage infrastructure at land off Leconfield Road, Nanpantan.

DATE: 27 April 2021

FROM: Nola O'Donnell Senior Landscape Officer

TO: Jeremy Eaton Planning Officer

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE ON LANDSCAPE GROUNDS / REQUEST CLARIFICATION ON TREES

COMMENT/REASON:

Valued Landscape:

The LVIA downplays the local importance of the site as a valued landscape. It should be noted that the GLVIA 3rd Edition states "*The fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value*". The GLVIA does not precisely prescribe what constitutes a valued landscape but does set out a range of factors that can help in the identification of a landscape as 'valued'. Local interest and support for a landscape should not be discounted. Such interest would come under the term 'cultural interest' as well as 'perceptual'. Similarly where local people give personal testimonies of their experiences, perceptions and feelings about a landscape this would come under 'associations'. It should be noted that a local community group exists which assigns high value to this landscape and has gathered local accounts of perceptions. The group have published opinion and reports on their website. The site forms the landscape setting for the ancient woodland and together is highly valued by the local community.

Landscape Character and visual effects:

The site rises from the east up toward Burleigh Wood, a locally significant ancient wood. The character of the site is open with vegetation cover of scrubby grassland. It is fairly prominent within the locality. Development of 2 story housing on this land is likely to be visible from several vantages in the town and from the landscape to the south and southwest. This would likely give rise to adverse impacts of the area and the setting of the ancient Burleigh Wood and thus result in adverse visual impacts. Proposed dwellings would dominate and overlook surrounding housing and bring pitched roofs prominent in relation to the wood in distance vantages.

The LVIA recognises the importance of the adjacent ancient wood. It acknowledges the development would yield a major –moderate landscape effect. It notes the likely change in visual setting from more distant views but downplays the issue of constructing dwellings on this elevated landform as part of the setting for the ancient wood.

The site lies within the Charnwood Forest area notwithstanding being surrounded on three sides by housing. This elevated and in part steeply sloping site together with its open nature makes an important contribution to the character of the area. Visually the sites upper gradients are prominent affording extensive views across Loughborough to the Wolds.

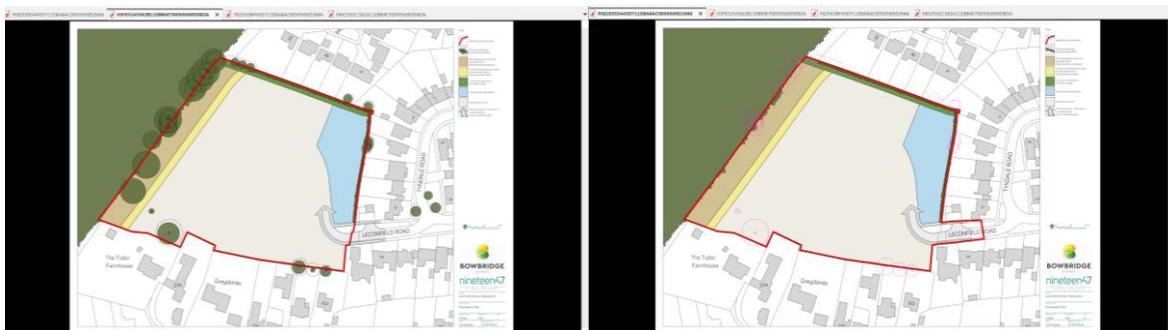
The LUC Landscape Sensitivity Study states that *'development on these slopes may be out of keeping with the existing settlement pattern'*.

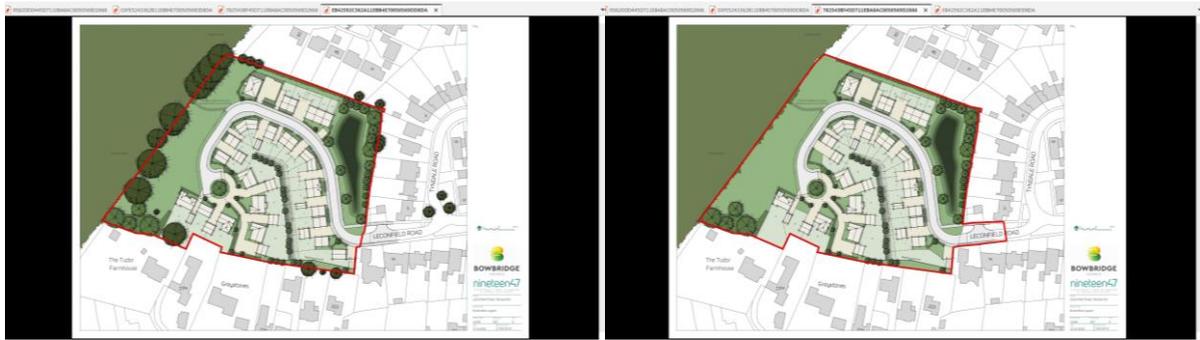
I agree with the LVIA that the development would have a major- moderate landscape effect. Development would give rise to harm substantially detrimental to that character and detrimental to the visual amenity of the area.

Trees and ancient wood:

Trees and lack of alignment with various plans and layout design

There seems to be some anomalies in the tree survey further reflected in the tree information of parameter plan dated 22.10.2020, superseded and current revision A dated 22.12.2020 and layout plans between superseded Rev D dated 17.11.2020 and current version Rev E dated 23.12.2020. The architectural / landscape architectural and engineering draughting convention is when a drawing is revised that a note explains the reason for the revision. This convention has not been followed so it is unclear as to why trees appear in the superseded versions and are now eliminated in the current versions. Have trees been felled which seems odd as there was no direct conflict with the layout positioning of buildings? Or, were the positioning of the trees incorrect? The reason is because some plans show symbols for fairly large trees in the SW corner but they are not on the schedule or Figure 3 Tree Location Plan even though on one plan Figure 5 Constraints and Tree Protection the RPA are drawn for them. Also there are some young trees which are of local interest just in from the entrance. The submitted plans should be reviewed and revised to accord with the tree survey. Historically they seem to have been planted as part of a Planning Condition.



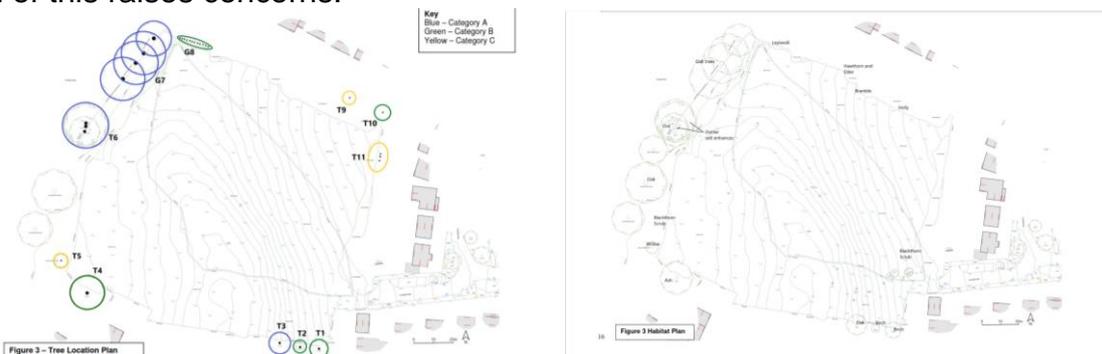


The Ecological report states “ it is clear from the table [a reference to table above in the report] that there is a potential for Burleigh Wood LWS to be impacted either directly or indirectly from the development within the site area due to proximity of this and the sharing of a boundary.”

This report seems to downplay the importance of Burleigh Wood as an ancient wood by failing to list it as a constraint.

Figure 3 Habitat plan in comparison to Tree Survey plan indicates tree on and adjacent to the site

All of this raises concerns.



There is no clear reason why some trees of Burleigh Wood along the perimeter are shown and identified while the ones to the SW are not.

I note the Forestry Commission expresses concerns for the potential impact of the development on the ancient woodland notwithstanding the inclusion of a minimum buffer. The standing advice covers ancient woods and the need to enhance and enlarge woodland covers as part of the delivery of buffer protection. Potential impacts which could be detrimental and lead to deterioration of the adjacent ancient woodland include inter alia polluting grounds around the wood; changing the water table or drainage of land which constitutes the woodlands zone of influence. Indirect effects with adverse impacts include reduction of amount of semi natural habitat next to ancient woodland; increasing amount of pollution including dust; increasing disturbance of wildlife; increasing light pollution; increasing damaging activities e.g. fly tipping and impact of domestic predator pets and not least changing the landscape character of the area.

Submitted proposed landscape mitigation:

The proposed buffer to the ancient wood is shown as amenity grass with some trees. It fails to address the stated need for planting of native species as transitional woodland edge habitat as set out in Natural England's response which reminds us of Loughborough University's Burleigh Wood and Holywell woodland Management Plan. I am not convinced that the proposed buffer would be adequate to mitigate direct and indirect harm to the woodland. There remains a likelihood that the edge of the woodland would be eroded through informal access. The proposal within the first 15m of the buffer ought to be retained as is and only to enhance through additional tree planting or as advised below under Mitigation Recommendations.

I note and concur with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust points regarding buffer to the ancient woodland, the proposed wildlife corridor being a mere token gesture and the need to propose trees throughout to be of type to give rise to true full high canopy and that sufficient spatial allocation be made.

Mitigation recommendation – *without prejudice*

In the event of development on the site gaining consent, I recommend that the access entrance to the site be flanked framed with trees and give a vista to the ancient wood from the access point off Leconfield road.

I further recommend that the ancient wood be afforded a more substantial woodland edge and grassland landscape setting buffer.

Specifically, the ancient woodland buffer should contribute to the wider green infrastructure for the locality. The buffer in landscape character terms and therefore habitat type should consist of woodland to woodland edge planting grading out to scrub and grassland. I defer to my colleague Mr Simms on the detail of such habitat provision and refer Natural England's comments on same.

Two-story pitched roofing should be limited to the lower areas of the site.