

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL –CONSERVATION & LANDSCAPE

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:** 25 November 2021**FROM:** Nola O'Donnell Senior Landscape Officer
TO: Ann Scott Senior Planning Officer**SUMMARY OPINION: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS LEADING TO HARM****COMMENT/REASON:**

I confirm that I have read the additional information submitted and find it does not change my views set out previously.

I summarise the key harms already expressed in previous comments:

- Landscape character - loss of unique elevated view, a feature of the physical character /landform of the natural site; loss of landscape setting i.e. sloping pasture as transition to ancient woodland. Level of harm: demonstrable loss of characteristic attributes
- Visual character– loss or impedance of skyline and view associated with the site. Level of harm: demonstrable loss of skyline and visual panoramic view
- Trees- adj ancient wood, a designated and sensitive landscape type fragmented from associated distribution of ancient woodland – impact on landscape setting of ancient wood. Level of harm: demonstrable loss of transition from pasture:scrub to the landscape setting; failure to create and improve habitat reflecting the established landscape character setting for the ancient wood; failure to integrate with adj. sensitive landscape or respect its character and appearance in accordance with CS11 and CS12

The cumulative harm is, therefore, considerable.

The LUC Landscape Sensitivity Study assessed the site in combination with others ascribing a low to moderate sensitivity to 2-3 story development. It examined a number of criteria. The Study noted for form, density and setting of existing settlement/development that “*development on these slopes may be out of keeping with the existing settlement pattern*”. While the Sensitivity Study noted the adjacency of the ancient wood it did not examine the interrelationship, nor the fact that small fragmented woods are more vulnerable. The NPPF Section 15 175 (a) and (b) are engaged.

At a finer grained evaluation of the site the special unique qualities, its *genius loci*, flow from the combination and interplay of its specific attributes. The rising landform creates elevated prominent space which has a close association to a sensitive, vulnerable small wood. This is of unique significance for the west of Loughborough as

part of the wider landscape setting to the settlement as no other site affords the combination of an undeveloped pastoral character so close to the built form and for which there are elevated landform affording panoramic skyline views across Loughborough toward the Wolds. A notable landmark of the skyline is the Carillon. This imparts a unique sense of place and distinctiveness.

The ancient wood is a surviving fragmented remnant of the Charnwood forest cover and by definition ought to be afforded especial consideration when adjacent sites come under development pressure. Smaller fragmented woods such Holywell wood and Burleigh Wood are in fact more sensitive by virtue of their small size and proximity to the settlement. It logically follows such settings are of greater importance for rehabilitation and integration to the wider green infrastructure of Loughborough. There remains a likelihood that the edge of the woodland could be eroded. The wood is part of a wider development strategy for the Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park (LUSEP). Although the site PSH447 is not directly covered by the LUSEP, the policy CS23 incorporates the objective to integrate sensitive landscape and respect its character and appearance in accordance with CS11 and CS13. Both the statutory status and the identified quality of Burleigh Wood are referenced in para 10.53 'Landscape' of the Core Strategy. Therefore, *a priori*, consideration of this should inform development of the site.

The current submissions do not set out how the harms identified would be satisfactorily mitigated.

Mitigation recommendation – *without prejudice*

In the event of development gaining consent,

1. I recommend that the indicative layout for built form be revised to not break the skyline views from the upper portion of the site.
2. I recommend that the proposed access entrance to the site be flanked framed with trees and that the layout be modified to afford a vista line to the ancient wood from the access point off Leconfield Road.
3. I recommend that the ancient wood, which as a landscape type and habitat of high sensitivity be afforded a more substantial offset buffer which properly and fully caters for transitional characteristic types, to assist in the protection and enhancement of it as significant green infrastructure assets currently fragmented from the wider Jubilee & Outwoods ancient woodland complex of the Charnwood Forest. Specifically, the ancient woodland buffer for this smaller wood should contribute to the wider green infrastructure for the locality to accord with CS13 and to complement CS23 which covers the LUSEP to the north and west of the ancient wood. The buffer in landscape character terms and therefore habitat type should consist of woodland to woodland edge grading out to scrub and grassland. (NPPF Section 15 Para 174 (a) and (b))

The cumulative effect of applying these mitigations would significantly reduce the predicted level of harm to less than considerable.