

Development Control Landscape Advice

File Reference:	3/23/1447/O	DC Officer:	Amit Patel
Date Received:	10/08/22	Team:	
Response Date:	02/11/22	From (Landscape):	Paul Stevens
Property Name:	Land off	Conservation area:	
Street:	Luynes Rise	TPO on site:	
Town:	Buntingford		

<input type="checkbox"/>	NO COMMENTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMENDED CONSENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMENDED REFUSAL
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Conditions on any approved application:

4P05 Tree/hedge Retention Protection

4P07 Tree/Natural Feature Protection:
Fencing

4P09 Tree Protection: Excavations

4P10 Tree Protection: Earthworks

4P12 Landscape Design Proposals

4P13 Landscape Works Implementation

4P16 Details of Earthworks/Mounding

4P17 Landscape Maintenance(Major Sites
Only)

4P21 Retention of Landscaping

Comments:

Impact on existing trees and surroundings

No significant impact on the important trees associated with the site.

Comments:

Landscape proposals:

This application is effectively a resubmission of application number 3/22/1551/FUL and so the landscape comments for that application apply.

Development Framework Plan – practically unchanged.

Parameter Plan – practically unchanged.

Parameter Plan Access and Movement – practically unchanged.

Parameter Plan Green Infrastructure – practically unchanged.

Plan showing Public Open Space – practically unchanged.

The comments and advice provided by CPRE Hertfordshire are endorsed and so no need to duplicate them here.

The previously submitted plans can be seen on pages 16 and 17 of the DAS. The illustrative layout on page 59 of the DAS does not diverge significantly (from a landscape perspective) from the previous application .and therefore the current proposals are similar in principle to those submitted in 2022.

The Site

Three agricultural fields partitioned by two hedgerows, approximately 20 hectares in total area on the urban fringe of west Buntingford. There is access from the A10 to allow agricultural machinery to the site and a gap in each hedgerow wide enough to allow farming equipment to pass through from one field to another.

The most northern field and the central field are open and exposed in character with the south-eastern field being more self-contained and enclosed.

- The northern field is in an elevated position in the landscape, roughly rectangular in shape, and with a high central ridge from which the land slopes downwards to the north- east and south- east corners of the field where it meets existing suburban housing development on the western outskirts of Buntingford.
- The central field is roughly triangular with undulating landform, although the land slopes generally downwards from the A10 on its western boundary towards the east.
- The eastern field also slopes generally downwards in an easterly direction.

Landscape character and context

The overall site is bounded on its western side by the A10 ring road and to the east by a 1980's suburban style housing estate. There are two public rights of way crossing the site which run from Buntingford to the village of Aspenden.

The agricultural land use of the site is to be found on both sides of the A10 and can be described as coherent or interconnected, despite the obvious presence of the road transport corridor - the undulating landform, open landscape character, land use and vestigial field pattern having been largely retained.

This is an outline planning application comprising:

The development of 350 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), a new highway junction from the A10 with up to 4,400sqm of commercial and services floorspace (Use Class E and B8) and up to 500 sqm of retail floorspace (Use Classes E) and other associated works including drainage.

The change of use, and scale of the proposed development, will result in urbanisation of the currently rural/agricultural landscape character of the site and surrounding area to the west. Albeit there are mixed adjacent land uses of water treatment works, housing, and transport corridor, the development will result in the loss of a clear and common connection between the agricultural land use of the site and the wider landscape setting.

The extension of the urban fringe of Buntingford up to the A10 bypass in this location will mean the loss of landscape buffer and/or physical separation of the town from the transport corridor, forfeiture of the favourable transition from urban fringe to rural landscape and will be visually intrusive by disrupting valued views enjoyed by users of the rights of way which cross the site.

The northern part of the site falls within landscape area 141, 'the Cherry Green Arable Plateau' with the southern part within character area 142, the High Rib Valley' of the landscape character areas as set out in the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Landscape Character Assessment 2007'.

The Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change common to both the LCAs is to promote a strategy for reducing the impact of development on the upper slopes of Buntingford which includes the proposed development site.

Landscape Designations, Quality Value and Sensitivity.

The LVIA categorises the site as of low to medium landscape quality. However, by using criteria for determining landscape quality the site meets various criteria for both medium and high quality.

The site can, therefore, reasonably be said to fall into the medium landscape quality categories, but this can be raised to medium/high when adding in the special quality of the site as an important landscape buffer between Buntingford and the A 10 bypass.

Landscape Effects

The proposed development will result in a development that is locally prominent due to the elevated position of much of the site.

- The openness of the landscape on this side of Buntingford will suffer an immediate and permanent loss.
- The introduction of new housing and other development of this scale will have adverse impact on the wider landscape as experienced by existing residents, users of the A10 and local Rights of Way.
- The landscape buffer between the A10 corridor and the outskirts of Buntingford will be lost. The A 10 would no longer bypass the town but will instead coalesce with urban style housing development on an expanded urban fringe of Buntingford.

Visual impact

The main viewpoints from which the various parts of the development will be seen are:

- From the houses to the east along the urban edge.
- From the far side of the valley of the River Rib - parts of the far valley side can be seen from within the site, indicating that the site will also be visible from those parts of the far valley side.
- From the A10 as it passes the site – the roadside vegetation is sparse in places and the southern section of the A10 is on higher ground relative to the site.
- From the two public footpaths which cross the site, including elevated views from the footbridge where the northern footpath crosses the A10.
- In terms of overall visual amenity, the development would be prominent in some views from houses along the existing urban edge to the east, and the general visual amenity of the local area to the east of the site would be adversely affected.

Assessment of effects

The site is sensitive to a housing (and other) development of the proposed layout and scale:

- It will cause significant harm to the coherence of the existing field system.
- The existing character of the site and its attributes such as landform and agricultural land use representative of the rib valley landscape will be lost.
- The plateau and natural sloping/undulating landform will be replaced by built form.
- Properties to the east and north will experience high adverse visual effects.
- The magnitude or degree of landscape change brought about by the development will be major, because of the change of use from agricultural land to housing development.

Summary

The scale of the development will have significant adverse impact on the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area.

The identity of the local surroundings is that of existing housing development set well back from the A10 ring road and looking out onto a landscape that is rural in character. The proposals however result in the immediate and permanent loss of this identity with the A10 now forming a tight collar around the development and therefore the town.

The development would represent a significant change to what is a largely agricultural landscape and there would also be adverse visual effects for the properties along the eastern edge of the site where the presently open rural views would be changed by the development and here would also be adverse visual effects for users of the two public footpaths which cross the site and for people passing along the A10.

There is conflict with those parts of the NPPF which seek to conserve and enhance the natural environment as well as conflict with Local Plan Policy GBR2, which seeks to maintain the rural area outside the Green Belt as a valued countryside resource. In respect of Policy DES2 of the Local Plan, the development will cause harm to local landscape character due to the loss of landscape features – chiefly the open fields which make up the site and the development would represent a significant change to what is, a largely open, agricultural landscape.

The site has not been identified in either the District Plan or Neighbourhood plan as appropriate for development.

Policy CFLR3 Public Rights of Way are adversely affected.