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CD6.18

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

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OF BRIAN JOHN DENNEY BA (HONS), DIPLA, FLI, CENV, MIEMA

IN RELATION TO LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MATTERS CONCERNING:

AN OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF UP TO 85 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS (*REDUCED FROM 93 ORIGINALLY*) AND OPEN SPACE (17/04673/OUT)

ON

LAND AT JUNCTION WITH CARR ROAD, HOLLIN BUSK LANE, SHEFFIELD, S36 1GH

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF HALLAM LAND MANAGEMENT LIMITED

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DESIGN **ENVIRONMENT** **PLANNING** **ECONOMICS** **HERITAGE**

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Summary Proof Evidence

- 1 My name is Brian John Denney. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect, a Fellow of the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
- 2 I am instructed to present evidence in respect in relation to the conjoined public inquiry concerning proposals for residential development on land at junction with Carr Road, Hollin Busk Lane, Sheffield, S36 1GH (the "site"). This concerns the refusal of an outline planning application submitted to Sheffield City Council ("the Council") on behalf of Hallam Land Management Ltd (the "Applicant"). The proposed residential development is for 85 dwellings (the "Proposed Development").
- 3 I have been involved with proposed development at the site since September 2019 when the Applicant approached Pegasus Group regarding the potential to provide landscape and visual expert witness services, should the proposed development be subject to a planning appeal. Hallam Land Management have subsequently approached me to undertake this role on their behalf.
- 4 Prior to my appointment, I familiarised myself with the development proposals and the site and its landscape and townscape context. In doing so, I also reviewed the LVA which formed part of the application submission. Following my review, I was able to confirm the findings of the LVA which had been undertaken by landscape architects at FPCR and accept my appointment.
- 5 In the course of my review, I considered the various consultation responses that had been received in respect of the application relating to landscape matters and the relevant national and local policy framework.
- 6 Having examined the relevant application documentation and the relevant policy context, I was satisfied that the proposals were appropriately located, and that the proposed development areas responded to their landscape and townscape context.
- 7 The appeal site is located to the north of the junction of Carr Road and Hollin Busk Lane in Deepcar, Sheffield. The site is located on the southern edge of a built-up area which comprises a somewhat linear settled valley townscape with

development stretching from east of the Underbank Reservoir in the west, to Deepcar in the east. A plan of the site can be found at CD1.1. The site covers an area of some 6.5ha of private agricultural land.

- 8 The site is allocated as an Open Space Area (OSA) on the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan Proposals Maps dated 1998 (CD3.5). The site forms the eastern part of a larger area of land with that designation, which extends to the west and north west.
- 9 The reason for refusal sets out those landscape and visual matters which are in dispute. Specifically, it refers to **'unreasonable harm to the established landscape and to visual amenity at both local and wider levels'**, which it suggests would lead to **'unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'**. It also suggests that there would be **'undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements'**.
- 10 The Council provide no commentary or explanation of what constitutes unreasonable harm and in what sense it is considered to be unreasonable. However as all of the material impacts are required to be identified and taken into the planning balance, my evidence and the assessments in the LVA has appropriately identified those impacts in relation to landscape, character, visual amenity and the separation of settlements.

Effects on Landscape Character

- 11 It is accepted that any development such as this, brings about direct effects upon the landscape of the site itself, as has been assessed within the LVA. The LVA identified that there would be a loss of the agricultural fields in which the proposed development would be constructed. However, the inclusion of existing landscape features within the site as green infrastructure, in conjunction with the proposed enhancements, will offer a direct and positive response to the priority landscape guidelines within the Enclosed Gritstone Uplands LCT of the landscape types in the Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe (CD7.4, page 17). Indeed, the proposed development embraces these guidelines, which includes amongst other things to 'Protect and maintain historic drystone walls', and 'manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands'.

12 I have considered the location of the site within its landscape and townscape context and the settlement growth of this part of the valley. The appeal proposals occupy land between approximately 230 m and 255 m AOD, responding positively not only to the settlement pattern, but appropriately located comparatively low down within this more developed valley side. It is this combination of location, local settlement context and topography which contributes significantly to conclusions of the LVA with regard to the limited nature of any impact that would occur to landscape character at both a local level and in the wider landscape and with which the Council's Landscape Officer agreed.

Effects on Visual Amenity

13 I have set out that the visual effects identified take the worst-case into account as is set out at LVA paragraph 5.43 whereby seasonal variations are considered within the assessment (Appendix 1). Indeed, given that the site is **'characterised by open fields interrupted only by traditional field boundaries and scattered tree planting'** (CD6.4), there are few instances where the season makes any material difference to the visual effects of the appeal proposals. Winter and summer photography is now included within the revised LVA (May 2021) (Appendix 5) enabling comparison to be made. Visualisations have also been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute Advice Note 06-19 (Visual Representation of Development Proposals, September 2019) (CD7.6) and are contained at Appendix 6.

The LVA contains a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) plan (Appendix 1, Figure 8) and a Representative Visual Envelope (RVE) plan (Appendix 1, Figure 9) which refined the ZTV through site fieldwork in order to seek to identify the actual degree of site visibility. An annotated version of Figure 9 is reproduced at my Appendix 7 which conveys the even more limited extent of effects (those assessed to be greater than Minor at completion).

14 Beyond the close range, localised views from nearby residents, it was set out in the LVA that there were no views of the site from the vast majority of residential receptors. Effects such as these are an inevitable consequence of development occurring in relative proximity to existing residences and is typical where existing views over undeveloped land at settlement edges are proposed for development such as the appeal scheme.

- 15 The LVA identified that there was very limited visibility of the site from the circular public footpath that runs through Fox Glen, just to the north of the site. The site would be visible from sections of the footpath which runs between Bolsterstone and Hollin Busk, after an initial section where views of the site are obscured by landform.
- 16 Some views of the site can be obtained from the elevated areas of Hunshelf Bank, however, the effect of the proposed development on those views is remarkably little. The LVA assessed the effects for viewpoints representative of these locations (viewpoints 9 and 13 (receptors 'G' and 'K') as being minor and this reflects the baseline of views which includes a broad expanse of developed areas, the distance from the site and degree of change which would arise from the appeal proposals.
- 17 The principal roads from which the proposed development would be visible, were identified in the LVA to be Carr Road, Cockshot Lane and Hollin Busk Lane and from the western extent of Royd Lane as it joins Carr Road, and from Broomfield Lane to the west of the site. The experience of receptors travelling along these routes is already one where there is an awareness of the existing settled edges which appear within both direct and peripheral views.
- 18 It was concluded that the visual effect on the Peak District would be negligible to none and for the and the proposed development does not fall within, or adversely affect Areas of High Landscape Value.

Potential for the proposals to undermine the role of the site in visually separating established settlements

- 19 Stocksbridge and Deepcar are already connected, with the northern extent of both settlements running interchangeably into one another along the B6088 (Manchester Road), and Wood Royd Road. Overall, this developed valley landscape / townscape, lying downstream of the Underbank Reservoir, has developed organically over time from a number of smaller settlements to what is now perceived as a settlement continuum, with its individual components not being distinct from each other when considered in townscape or visual terms. Any separation which does occur between the settlements therefore relates solely to their southern extents and is not always clearly apparent in views from the wider landscape.

20 This issue therefore primarily relates to the area of land between Carr Road in the east and Hollin Busk Road in the west. The proposals would appear to clearly relate to the adjacent settlement and appear well separated from that at Hollin Busk. There would remain a physical gap between these two areas of the local townscape and that the perception of leaving Hollin Busk and travelling through an area of undeveloped land along the settlement edges would, nonetheless, be retained. The objective of retaining a visual break between these two areas would not be undermined by the appeal proposals and the proposals were carefully and sensitively constrained with this objective in mind.

Conclusions

21 Having examined the relevant application documentation and the relevant policy context, I was satisfied that the proposals were appropriately located, and that the proposed development areas responded to their landscape and townscape context. Indeed, it was clear that the involvement of FPCR into the design of the proposals had led to a positive, Green Infrastructure led, scheme responsive to local landscape character and distinctiveness and with regard to local visual amenity.

22 The matter of the overall planning balance is one which is discussed by Mr Roland Bolton, however it is clear that the extent and nature of the landscape and visual effects to be taken forward into that balance is one which both the Council's Landscape Architect and the Planning Officer confirmed were highly limited and localised. Furthermore, that part of the landscape in which those limited effect would occur is one which would lie outside of the Green Belt, in a landscape which is not a Valued Landscape, as considered in the NPPF.

23 The proposed development will have either no effect, or no more than a negligible effect, upon landscapes of acknowledged importance, such as landscapes designated for their National, Regional or local landscape value, including the Peak District National Park. At a local level, the Sheffield UDP includes Areas of High Landscape Value, and the proposed development does not fall within, or adversely affect, any of these designated landscapes. The UDP also includes an important views designation which it is also confirmed does not apply to this site, nor does the development proposals adversely affect any of those views of acknowledged importance.

- 24 With regard to the highly limited and localised nature of the effects which would arise, it is not agreed that the proposals would give rise to unreasonable harm to landscape character or visual amenity, nor would they therefore give rise to unacceptable impacts on the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Furthermore, it is not considered that the proposals would result in an undermining of the role of the site in providing a visual separation between existing settlement areas. The proposals only extend across part of an undeveloped area, with a clear separation remaining between the proposals to the east and Hollin Busk to the west.
- 25 I do not therefore consider that the proposals are contrary to any of the landscape and visual policies from the Core Strategy or Unitary Development Plan, which were referenced in the reason for refusal. Nor do I consider that the proposals are contrary to the aims, purposes or requirements of paragraphs 127(c) or 170(b) of the NPPF. The proposed development has been designed in a manner which is sympathetic to local character and history and has appropriate regard to its surrounding built environment and landscape and townscape setting. It also recognises the site's intrinsic character and that of the wider landscape whilst seeking to maintain local character, retain important landscape features and to improve and enhance local biodiversity.
- 26 With regard to the agreed highly limited and localised nature of the effects, and the advice of the Council's Landscape Architect who did not object to the proposals, the Planning Officer had concluded that **'there are no adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme'**. This is a reasonable and informed conclusion, in line with the findings of the LVA and one with which I would agree.