

DRAFT

Review of the Reserved Matters Application for

**LAND TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF BARTLOW
ROAD, LINTON CB21 4LY**

on behalf of Linton Parish Council

January 2019

**Application Site: Land to the North and South of Bartlow Road,
Linton, CB21 4LY**

Application Reference: S/2487/18/RM
LPA: South Cambridgeshire District Council

**Review of the Reserved Matters application with respect to the
Landscape Masterplan/LVIA (Bidwells) approved for outline
planning Permission.**

Liz Lake Associates (January 2019)

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Liz Lakes Associates on behalf of Linton Parish Council to review the outcomes and recommendations made by Bidwells which supported the approved outline application (ref S/1963/15/OL) for residential development, for up to 55 dwellings with landscape buffer and new vehicular accesses from Bartlow Road, Linton. The following documents and drawings, in respect of this application, have been reviewed:

- Bidwells Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 25 May 2016
- Bidwells Landscape Masterplan reference: UDS 32011-A1-201, July 2015
- Bidwells Revised Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 25 May 2016
- Bidwells Supplementary Masterplan Information, June 2016

In respect of the reserved matters application (ref: S/2487/18/RM), which seeks approval of the layout of the site, the scale and appearance of buildings, the means of access and landscaping, the following documents have been reviewed:

- Site Layout at GF Level, Drawing No. P_1552-101A, NC Architects
- Site Layout at Roof Level, Drawing No. P_1552-102A, NC Architects
- Soft Landscape Proposals; Drawing No: 21616 11 SHEETS 1- 5, ACD Environmental

The purpose of this report is to establish whether the site extents and design have been carried out satisfactorily (or not) and if the design has changed, then do those changes materially affect the outcome.

The outline Planning permission was granted for a 55 unit scheme which was developed in response to the findings of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) carried out by Bidwells, subsequent to the original planning application for a 78 unit scheme .

A number of changes to the master plan (as set out in the Supplementary Master Plan Information), were incorporated into the revised masterplan to achieve a reduction in potentially adverse landscape and visual effects.

Bidwells note that the *"revised Illustrative Master Plan delivers a reduced built area and quantity of development, to respond to the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).*

The proposals reduce the overall maximum number of residences from 78 to 55. The reduction in dwelling numbers has created a large area of retained agricultural land to the east of each of the sites, which will connect visually with the rural landscapes to the east of the A1307. Strategic woodland planting at the edge of the development will create glimpses of the proposed new development at the edge or Linton.

In accordance with the 78 dwelling master plan, this master plan still maintains a centrally located LEAP, with a central pedestrian spine. The walking route connects with the woodlands walks, linking back to Bartlow Road. Access to the riverine landscape of the River Granta to the south will be discouraged in order to prioritise its habitat and ecological functions."

is important to note that the main principles of the original Landscape masterplan were maintained and informed the Planning Committee's decision to approve the development.

However, the current proposed layout as set out in the reserved matters application are very different from the previous indicative landscape planting and screening proposals. This report will demonstrate that the reserved matters application is materially different to the Outline approval S/1963/15/OL to which it is linked.

The Site and its landscape setting

The site lies on the eastern edge of Linton, Cambridgeshire and is located on the eastern edge of Linton, surrounded by open countryside. The site comprises two parcels of arable land and semi improved neutral grassland. The larger parcel is located south of Bartlow Road on land that slopes south westwards towards the floodplain of the River Granta, whilst the smaller parcel located north of Bartlow Road is flatter. The southern boundary of the larger parcel abuts the River Granta and a band of broad leaved semi-natural woodland, the parcel is contained by trees and hedgerow along its western boundary, hedgerow and trees run along the northern boundary alongside Bartlow Road, fairly exposed areas with intermittent tall ruderal planting line the eastern boundary alongside the A1307. The smaller parcel has strong hedgerow boundaries along its northern, eastern and western boundaries as

well as trees along its northern boundary, and the southern boundary has low level post fencing with taller grass fronting onto Bartlow Road.

The Site parcels abut the edge of Linton but are positioned outside of the village envelope. These two parcels of land play a significant role in separating the historic village of Linton from the A1307. The currently undeveloped Site preserves the long, existing rural views identified as key characteristics of the area in the South Cambridgeshire District Council Design Guide SPD. These long views establish Linton's countryside context and as such the Site forms part of the open countryside setting of the village on the rural approach to the village.

The historic village of Linton is set in a valued landscape, close to the 'Outstanding Conservation Area' within a chalkland landscape of rising arable fields and the River Granta. The River Granta has its own water meadows and these, together with trees and hedgerows, form strong features in the landscape setting of Linton. The rural setting epitomises the historic setting of the agricultural community founded around the milling of cloth. The Site's proximity to Linton Conservation Area gives heavy weight and due consideration to the local vernacular of the Conservation Area.

The Site lies on the edge of 'Area 1 South-east Clay Hills' and 'Area 2 Chalklands' as identified in the Cambridge Landscape Guidelines. Although the site affords a high level of tranquillity owing to its rural character, this is degraded closer to the A1307.

The Reserved Matters Application

Although the extent of the development and the woodland buffer remain broadly the same, the layout of the parcels differs to that which was approved for outline consent. These differences are summarised below:

1. The layout of roads in the southern parcel are no longer aligned with the contours.
2. The interface of the development with the Granta valley is now associated with roads.
3. An additional access point onto Bartlow Road is proposed along the north-south pedestrian link.
4. The current plan shows the crucial pedestrian link/ green corridor through the southern parcel adjoins roads and no longer links positively to the green buffer on the eastern boundary.
5. The integrity of the 30m woodland buffer on the eastern boundary has been compromised by the inclusion of hammerheads in both parcels.
6. The hammerheads and drawing notes (links to further development) within both parcels suggest a later phase of development on the agricultural land to the A1307.
7. A considerable number of trees have been removed from boundary treatments and facing rear gardens resulting in noticeably less mitigation.

The differences outlined above, all contribute to increasing the landscape and visual effects of the development.

Landscape Issues

The changes to the layout of roads in the southern parcel mean that the grain of the development no longer follows the contours. As a result of this, the development does not:

- respond to the existing settlement pattern on the valley slope;
- allow the same level of tree planting across the site along roads and within rear gardens;
- provide a positive green interface between the development and the Granta valley as it is now associated with roads.

Aligning the roads with the contour on a sloping Site, in conjunction with tree planting helps integrate new dwellings into the landscape by breaking up the built form. This principle was fundamental in the approved outline scheme where rows of trees are proposed both along the roads and within rear gardens, following the contours of the Site. In the reserved matters application, roads predominantly cross the contour. This breaks from the established pattern of development along the valley side. The roads themselves will be visually prominent and there are less opportunities to create the strong linear bands of vegetation required to break up the built form. In addition to this, the massing of buildings and associated hard surfacing in the central area of the Site (Plots 21-29) in conjunction with plots 18, 19 and 20 which front the Site will be highly visible in cross valley views. All of these changes will have a significant effect on the visual character of the development and the scenic quality of the landscape in this prominent location on the edge of Linton.

In the Bidwells LVIA the sensitivity of the River Granta is assessed as High because of its high value and susceptibility. The LVIA subsequently notes that *"although the Granta River adjoins the southern boundary it would not be impacted as a buffer would be maintained"*. In the approved scheme a strong landscape buffer is proposed to provide this. In the reserved matters application, a road now forms this interface, providing access to a pumping station and to housing which fronts onto the river, with little opportunity for mitigating planting (four trees are proposed in front of plots 18, 19 and 20). This means that there will not be a strong green buffer between the development and the highly sensitive Granta valley.

The changes to the road layout in the reserved matters application includes an additional access point onto Bartlow Road which partially replaces the crucial north-south pedestrian link through the southern parcel. As a result, the integrity of this pedestrian

link as a green corridor, which is a key component of the approved scheme, has been compromised. The northern part of the pedestrian link now follows a road adjacent to dwellings, crossing the eastern access road to the Leap. The Leap no longer links to the woodland buffer on the eastern boundary but is adjoined by a further road and dwellings. As well as compromising the integrity of the green link, this also weakens the effects of the woodland buffer in integrating the development into the wider landscape on the prominent entrance to the village. At the southern end of this spurious green link, where the pedestrian route joins the Granta valley, the path is squeezed between buildings (plot 18 and 31) with no space for tree planting. In this area, the approved scheme proposed buffer planting to the Granta valley, linking to this pedestrian corridor (see point above), yet the soft landscape proposals indicate just two trees in this area.

As mention above, the integrity of the 30m woodland buffer on the eastern boundary of the Site has been weakened as it no longer links to the green corridor and the LEAP. The location and extent of this buffer is fundamental to the approved outline scheme in integrating the development into the wider landscape on the prominent entrance to the village. The inclusion of hammerheads in the reserved matters application, in both parcels, suggest a later phase of development on the agricultural land to the A1307. Although the overall size of the woodland buffer is compliant with the approved outline scheme, the inclusion of these hammerheads and the grassed gaps in both parcels weakens the effect of the landscape buffer.

Maintaining the agricultural land in conjunction with the proposed woodland buffer to provide a strong new settlement edge, followed recommendations by Bidwells following their LVIA of the outline planning application for 78 dwellings. Approval of the outline application was granted on the revised scheme for 55 dwellings and the woodland buffer; and as such, a later phase of development cannot be considered. As noted previously, the soft rural edge of

Linton makes a critical contribution to its strong landscape character and the village's historic landscape setting. The agricultural land and the woodland buffer are essential in creating a new soft rural edge to the village as proposed in the approved outline scheme.

The LCA (The Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines: 1. The South East Clay Hills) notes Principles for landscape improvement and management, *"Creation of new woodlands: ideally these should extend or link with existing woods... They should be carefully sited with regard to: - existing or potential views; - wildlife potential; - landform and skyline; - the broader pattern of the landscape"* and *"Hedgerow management: simple enhancement of the landscape could be achieved by allowing selected existing hedges to grow taller; those hedges with the strongest visual and wildlife potential should be selected for this purpose. Historically significant hedgerows should be carefully conserved."* *"Village edges: where unsightly fringes to village meet farmland, woodland belts or broach hedgerows can be used for screening where land is available. Views from roads can be obscured by planting along the road margin. It is important to retain or frame particularly important views of distant skylines, fine village views, church towers, etc. and in these situations, a more open village edge, possibly with short avenues on the entrance roads, will be more appropriate."* *"Footpath corridor improvements; landscape enhancement to local footpaths is needed along selected routes (see Farmland Model A7)."*

With reference to both the LCA guidelines above and the reserved matters application, it is clear that opportunities to strengthen landscape character which were incorporated into the approved scheme, have been missed. The soft landscape proposals demonstrate that there is a significant decrease in the number of trees throughout the development resulting in noticeably less mitigation. As noted above the changes to the layout has meant:

- there are considerably less opportunities for tree planting along roads and within rear gardens which would help integrate the development into the wider landscape.
- There is little additional planting to provide a buffer to the Granta river corridor.
- There is little planting within the north south pedestrian 'green' corridor route and opportunities to create green links connecting to both the Granta valley and the woodland buffer have been missed.

In addition to the above points and following the recommendations in the LCA Guidelines, the proposed woodland buffer along the eastern boundary of the Site could benefit from better integration with the existing woodland along the River Granta which extends south of the A1307.

It is worth noting that the Mitigation Measures (Point 4) on Tree Planting within the Development in the Bidwells LVIA states:

"The site has been designed to retain some areas of open green space and recreational areas, along with a central 'green corridor' to the south. These areas would include further tree planting, which combined with tree and shrub planting within the garden spaces to assist in screening views of the new properties and provide landscape integration and ecological value, reducing adverse landscape effects."

In terms of the more detailed landscape issues, the site is currently elevated land adjoining the eastern development limit of Linton, which is a mixture of housing styles and ages. In this respect the scale and massing of buildings needs to be carefully considered as there can often be an exaggerated sense of height from buildings on a sloping site.

The materials proposed for housing in the street elevations should be informed by the rich historic architecture of the village, and

reference traditional materials as stated in the landscape character of National Character Area 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, such as: traditional timber-frame, elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks., or equally as important in the SCDC Design Guide: "plastered timber frame construction, often with decorative pargetting ,flint and weatherboard, Gault brick, plain clay tiles, steep roof pitches, four or five planked doors, casement and sash windows, and chimneys located laterally on the roof ridge, or at gable ends."

The unsuitable mix of housing was identified as an issue at the pre-application stage and during this reserved matters stage has been responded to by NC Architects as "too prescriptive". They state to have simplified their house design, however, designs should be of an appropriate time, and in this case a modern approach to avoid design imitation. The details of the proposed buildings are relatively standard and are considered inappropriate in respect of the current built form. Therefore, the impact of housing numbers, massing and generic proposed house designs on the landscape, townscape and village approach are out of character and do not contribute positively to the settlement of Linton.

It is considered that the effect of the proposed development, as detailed in this reserved matters application, on the landscape and settlement character of the Site and its immediate surroundings, would be far greater than those accepted in the approved outline plan. The key principals of the landscape mitigation have been eroded with substantially less tree planting throughout the Site. This will give rise to significantly greater long term harm on the landscape character and setting of Linton.

Visual Issues

The prominence of the sites position is as a key entry point and gateway into Linton. The approach towards the village is gradual and it can be seen in its countryside setting from the A1307. The Site is situated on a sloping Site on the north bank of the River Granta, to the east of the settlement, which further emphasises the prominence of the Site in long distance views. Development at this edge of the village will affect the character of the approach into the village and key views.

The principal of development on this Site is now established, but the form of this development, subject to this reserved matters application, needs to be carefully considered to prevent adverse visual effects. Linton's position in an open agricultural landscape gives rise to long open views which extend to the skylines and sometimes village rooftops and church towers.

The assessment of the visual effects in the Bidwells LVIA seems to be reliably prepared with a suitable range of receptors and the assessment is appropriate for a project of this scale. However, it does not assess the effects of the development at Year 15 when landscape mitigation in terms of new tree planting is established.

A number of views (referencing the representative views presented in the Bidwells LVIA) are reviewed to demonstrate the importance of the principals of the approved outline planning consent and how these have been eroded through the detailed design, the subject of this reserved matters application.

The effects of the development on the residential views along Bartlow Road (VP1 and 2) are considered Major/Moderate Adverse in the LVIA due to the loss of the open views across the Granta Valley. It is suggested that new housing would be positioned approximately 25m away from existing properties and incorporate mitigation planting to reduce the impact. However, the scale and massing of the new housing, its character in terms of the architectural detail and

building materials does not reflect the existing street scape and settlement character of Linton. In addition, private driveways onto Bartlow Road leave little room for mitigation planting and this will have a significant effect on visual amenity. The existing hedgerow will be removed, degrading the rural approach to the village. Although the reserved matters application resembles the approved outline scheme, setting back housing beyond a private driveway and retaining and enhancing the existing hedgerow would be a more appropriate landscape led response to retaining the rural settlement character of Linton and reducing the effects of the development on residential views.

In views from across the valley to the south (VP12), the prominent sloping Site on the edge of the village is clearly visible. The visualisation demonstrates that the mitigation planting (predominantly in rows along the roads and in rear gardens which are aligned to the contour) has some effect in breaking up the development and integrating it with existing trees in the wider landscape.

Views from the footpath running adjacent to the northern parcel (VP4) show how important the retained agricultural land and the woodland buffer is to maintain open views of the landscape and to screen the new development respectively. The break in the woodland buffer and hammerheads to 'link to further development' compromises the integrity of the buffer and the purpose of retaining the agricultural land.

In views from the east (VP 6, 9 and 10) the importance of both the retained agricultural land and the woodland buffer are demonstrated. They contribute to both the visual amenity of road user of the A1307 and Bartlow Road as well as the perception of Linton in its landscape setting. The setting of Barham Hall and Barham Cottage (VP10) which are Grade II* and II listed buildings, respectively are also represented in these views. The visualisation for VP6 clearly

demonstrates why the original scheme of 78 dwelling was revised to retain part of the agricultural land on the east. As noted above the hammerheads and drawing notes (links to further development) in the reserved matters application suggest further development in this area and is contrary to the approved outline scheme. These aspects of the approved scheme are essential in mitigating the effects of the development on the setting of these listed buildings and retaining the rural character of Linton.

In addition to the above views from roads and Public Rights of Way (PRoW), there are a series of permissive paths from Mill Lane eastwards in the river valley to the south of the Site in an area known locally as the Leadwell Meadows/Pocket Park. Views from here were not identified in the Bidwells LVIA as they are not from a PRoW. However, it is usual to consider views from permissive paths as they are often well used and considered locally important. As referred to previously with reference to the layout of the parcels and the changes to the roads, the interface of the development with the Granta valley is now associated with a road providing access to a pumping station and to housing which fronts onto the river with little opportunity for mitigating planting (four trees are proposed in front of plots 18, 19 and 20). This means that there will not be a strong green buffer between the development and the highly sensitive Granta valley which was a fundamental aspect of the mitigation in the approved outline plan. In addition to this, the proposed housing fronting onto the valley are 2 to 2.5 stories high (house styles Kb, S2 and M) with four isolated trees in front of them. Although there is some proposed planting on the boundary of the Site with the river, when viewed from the permissive paths along the river, these buildings will appear overbearing and dominant as their height would be accentuated by the rising ground.

Summary

This report demonstrates that the detailed design, subject to this reserved matters application, is materially different to the Outline approval S/1963/15/OL to which it is linked. The changes to the layout have eroded the principals of the landscape mitigation which formed the basis of the approved outline application with increased effects on the character of the landscape and the settlement of Linton, including key landscape views on the approach to the village and from the river valley. As a result, it is a materially different scheme and is considered less sustainable and contrary to the policy presumption to grant approval under NPPF 2018 paragraph 11.

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