



AMJ Construction Ltd

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Landscape Review
Proposed Residential Development
Keston Nursery, Mill Green Road, Pinchbeck, Spalding,
Lincolnshire

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. My Name is Wendy Buckingham, I have a BA (Hons) degree and a Masters of philosophy degree (MPhil) in Landscape Design, and I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute since 1991. As Principal Landscape Architect with the Robert Doughty Consultancy, I am experienced in carrying out Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment work for a range of development types.
- 1.2. This review is intended to assess the impact on the local landscape of the development of the site and to establish any mitigation requirements in order to ensure that any landscape impacts arising from the development are reduced.
- 1.3. In order to carry out the assessment, prior to visiting the site, a desk top study was carried out to gain an insight into the landscape character of the site and surrounding area and highlight any possible sensitive receptors. This was followed by a site visit on the 14th March 2017 which involved both assessing the views from the site itself outwards and visiting key viewpoints such as public roads, footpaths and residential areas. Significant views were recorded using a digital camera with the focal lens adjusted to 50mm.
- 1.4. The application site measures 7.6ha, and is located to the south and east of Mill Green Road and west of the rail line. The site consists of a range of horticultural buildings ranging from brick storage and loading bays to offices, greenhouses, hardstanding and parking and ancillary equipment such as water tanks and boilers. Outline permission is sought for the redevelopment of the nursery for the residential development of up to 100 dwellings.

2. SITE AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

- 2.1. The application site is generally flat, and comprises a roughly triangular area of land to the east of Mill Green Road on the south western edge of Pinchbeck. The eastern boundary of the site is defined by an operational railway, and residential development lies immediately to the east of the railway. Directly to the north of the site are two existing dwellings adjacent to the Mill Green Road rail crossing and residential Pinchbeck lies beyond those two dwellings to the north east. To the west of Mill Green Road, there is an extensive area of open and flat arable land.

Located between the western boundary of the site and Mill Green Road, there is a triangular area of land occupied by residential development which fronts Mill Green Road, and the rear gardens to these properties run up to the site's south western boundary. To the south east of the site there is an area of land laid to polytunnels, with arable land and some commercial development (Anglia UK) to the south east.

- 2.2. In terms of vegetation, the north western boundary of the site is characterised by a tall *Leylandii* hedge. To the east, the site's boundary with the rail line is characterised by deciduous planting, as are the boundaries to the south west and south. The rear gardens to the dwellings fronting Mill Green Road back up to the site along the southern half of the western boundary.
- 2.3. In terms of landscape character, the application site falls within the National Character Area 46, The Fens. This area is described as a "large scale, flat open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies, with sparse woodland cover and a hierarchy of rivers, drains and ditches providing a strong influence throughout the area. Shelter belts, including poplar, **willow and leylandii are often around farmsteads**". There is no local level detailed landscape character assessment available for the South Holland District, but the National Character Area description accurately describes the locality of the site. The landscape surrounding the site is typical of the drained fenland that surrounds the Wash and land to the south, being virtually flat pond low lying. It is characterised by its simplicity and relative remoteness, with expansive and peaceful panoramas and big skies.

3. VISUAL IMPACT OF PROPOSALS

- 3.1. The site is on the whole well screened from the surrounding area by established existing planting to its boundaries. The site is particularly visually well contained in views from the north and east due to intervening built development and existing planting, as can be seen in viewpoint 7.
- 3.2. Looking towards the site from the west, as can be seen in viewpoints 1, 3 and 4 the existing *Leylandii* hedge to the site's north western boundary and the residential ribbon development on Mill Green Road significantly screen the application site from view. The *Leylandii* hedge is however an

incongruous feature in this particular location, albeit a feature characteristic of the area, and it is proposed to remove it and replace it with an area of open space and more appropriate planting which will allow filtered views into the site. Although there will be some views of the proposed residential development from the west, the character of these views will not be altered significantly, as what is apparent in viewpoints 3 and 4 is that there is an existing residential context to these views. What is also apparent in these views is that the rail line to the eastern boundary of the site is not visually evident and does not visually form or contribute to defining the western settlement edge of Pinchbeck.

- 3.3. From Blue Gowt Drove and Blue Gowt Lane south of the site (viewpoints 5, 6 and 7) it is difficult to get clear views of the application site, as it is screened by intervening vegetation, the site boundary vegetation, and, from the south west, the buildings associated with Anglia UK. There may be some views of rooftops of the proposed residential units, but, as above, these will not be out of character within the context of the existing views from this direction; the proposal is set against the backdrop of the south western residential edge of Pinchbeck. In viewpoint 6, looking south east from Blue Gowt Drove, the modern and stark residential edge of Spalding is clearly visible.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

- 4.1. To conclude, the application site as a whole is well screened from view, as has been detailed above, with the proposed development benefiting from a high degree of visual containment afforded by the existing boundary vegetation and existing settlement edge.
- 4.2. Close views of the development are on the whole confined to views from the rear of the residential properties directly to the east of the site. However, as many of these properties are single storey, with their rear gardens facing the development, and taking into account the existing vegetation associated with the railway line and the site's eastern boundary, views of the development will be filtered.
- 4.3. Notwithstanding the above, other views of the development are mainly limited to views from the road and rail network immediately surrounding the site. The vast majority of people affected by any changes to the landscape the development may bring will be those travelling by vehicle i.e. transient receptors. There are very few properties associated with

the roads surrounding the site, and where there are roadside properties, more often than not they are associated with curtilage planting which screens views. There are no footpaths within the extents of the immediate road network, hence there are no Public Rights of Way close to the site. Due to the sparse road network in the area, once away from the roads which immediately surround the site, views of the site are extremely limited and distant. The nearest settlements are Pinchbeck to the east and Spalding to the south. The only views of the site from Pinchbeck are those achievable from the properties directly to the east of the site and the railway, whilst any views achievable from the northern edge of Spalding would be very distant, and the development would be viewed in the context of the existing residential edge of Pinchbeck.

- 4.4. The impact of the proposals on views is affected by a variety of issues, such as the landscape backdrop to particular views, the proximity and character of other buildings and structures, and intervening planting and buildings. I consider that the character of the application site is influenced by its location directly adjacent to the existing south western residential edge of Pinchbeck, which imparts an increased capacity for the site to accommodate development of a similar character to that which already exists. In my opinion, the strong visual and physical containment afforded to the site from the wider landscape by the extensive existing boundary vegetation, combined with the location of the site directly adjacent to the existing settlement, will ensure that this site can accommodate the type of development proposed without adversely affecting the character of the locality and without being visually obtrusive.
- 4.5. The site is suitable for the type of development proposed due to a set of specific characteristics which are unique to this particular site. These qualities are its containment, its location directly adjacent to and partially surrounded by the existing settlement edge, and the existing boundary vegetation, which is to be significantly retained and enhanced where necessary. I do not consider that the development of the site would create a precedent for building on the adjacent fields or on any other site located in the vicinity of the village, as other sites will not have the specific set of characteristics which are unique to the application site, and each would require assessment of their own individual merits.

- 4.6. The refusal of a previous planning application to this site, reference H14-0942-16, stated that the existing western built up edge of Pinchbeck is marked by the railway line, and that the development of the application site for housing would lead to an unacceptable pattern of development that would set a precedent for the expansion of Pinchbeck to the west of the railway, which would negatively impact upon the overall form and character of the village, which is concentrated to the east of the railway.
- 4.7. For the reasons stated above, I do not consider that the residential development of the site would set a precedent for further similar development in the locality. Although physically and on plan the railway line forms the western edge of residential development to Pinchbeck, in reality, on the ground, due to the fact that the rail track is at ground level and isn't visually apparent in views from the west to the settlement, it is the existing residential edge itself which forms the western edge of Pinchbeck, not the railway line. Additionally, it is clear when looking at the layout and form of Pinchbeck on plan that its development has been organic over the years, and it would seem inappropriate to use a feature such as a railway line as a limit to Pinchbeck's western development when this is a visually inconsequential feature on the ground.
- 4.8. To assist with the integration of the development into the local landscape, and to ensure that the site is developed without adverse landscape impacts, whilst at the same time preserving the key attributes and features of the site, a well thought out and high quality landscape strategy is proposed for the development. The strategy's main strands are as follows:
- The existing boundary hedges and trees to the site will be managed and maintained with any gaps in the hedgerows being in-filled with appropriate species. The retention of these existing hedges and trees will assist in giving the development a more established character from the outset, and will also ensure that the long-term future management of these hedges and trees is secured. In particular, the retention and infilling of any gappy areas of the hedge and trees to the south-western boundary of the site will afford screening of views into and across the site from the rear of the properties on Mill Green Road.

- The retention of the hedgerow and trees to the site's eastern boundary alongside the railway line along with the inclusion a linear area of open space along this boundary will be instrumental in maintaining spatial separation between the development on the site and that existing to the east of the site, thus avoiding the impression of cohesion of developed areas.
 - The removal of the evergreen Leylandii hedge from the north western boundary and its replacement with an area of open space combined with tree planting of an appropriate character will enhance this boundary. The proposed planting will aim to filter views into the site rather than wholesale screen the development from view.
 - Public open space in the form of general amenity space, specific children's play space and informal kick about space will be incorporated sensitively within the development.
 - New planting within the site itself will assist in the assimilation of the development into the surrounding landscape in terms of any views into the site. New planting will also be fundamental in order to provide an attractive and pleasant living environment with seasonal variation for residents, with planting enhancing the privacy and enjoyment of the residents.
 - The use of an appropriate palette of materials which will reflect the local vernacular will ensure the proposed development will integrate well with the area. Boundary treatments, such as garden walls and fencing will reflect the rural character of the locality.
- 4.9. Developing a layout for the site which is sympathetic to the local character, whilst at the same time preserving the key features of the site, such as the established boundary planting, will ensure that the site can be developed without significant adverse effects to the local landscape character, as detailed above.

APPENDIX A
PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWPOINTS LOCATION PLAN



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Project Residential Development, Mill Green Road, Pinchbeck			
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Drawing No 1211-3_VP01	Rev -	Drawn GG	
Scale NTS @ A4	Date 20.03.17	Checked WB	



APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1 - View south-west along Mill Green Road



Viewpoint 2 - View from inside the application site looking west



Viewpoint 3 - View from Fengate Road looking east



Viewpoint 4 - View from High Fields Lane looking east



Viewpoint 5 - View from Blue Gowt Drove looking north east



Viewpoint 6 - View from Blue Gowt Drove looking south west



Viewpoint 7 - View from Blue Gowt Lane looking north west

APPENDIX C

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