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influence®

Date

Dear Paul

Appeal Reference: APP/J0405/W/16/3147513
Planning Application Reference: 16/02752/AOP

Land West of College Road South, Aston Clinton

Following receipt of the planning decision, issued on 18 April 2017, dismissing the appeal by Hollins Strategic Land LLP, a revised Concept Layout Plan has been developed in response to the key issues raised by the Inspector.

I am a fully chartered Landscape Architect and Director of Influence Environmental Ltd and represented the appellant at appeal. By way of this letter I address those key issues raised in relation to landscape and visual and explain how the revised Concept Layout Plan responds to those points.

The appeal scheme for 85 dwellings

I note that in paragraph 16¹ the Inspector concludes that the appeal site *"does not form part of a 'valued landscape' in the terms of the Framework (NPPF)"* and that in paragraph 29, it is stated that *"the site is not prominent in the wider landscape"* and *"the effects of the development are likely to be relatively local in their extent"*.

With regard to the sensitivity of the footpaths the Inspector finds that the receptors using the local footpath network would have a *"high sensitivity to the development proposed"* (paragraph 30).

Although not formally designated or identified in the current or emerging Local Plan, as a *"gap"* the Inspector considers in paragraph 17, that a *'gap' "has a very important role in preserving the separation and very different function, character and identity of each settlement"* (Aylesbury and Aston Clinton). Although the development of 85 dwellings, as per the appeal proposal, would not result in coalescence *per se*, *"the sense of separation between the two settlements would be all but lost, with consequent harm to the form and identity of the village"* (paragraph 23).

¹ Where reference to paragraphs is made, it is in relation to the Appeal Decision unless otherwise stated.

The Inspector commented that the 85 dwelling development would also appear to “project” and “obtrude” out into the open countryside into the gap (paragraphs 19 & 27) and is therefore more related to the countryside than the existing settlement edge.

The new proposal for up to 55 dwellings

In response to the Inspector’s comments, the revised Concept Layout is for a reduced number of proposed dwellings, only up to 55, around 35% reduction of the appeal scheme, thereby preserving a larger proportion of the ‘gap’ and the sense of separation.

The proposed northern edge in the revised Concept Layout does not go beyond the existing edge of the settlement on College Road South and as a result does not project or obtrude into the open countryside and the ‘gap’. The actual physical gap is retained between the bypass and the residential edge of Aston Clinton on College South Road, accepting that there is an increase in the built form on this part of the village boundary, it is not beyond the existing edge of development and would consolidate the existing settlement in this location.

The proposed landscape buffer is designed to wrap around the northern and western boundaries of the site and connect to the existing hedgerows and trees. The Concept Layout shows that development is set back by circa 75 metres from the northern boundary of the application site. Such a substantial level of landscaping which will provide a more robust and softer edge than the Brook Farm proposals and a real sense of ‘rounding off’ the settlement at this point. By comparison, the Brook Farm development has consent for dwellings proposed merely 4 metres from the northern boundary. The proposed development would be read as clearly relating to the village and not the countryside. The density of the proposals will relate to the adjoining residential developments, more modern and historic, and will relate to the form of the existing village. As part of the revised concept layout dwellings will be 2 storey, approximately 9 metres in height

In paragraph 21 the Inspector refers to views from PRoW ACL/1/4 to the west. She notes that the views towards the east show the “limited width of the gap” in the context of the whole appeal site, the approved development in the surrounding area, the bypass and the tall Arla dairies as seen beyond the bypass. In combination, the decreased size and scale of the revised Concept Layout and the substantial landscape buffer, assimilate the proposals into the surrounding landscape and reduce the overall impact both on the landscape and the visual receptors. When viewed from the footpath from the west, due to the development on land to the rear of Aylesbury Road (16/00780/AOP) and the substantial landscape buffer, the impact will be much reduced and the sense of the ‘gap’ will be far less compromised and will remain as a discernible separation between the village and the bypass.

The Inspector considers that the historic setting of the village is relevant and is brought through in Policies RA.2 and GP.35 which requires in part that new development ‘should respect and complement the historic scale and context of its setting’. In paragraph 25 she concludes that ‘the remaining pastoral landscape between the northern edge of the village and the bypass are an integral part of its setting and identity’.

As referred to earlier, the reduced size of the revised Concept Layout is to retain any pastoral landscape gap and the qualities and features within it which relate to the setting and identity of the village.

The proposal includes for open play space, a LEAP and the SUDs solution within the substantial area of landscape to the northern boundary, circa 75m in width. The proposed open space is circa 4.1 acres (circa 16,500 sqm) out of a total gross site area of 8.6 acres which results in a significant increase in comparison with the appeal scheme. Importantly, the revised concept secures the long-term retention of this land for recreational purposes and protects it from future development.

In summary, the revised Concept Layout:

- Reduces the scheme by over 35% to up to 55 dwellings;
- Provides an increased landscape buffer, 75m wide, with additional tree and shrub planting;
- Will provide a managed open space area of circa 4.1 acres (16,500 sqm) protected from development;
- Does not go beyond the existing edge of built development along College Road South and as a result does not project or obtrude into open countryside towards the bypass;
- Will provide a much more robust and softer edge to the settlement than the Brook Street development;
- Will retain a wider and significant 'gap' between the bypass and Aston Clinton than the appeal scheme.

In conclusion, the revised Concept Layout is a result of addressing the key comments of the Appeal Inspector and addressing them through a layout which responds with a more considered and balanced approach to the potential landscape and visual impacts.

Yours sincerely



Sara Boland CMLI
Director