

**FL&BH 1.3**

## **APPEAL BY FAREHAM LAND LP AND BARGATE HOMES LTD**

## **LAND AT NEWGATE LANE (NORTH) AND LAND AT NEWGATE LANE (SOUTH), FAREHAM, HAMPSHIRE**

## **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MATTERS: SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

### **PREPARED BY:**

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## CONTENTS

|                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| <b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>2. BACKGROUND</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>3. SUMMARY</b>      | <b>4</b> |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1. My name is James Atkin, Director (Landscape) in the Birmingham Office of the Pegasus Group and a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (2005). I have over 19 years experience specialising in the application of LVIA across a range of sectors including power, highways, rail, housing, waste, land reclamation and restoration, mineral extraction, commercial developments and renewable energy.
- 1.2. Since joining the Pegasus Group I have completed detailed LVIA's for sites across the UK, including schemes for residential, mixed use, care home, solar and commercial development. As an inherent part of this work I apply an iterative process of LVIA to inform masterplanning principles that respond appropriately to landscape and visual constraints and opportunities.

### Terms of Reference

- 1.3. This evidence is written on behalf of Fareham Land LP and Bargate Homes Ltd (the appellants) and relates to an appeal for non-determination by Fareham Borough Council in respect of two outline applications for residential development, both on land to the east of Newgate Lane. This evidence sets out an overview of relevant landscape and visual matters.
- 1.4. Principles and good practice for undertaking landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) and/or applying the principles of LVIA are set out in the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (2013)<sup>1</sup> (GLVIA3). The concepts and procedures set out in this guidance have been adopted where appropriate.
- 1.5. The evidence included in this supporting statement for this appeal (LPA reference: P/18/1118/OA - AND - P/19/0460/OA) is true and has been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (April, 2013)

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The appeal sites extend to ca. 10 hectares (ha) of agricultural land, situated close to the urban edge of Fareham. The appeal sites are bounded by Newgate Lane to the west, Woodcote Lane to the south and Newgate Lane East to the east.
- 2.2. The wider landscape context of the appeal sites includes the low-lying ground of the coastal plain and the adjacent urban environments of Fareham, Gosport (with Woodcot and Bridgemary). The settlement area of Stubbington forms the western extent of the Strategic Gap which extends across the coastal plain between the local settlement areas. Separation is most pronounced across the arable areas between Fareham/Peel Common and Stubbington.
- 2.3. The applications were submitted with a detailed LVIA which set out a comprehensive baseline and robust assessment of predicted impacts. These included details as to how landscape and visual matters have influenced the design of the masterplan, with mitigation measures consequently forming an inherent part of the proposals.
- 2.4. The reasons for refusal raises three main issues in respect of landscape and visual matters, stating that:
  - b) The proposed development fails to respond positively to and be respectful of the key characteristics of the area and would be harmful to the character and appearance of the countryside;
  - c) The provision of development in this location would significantly affect the integrity of the strategic gap and the physical and visual separation of settlements;
  - d) The application site is not sustainably located adjacent to, well related to or well-integrated with the existing urban settlement boundaries;
- 2.5. This evidence considers these issues against various information, including the submitted LVIA's, consultation responses, report to committee and other relevant baseline and evidence base documents related to landscape and visual matters.

### 3. SUMMARY

- 3.1. The submitted LVIA's address the key characteristics of the appeal sites and their context. The submitted LVIA's also set out an assessment of the impact and approach to mitigation. This process also enables judgements to be drawn in respect of the context of the appeal sites in relation to the existing urban settlement edges/boundaries.
- 3.2. With reference to this material, and supported by my own additional analysis where necessary, I conclude that the appeal schemes will not be harmful to the character and appearance of the countryside, will not significantly affect the integrity of the Strategic Gap and will relate well to the existing patterns of settlement.
- 3.3. This is on the basis the relevant key landscape characteristics of the area have been considered through the process of LVIA, consequently informing the analysis of constraints and opportunities, and ultimately the landscape strategy for the mitigation. This forms an integrated part of the two masterplans for northern and southern schemes.
- 3.4. Consequently, I consider the approach taken to the design of the respective masterplans to have adopted a positive approach in landscape and visual terms.
- 3.5. The loss of the agricultural enclosures and replacement of these areas with residential development is largely the main cause of impact, however this is balanced by the response to the grain and pattern of the landscape and its scale, as well as the response to the characteristics of the landscape, several of which are defined as 'essential' by the published guidance. Where these are referenced, mitigation adopts an approach of retention and/or enhancement.
- 3.6. I consider that the subsequent residual impacts of the appeal schemes will be acceptable in landscape and visual terms.
- 3.7. In terms of the Fareham to Stubbington gap, I consider the appeal sites are well placed to accommodate development without undue consequences or impacts on the role and function of the Strategic Gap. This is on the basis that:
  - In relation to distances, the appeal schemes will reduce the gap between Bridgemary and Stubbington physically from ca. 1.6km to ca. 1.1km which remains a considerable distance and well within the thresholds of the 'rule of thumb' appropriate distances set out in the FBC study;

- In terms of visibility, the appeal schemes will be physically and visually well contained – they sit within the strong green infrastructure framework that is evident in the form of blocks of woodland and tree lined hedges which screen or partially screen views – furthermore they will not be visible across the Strategic Gap from Stubbington;
- Existing screening is present immediately adjacent to the appeal sites in terms of the woodland around the waste water treatment works, along Newgate Lane and within the emerging framework of vegetation along Newgate Lane East that will continue to establish and increasingly provide a robust visual screen from the east;
- The surrounding context and urbanising influences, including the settlement area of Peel Common which reduce the degree of change;
- The opportunity to contribute to, and maintain, a strong green infrastructure network that complements both the strategic gap and the areas of settlement, in the form of the landscape d areas and landscape buffers along the eastern and western edges of the appeal sites which will reinforce and connect the linear routes which cross broadly north to south through this area; and
- In connection with the green infrastructure provision, the ability to incorporate substantial mitigation that will successfully avoid or minimise landscape and visual effects.

3.8. I also note that, notwithstanding differences in the technical approaches, the Pegasus Group and FBC Strategic Gap studies both independently acknowledge that the Strategic Gap can accommodate some form of growth and development within it. Both also recognise the need for additional, more detailed assessment on a site/project basis.

3.9. In respect of the conclusions of the FBC Strategic Gap study (where these note the relatively poor state of the gap at this point), I would think a logical and appropriate conclusion would be to amend the boundary to omit this part of the landscape from the Strategic Gap, creating capacity for development to come forward with a strong framework of green infrastructure and mitigation. This would place an emphasis on the importance of the core areas that are located further west, between Fareham and Stubbington where the Strategic Gap clearly delivers its role and function in full.

3.10. Finally, the reason for refusal suggests that the appeal schemes will not relate to, or integrate with, the existing urban settlement boundaries. However, my evidence demonstrates that the appeal sites are well related to Peel Common, being located to the east of Newgate Lane, physical contained by the alignment of Newgate Lane East and situated immediately adjacent to the existing residential dwellings off Woodcote

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Lane and directly opposite the mix of dwellings and urban influences along the northern section of Newgate Lane.

- 3.11. With existing and proposed green infrastructure in place, the appeal schemes will consolidate the pattern of Peel Common within a clearly defined limit. As such I consider that the appeal schemes will integrate well, and in a positive way, with the settlement area at Peel Common.
- 3.12. Furthermore, there are some existing physical connections between Peel Common and Bridgemarky. With the appeal schemes in place, the consolidated pattern of Peel Common would continue to blend with the urban edge of Gosport and Bridgemarky, focused along the green route into Bridgemarky (along Woodcote Lane) and focussed on the large amenity open space of Brookers Field Recreation Ground.
- 3.13. If the previous emerging allocation of HA2 were to come forward, this broader area of development would reinforce the connection between Peel Common (including the appeal sites) and the edge of Fareham. In each eventuality, I consider there to be a good connection between the appeal schemes and the existing areas of the settlement.
- 3.14. In all respects, considering Peel Common in itself, connections to Gosport, and with the potential for HA2 to come forward, development in this area will maintain a robust gap between Fareham (aligned with the western edge of Peel Common) and Stubbington.
- 3.15. Overall, in the context of these limited issues, and with the appeal schemes in place, landscape and visual issues are not sufficient to support a prospective reason for refusal.