



# TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

## PLANNING APPEAL BY PERSIMMON HOMES LTD

Development comprising 206 dwellings, access road from Peak Lane maintaining link to Oakcroft Lane, stopping up of a section of Oakcroft Lane (from Old Peak Lane to access road), with car parking, landscaping, substation, public open space and associated works

## Land east of Crofton Cemetery and west of Peak Lane, Stubbington

APPEAL REF:  
APP/A1720/W/21/3275237  
LPA REF: P/20/0522/FP

# PROOF OF EVIDENCE ON LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MATTERS

## SUMMARY

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on behalf of Fareham Borough Council

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## SUMMARY

1. This Public Inquiry concerns an appeal against the planning refusal by Fareham Borough Council of a full application for a development comprising 206 dwellings, access road from Peak Lane maintaining link to Oakcroft Lane, stopping up of a section of Oakcroft Lane (from Old Peak Lane to access road), with car parking, landscaping, substation, public open space and associated works. My evidence addresses issues of landscape and visual effects, design and the effects on the character and appearance of the area.
2. The appeal site is located to the north of Stubbington. The site is some 19.4Ha in area and includes land to the north and south of Oakcroft Lane. The main development parcel of the site would be the arable field, of about 8Ha, to the south of Oakcroft Lane, which has its eastern and southern boundaries with the existing settlement of Stubbington and the development around Mark's Tey Road.
3. In terms of considering the likely effects of developing the appeal site on the landscape, views, amenity of the adjoining open spaces and rights of way, and on the character and appearance of the site and local context, the key landscape features and functions are as follows:
  - 1) The north/north-west boundary formed by Oakcroft Lane and by the line of poplars is a distinct feature of the local landscape context. These elements, together with the subtle slope of the ground to the south, means that when seen from the north of the wider appeal site, the surface of the site is not visible, and undeveloped, the site appears to be well contained;
  - 2) The dense vegetation along the eastern and southern site boundaries, as well as the open uses to the south and west promotes some sense of separation from the adjoining settlement which gives the appeal site a comparatively rural character;
  - 3) A characteristic of the views from the north, from west of Peak Lane and east of Ranvilles Lane, back towards Stubbington, is how little of the built form of Stubbington is visible;

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- 4) The character of Oakcroft Lane is an essentially rural one. The single line of poplars is a striking feature. Despite the density of the planting, views into the site from Oakcroft Lane are possible;
  - 5) Crofton Cemetery, the churchyard of St Edmunds (Crofton Old Church) and the wooded open space within the appeal site, conjoin and combine to provide an evidently well-used and popular open space amenity. This open space appears to be used as part of local walking routes, together with Oakcroft Lane, the separated cycle/pedestrian link along Peak Lane, between Stubbington and Fareham, PRow 67 and Ranvilles Lane. Pressure for access is evident in the use of the boundaries of the main body of the appeal site for walking;
  - 6) The main characteristics of the existing developed areas to the east and south of the appeal site are the informality of the layout; of curved roads and footways, with some shared surfaces; front gardens with front parking arrangements; and detached housing, with slightly denser housing arrangements along the shared surfaces. The buildings are 2 storeys in height, with a few 2.5 storey units on Summerleigh Walk. The retained former landscape of trees is the primary landscape feature, with occasional, small incidental grassed open spaces; and
  - 7) The introduction of the construction and shortly the use of the Stubbington Bypass into the landscape will have a permanent effect on the landscape context. Its present under construction appearance is quite raw, but with time and its landscape matured, the road and traffic on it should be partially absorbed.
4. My appraisal considers the LVIA submitted with the planning application and the key findings of the LDA review. I then provide my overall landscape and visual assessment and, next, I focus on the design proposals and their effect on the character and appearance of the local area, and from where this would be perceived.
  5. I have reviewed the LVIA, and I concur with the findings of the LDA review. There are several stages of the assessment of the landscape baseline that are not in accordance with the approach advocated by GLVIA3 and there is a lack of any assessment on the landscape effects on the site and immediate local landscape context.

6. My assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the proposals is not an exhaustive assessment of the kind that would be undertaken for an LVIA. Rather I have sought to provide a framework for understanding the key effects rather than all of the effects. I have followed the approach advocated by GLVIA3 and have set out the criteria used to determine both landscape and visual value, susceptibility, sensitivity, magnitude of effect and overall significance of the effect in my appendices and, where this is relevant, I have used the terms defined in my appendices.
7. For the assessment of the magnitude of change of the landscape effect of the proposal and the overall effect when combined with sensitivity, using the LVIA's criteria the LDA review concluded for 264 units that the effect on the site (south of Oakcroft Lane) would be a major/moderate effect, the effect on the landscape immediately north of Oakcroft Lane would be a moderate effect and on the wider landscape of LLCA7.1a the effect would be a minor effect. My landscape units are slightly wider than these three, but in turn I consider the magnitude of change and overall effect or significance, to be *Substantial* and *Major-Moderate* for the site and surrounds, *Moderate* and *Moderate* for the that part of LCA7 between Fareham and Stubbington, and *Slight* and *Moderate* to *Moderate-Minor*.
8. The Landscape Statement of Common Ground summarises the findings of my visual assessment in respect of the magnitude of change experienced by people at the LVIA's viewpoints, in order to make a comparison with the findings of the LVIA. The visual issues at this appeal are focussed on relatively detailed elements of the design, rather than on the principle and suitability of developing the appeal site. Accordingly, I address the detailed implications of those aspects of the scheme proposal that would give rise to visual changes on nearby receptors.
9. Overall, I find that the scheme has failed to minimise the visual effects, and therefore causes adverse visual effect on the immediate countryside setting which is not necessary from the residential development of the site. This is as a result of inadequate landscape buffers which do not allow for the development built edge to be set far enough back from the site's boundaries to provide for the proper provision of landscape planting, as well as the failure to set the development back to an appropriate degree on the northern and western boundaries. The presence of 2.5 storey buildings on the northern, western and southern boundaries also unnecessarily increases the visual effects, as does the presence of almost continual

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roads around the development's perimeter with front parking and, in part, the 'additional' 206 units (over the Council's indicated 180 units), which gives rise to the presence of more buildings along the countryside edges than necessary. Reducing the numbers, even by a few along this edge, would allow for a more 'broken' built edge with more opportunity for landscaping.

10. In respect of the Site Layout, the approach to the design of the external GI has limited vision and has failed, almost entirely, to integrate the proposals with the local context and missed clear and readily available opportunities to do so. Consequently, the scheme has demonstrated that it has not responded to its setting and context and would not be well integrated physically, socially and visually with the adjoining community and the locally important GI network.
11. Overall, the layout design does not demonstrate any meaningful association with its context and has failed to respond to the attributes of its context. As the NDG sets out, good design does not need to mimic its surroundings and, in this case, the not all of the attributes of the locale are entirely positive, in this regard I have in mind the overwhelmingly detached nature of the development, with front gardens and drives onto the street, but the scheme should have responded to the sense of informality of the adjoining area and its well-landscaped form.
12. I have developed a Concept Plan for the site, to indicate how a scheme could be designed to address the Council's concerns at this appeal and to meet with Policy HA54 of the emerging Local Plan. Compared with the appeal scheme, the Concept Plan would increase the open space uses by some 0.8Ha whilst maintaining the net and gross developable densities. Its key features include:
  - An entrance open space and SW corner open space.
  - A larger single open space, rather than two smaller, less impactful spaces. Central play space potentially, although this could be located in the SE corner open space
  - A wider central green corridor providing a largely separated pedestrian route (from the roads) linking with the internal and external green spaces.
  - An almost entirely separated external pedestrian and cycle looped route.
  - Two access points to the footpath through the open space to the south and an enhancement of this route. A further access onto Oakcroft Lane and

enhanced provision on Oakcroft Lane back into the existing residential area to integrate the new scheme and link communities. Retain and enhance the old route of Peak Lane into a pedestrian/cycle link, to join in with the existing popular provision along Peak Lane between Stubbington and Fareham.

- A more informal built arrangement, with more parking courts to improve and provide more variety of built form along the street scene.
- Focal architecture in key locations; not through the use of 2.5 storey detached and semi-detached houses, but through the use of short rows of mixed character terraced cottages.

13. In my assessment, the scheme proposals have, by the virtue of the design, failed to minimise the visual harm and have not been as sympathetic to the local surroundings of Stubbington and the countryside setting, as they should or could be. They do not function well in terms of the use of the GI within the layout and have failed to integrate successfully with the local GI and consequently socially with the local community, despite the clear opportunities to do so. The scheme proposals have also failed to establish a strong sense of place, through the scheme layout and/or the provision of attractive open space and successful GI. Consequently, the proposals conflict with the objectives of Paragraphs 126, 130 and 174(b) and do not accord with the requirements of the NDG or local plan policies CS14, CS17, DSP6 and DSP40 (ii) and (iii).

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