

PROPOSAL FOR UP TO 57 HOMES ON LAND EAST OF POSBROOK LANE, TITCHFIELD

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Summary of Evidence on Landscape Matters by
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1.0 Summary and Conclusions

1.1 Introduction

1. I am Jeremy Smith, Director with SLR Consulting Limited (SLR). I am the founder member of SLR's landscape architecture practice. The SLR landscape practice includes 70 landscape architects across the UK, Australia and USA, in addition to support staff.
2. I am a chartered landscape architect with over 30 years of professional experience. I have a degree in geography and a post-graduate diploma in landscape architecture.

1.2 Summary of Planning Context

3. The Appeal Site is not located within any formal designations for the most valued landscapes. It is, however, adjacent to two listed buildings at Great Posbrooke Farm, and is within the Meon strategic gap.
4. The Council concedes that it does not have a five-year housing land supply. The potential landscape implication of this is that additional land for housing around the settlement will need to be found, and this is likely to be greenfield. The other implication of this is that policy DSP40 of the adopted local plan would be engaged, meaning that additional housing sites outside of the settlement boundary will be considered, where these minimise effects on the countryside and strategic gaps.
5. In the Officer's Report it is stated that 3 of the 5 criteria for allowing development outside the settlement boundary under policy DSP40 are satisfied by the proposed development. In relation to criterion iii, the requirement to minimise effects on the countryside and strategic gaps, it is acknowledged by the Officers that there would be no significant effects on the strategic gap, and that the proposed woodland planting would "*result in positive changes to views of this urban edge in the long term*".
6. In relation to harm to the countryside the Officer's Report also notes that the proposed development would reduce the distance between Great Posbrooke and Titchfield, and therefore undermine Great Posbrooke's historic role as a separate farmstead. However

Historic England has not objected to the proposed development and has commented that the proposed planting would enhance the existing settlement edge.

7. In the Inspector's decision for the previous appeal for up to 150 homes, he concluded that the site forms part of the wider valued landscape of the Lower Meon Valley. However, he also noted that the *"the urban edge is open and harsh with little by way of softening landscape"*, and that this has an *"undeniable"* influence on the character of the adjacent field. He also noted the benefits of the proposed planting along the settlement edge, stating that this would make the housing *"more screened and in effect a softer edge"* which would *"improve the appearance of the existing urban edge"*.
8. A review of appeals indicates that there are many examples of development being allowed within our most valued landscapes. In the cases examined it was accepted that there would be localised harm to the landscape and views, but that the proposed developments would conserve and/or enhance the wider landscape.

1.3 The Proposed Development and Mitigation Measures

9. I have helped to shape the revised proposal for up to 57 homes, which has taken on board comments made by the Inspector for the previous proposal for up to 150 homes.
10. When compared with the previous Appeal the total number of dwellings has been reduced by 93 (to 38% of the original number), and the proposed area which would be occupied by homes and POS has reduced from 6.6ha (from the Statement of Common Ground) to 1.65ha (25% of the original area). This ensures that the proposed housing is only located within the area which is influenced by the *"harsh and readily visible urban edge"*, an influence which the Inspector termed *"undeniable"* (paragraph 23). It also means that the effects of *"noise, activity, illumination"* and effects on *"localised views"* (paragraph 26) would not extend far from the existing settlement edge but would instead be closely associated with it, resisting the Inspector's concerns regarding *"creeping urbanisation"* (paragraph 26).

1.4 The Character and Value of the Appeal Site and its Context, and the Potential Landscape and Visual Effects of the Proposed Development

11. The SLR LVIA 2019 was carried out by an experienced landscape architect using a robust and thorough methodology. Surveys have been carried out over two years and in both winter and summer. A new ZTV and photomontages have been produced to illustrate the potential landscape and visual effects.
12. The 2019 assessment also takes on board the conclusions of the Inspector at the Appeal for 150 homes. The site has now been classified as part of the Open Valley Side landscape type, and it has also been accepted that the site is part of the wider Lower Meon Valley valued landscape. The assessment of landscape value has been elevated accordingly in the landscape assessment. However, the influence of the existing settlement edge has also been factored into this assessment, since the Inspector agreed that the influence of this on the character of the site was "*undeniable*". A further review of landscape value using the latest Landscape Institute guidance has been presented in my proof, and this concurs with the overall assessment of value presented in the SLR LVIA 2019. I have also concluded that even if the proposed Area of Special Landscape Quality had been adopted, the assessment of landscape value for the appeal site and its context would remain the same.
13. The SLR LVIA 2019 concludes that the landscape effects of the proposed development would be localised and focused upon an area which is already strongly influenced by the settlement edge. Landscape effects outside of the Appeal Site would be minor and negative in the short term, becoming minor and positive in the medium to long term, once proposed woodland planting has established. This conclusion of medium to long term enhancement is supported by the LSoCG, which states at paragraph 25 that the proposed woodland planting would improve the appearance of the settlement edge.
14. Similarly, the visual assessment within the SLR LVIA 2019 concluded that the visual effects of the proposed development would also be localised and focused on an area which already contains views of the existing settlement edge. For viewpoints outside of the Appeal Site, the effects would be negative in the short term, becoming positive in many cases once the proposed new woodland planting has established. Again, the ZTV and photomontages which form part of this evidence support this conclusion.

15. In summary, the proposed development would result in some localised landscape and visual harm to a valued landscape. Once proposed planting has established, landscape and visual harm would be focused on the Appeal Site itself, with landscapes and visual receptors outside of the site experiencing minor landscape and visual benefits.
16. I have noted that all green field residential developments would result in at least localised landscape and visual effects, and that given that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply it is likely that other green field sites on the settlement edge will be required, a situation envisaged within policy DSP40 of the adopted local plan. DSP40 also recognises that some harm from development is likely, but requires that harm to *minimised*.

1.5 Potential Effects of the Development upon the Meon Valley Strategic Gap

17. The Inspector accepted that the larger proposal for up to 150 homes would not affect the integrity of the strategic gap, although he acknowledged that the proposal would slightly reduce the physical distance between the settlements.
18. The Officer's Report to Committee concludes that the proposal for up to 57 homes would not have a significant or material adverse effect on the integrity of the strategic gap.
19. The SLR LVIA 2019 applies the Eastleigh Criteria to test the extent to which the development proposals would affect the functionality of the strategic gap. The fundamental principle of these criteria is that the integrity and effectiveness of a gap is not only a question of its physical extent, but also how it is perceived. The Fareham Landscape Assessment's own assessment of strategic gaps concurs with this basic principle.
20. The SLR LVIA's strategic gap assessment concluded that the proposed development would have no significant effect on the function and effectiveness of the strategic gap between Titchfield and Stubbington. Furthermore, the form of mitigation planting as envisaged in the illustrative masterplan would enhance the definition of the settlement edge and gradually improve the visual separation between the settlements once it has established.

21. It is common ground between the landscape witnesses that the appeal proposals would have no significant nor material effects upon the functionality and integrity of the Meon Strategic Gap.

1.6 Response to the Landscape Concerns Raised in the Officer's Report to Committee

22. In summary the proposed development not only minimises the harm upon the landscape of the Appeal site itself, but would also minimise harm on the wider Lower Meon Valley in the short term, and provide positive landscape and visual effects in the medium to long term. In this way the proposed development complies with point iii of DSP40.
23. With the localising of negative effects, and the provision of widespread if minor positive landscape and visual effects in the Lower Meon Valley the proposed development would also conserve and enhance the overall character of the valley, thus complying with the requirements of NPPF paragraph 174.

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