

## Land East of Posbrook Lane, Titchfield

**Landscape Advice on Planning Application P/19/1193/OA**  
January 2020

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*This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2015.*

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1.1. This advice note has been prepared for Fareham Borough Council (FBC) in response to the request for professional advice on the landscape and visual effects of the proposed housing development on land east of Posbrook Lane (Planning Application P/19/1193/OA).

1.1.2. This is a revised outline application for 57 dwellings following the previous proposals for 150 dwellings, which was dismissed on appeal (Application Ref: P/17/0681/OA, Appeal Ref: APP/A1720/W/18/3199119).

1.1.3. The following documents have been reviewed:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of a Proposed Outline Application for up to 57 Dwellings, SLR, Version 2, October 2019. (The LVIA)
- Illustrative Site Plan drawing number 16.092.02.
- Fareham Borough Council Urban Design response to Planning Application P/19/1193/OA, 18 December 2019.
- Memorandum by SLR dated 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020 responding to landscape comments.
- Appeal Decision for Land East of Posbrook Lane, 12th April 2019 (APP/A1720/W/18/3199119)

1.1.4. In this note I refer to the application / application site (the current planning application for 57 dwellings reference P/19/1193/OA) and the appeal / appeal site (the refused appeal for 150 dwellings reference APP/A1720/W/18/3199119).

**2.0 Appeal Decision for Land East of Posbrook Lane, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2019  
(APP/A1720/W/18/3199119)**

2.1.1. This appeal was for 150 dwellings on the same site, covering a smaller area. A number of important points raised in the appeal decision are relevant to the Application.

- 1) The Lower Meon Valley is a 'valued landscape'.
- 2) The appeal site (and the Application site) forms part of the Lower Meon Valley valued landscape.
- 3) The appeal proposals would result in material harm to the character and appearance of the area resulting in harm to a valued landscape.
- 4) The appeal site (and also the Application site) lies within 'open valley side' landscape type defined by the Fareham Landscape Assessments (1996 and 2017).
- 5) The existing urban edge provides a distinct break with the open rural field which flows to the lower valley floor below

2.1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 170 states:

*"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); ..."*

**2.2. The Lower Meon Valley is a ‘valued landscape’**

2.2.1. The Inspector concluded:

*“I have no difficulty in accepting that the Lower Meon Valley is a valued landscape in the context of the Framework and this is a conclusion consistent with my colleague in the Old Road decision.” (Paragraph 28)*

**2.3. The appeal site (and the application site) forms part of the Lower Meon Valley valued landscape**

2.3.1. The application site lies within the red line for the appeal site, covering part of the same open pastoral field.

2.3.2. The Inspector concluded:

*“From my visit to the site and the evidence presented to me I am of the view that the appeal site shares a number of those attributes including the nature of the rural landscape and topography, its scenic quality and that it is representative of the valley sides character type. The site does form part of the broad visual envelope of the Lower Meon valley and part of the landscape compartment and therefore should be considered as part of the valued landscape.” (Paragraph 28)*

2.3.3. The application site (being part of the appeal site) also shares those attributes including the nature of the rural landscape and topography, its scenic quality and it is representative of the valley sides character type, forms part of the broad visual envelope of the Lower Meon valley and part of the landscape compartment and is also part of the valued landscape.

**2.4. The appeal proposals would result in material harm to the character and appearance of the area resulting in harm to a valued landscape**

2.4.1. The Inspector concluded:

2.4.2. *"I conclude that the proposed development would result in material harm to the character and appearance of the area. This would result in harm to a valued landscape."* (Paragraph 31)

2.4.3. The proposed development would also result in in material harm to the character and appearance of the area resulting in harm to the valued landscape of the Lower Meon Valley as discussed below.

**2.5. The appeal site (and also the application site) lies within 'open valley side' landscape type defined by the Fareham Landscape Assessments (1996 and 2017)**

2.5.1. At the appeal the appellant argued that the area proposed for development lay within landscape type 'open coastal plain farmland: fringe character' arguing that the fringe character reduced sensitivity to the proposed development. The Inspector agreed with FBC's evidence at the appeal that the whole appeal site (and therefore the application site) lies within the open valley side landscape type which is undeveloped and extends from the southern edge of Titchfield southwards for approximately 1.5km, for over half the length of the Lower Meon Valley valued landscape.

2.5.2. The LVIA submitted by with this application accepts that the application site lies within the open valley side landscape type (section 4.3.3).

**2.6. The existing urban edge provides a distinct break with the open rural field which flows to the lower valley floor below**

2.6.1. The Inspector concluded:

2.6.2. *“On site I was firmly of the view that the site was of an open character with little in the way of field boundaries, hedges or other landscape features to different areas of the site. Whilst there was a break in the slope this was minimal and did not change the characterisation from a gentle slope. There were minor variations across the site and I was not persuaded that this was such a feature that would change the character type of the site. Finally, in the context of the urban settlement edge influence it is undeniable that it is there. There is a lack of screening and there is a harsh and readily visible urban edge. **This however is a distinct break with the open rural field which then flows to the open agricultural fields beyond the farmstead cluster and the lower valley floor below. In my view in the wider context the urban influence is given too much weight in the appellant’s assessment and in association with the sub division of the site into smaller fields adds to the reduced weight given to the effect of the proposed development.**”* (Paragraph 23) (bold emphasis added)

2.6.3. The application site is all part of the single pastoral field on the valley side flowing down to the valley floor, clearly distinct from the urban area of Titchfield to the north, and is an integral part of the valued landscape of the Lower Meon Valley.



## 3.0 The LVIA

3.1.1. I have reviewed the LVIA submitted with the planning application. This note sets out some key points regarding the LVIA and potential impacts. It does not provide a detailed point by point critique of the LVIA, but focusses on the main issues likely to be important in determining the planning balance of this application.

3.1.2. **Section 4.3.2.** The LVIA states that there is potential for open views across the Meon Valley from the eastern part the application site. There are, in fact, open views across the Meon Valley from the whole of the application site, emphasising the role that the whole site plays as part of the visual envelope of the valley.

## 3.2. Landscape Effects

3.2.1. **Sections 4.3.3, 4.4, 4.5.1.** The LVIA incorrectly assesses a different landscape character and value, susceptibility and sensitivity between the area proposed for housing development and the rest of the valley, based on the relative influence of the existing urban edge. This enables the LVIA to conclude that adverse landscape effects would be lower than would actually occur.

3.2.2. Section 4.4 states:

*“The following character areas will be assessed for the site and its immediate context:*

*Lower Meon Valley, Open Valley Side (with fringe characteristics at the northern end of the application site, in the proposed development area, and more rural to the east and south of this); ...”*

3.2.3. Section 4.5.1 then goes on to apply a different value to these areas within the site:

*“... the value of the site has been reassessed and it is recognised that the visual effects of the existing settlement edge are much more localised [than the Appellant argued at the*

appeal], *affecting only the northern end of the application site. Consequently, this area has been assessed as being of community value, whereas other parts of the Lower Meon Valley, including the southern and eastern edges of the application site, are assessed as being of Local Authority Value (see table B1, Appendix B, which applies the box 5.1 criteria from GLVIA3).*" (Paragraph 4.5.1)

3.2.4. At the appeal, LDA Design (FBC's landscape witness), made it clear that subdividing the site for the purpose of assessment, and applying a lower value to the area proposed for housing, is a flawed approach, and that the whole site should be assessed as part of the valley of which it is an integral part. FBC's landscape witness provided evidence on this from previous Inspectors reports and a High Court judgement. There are no features on the ground or strong differences in landscape character that warrant a change in the assessment of landscape value between the area proposed for development and the rest of the valley. The whole of the valley is of equal value (i.e. local authority value), and should not be artificially sub-divided as has been applied within the LVIA.

3.2.5. **Section 4.5.2.** The LVIA goes on to apply a lower susceptibility to the proposed development to the landscape *"in the vicinity of the proposed new homes"* than to the rest of the valley.

*"The Lower Meon Valley, Open Valley Side Character landscape type in the vicinity of the proposed new homes has a medium susceptibility to the proposed development, but further from this area susceptibility increases to high, since the landscape is more open and rural in character, with better scenic quality and condition."*

3.2.6. **Section 4.5.3.** The LVIA then applies a lower sensitivity to the proposed development **"close to Bellfield"** than to the rest of the Open Valley Side character type:

*“Open Valley Side character type in the locality of the application site has medium sensitivity to the proposed development at its northern end, close to Bellfield, but this becomes high/medium sensitivity further from the settlement edge.”*

- 3.2.7. The Inspector made it clear that he disagreed with the weight given to the influence of the urban edge and sub-dividing the site, which is in fact all part of a single pastoral field the valley side, which the appellant had applied at the appeal (see Paragraph 23 of the Inspector’s report quoted above).
- 3.2.8. **By incorrectly dividing the field for the purpose of assessing landscape value and applying a lower value, susceptibility and sensitivity to the area proposed for housing the LVIA leads to a lower assessment of adverse effects on landscape character and the valued landscape of the Lower Meon Valley than would actually occur.**

#### LVIA Section 4.7 Assessment of Landscape Effects

- 3.2.9. The key aspect of the assessment in terms of landscape effects is assessment of effects on the Lower Meon Valley. The LVIA states that effects on the Meon Valley as a whole would be minor, and the nature of effect would usually change from negative to positive once proposed new planting has established.
- 3.2.10. The LVIA states that effects on the character of the Open Valley Side landscape type would be:
- moderate and negative in the proposed development area;
  - moderate and negative in the short term areas in the immediate context of the application site, reducing and changing to positive once planting matures; and
  - minor and negative effects elsewhere in the Lower Meon Valley, changing to positive once planting has established.

## **LDA Design's assessment**

- 3.2.11. It was established at the appeal that the Lower Meon Valley is of high/medium sensitivity, and the LVIA concurs with this (section 4.5.3). The application site should not be separated from this and given a lower sensitivity rating as demonstrated by FBC's landscape evidence and supported by the conclusions of the Inspector at the appeal, as has been applied within the LVIA.
- 3.2.12. The proposed development would change part of the pastoral field within the Lower Meon Valley to housing development, causing permanent harm to the character of the valley. Effects within the area proposed for development would be of at large scale and major-moderate adverse significance. These effects would be permanent. Harm would also occur outside the area proposed for development as new housing would extend into the valley and along the skyline of the of the valley side, increasing urban intrusion into the valued landscape. Mitigation planting would take a number of years before it begins to soften the housing, but part of the valued landscape would be permanently lost, and there would be permanent harm.

## **3.3. Visual Effects**

- 3.3.1. Section 5.0 of the LVIA concludes that there would be a number of adverse visual effects from public rights of way and other locations within and adjacent to the Lower Meon Valley. These effects would be experienced as people move around the valley, including on the network of public rights of way that are popular with local walkers, longer distance walkers passing along the path beside the Titchfield Canal, and people watching wildlife within the valley including the designated which extend east of the application site and southwards all of the way to the Solent.

- 3.3.2. The LVIA states that for many viewpoints the nature of visual effects would change once the proposed new planting has established. However, views from the south and east of the site would clearly see the new homes for many years, extending housing into the valley, as planting would take a number of years to mature.
- 3.3.3. The LVIA states, once the proposed new woodland planting has reached semi-maturity both the new homes and the existing settlement edge would be screened, resulting in a positive change to views. The LVIA does not present any sections or visualisations to enable effects on views from the Lower Meon Valley to be tested accurately.
- 3.3.4. The proposed planting along the eastern edge of the existing housing in Titchfield (north-east of the area proposed for development) would result in a positive change to views of this urban edge in the long term. The proposed planting along the southern and eastern edge of the proposed housing would help to filter views of it in the long term and provide a softer edge than currently exists along the southern edge of Titchfield. However, in the medium term (or potentially longer) the new urban edge would be clearly visible. It is likely that new houses would be visible on the skyline above proposed planting for many years if not permanently.

#### 4.0 Great Posbrook farmstead

The Application site is located to the north of Great Posbrook, an ancient farmstead, which contains two grade II\* listed buildings. This historic cluster, distinctly separate from Titchfield, within the Lower Meon Valley, is an important characteristic of the character of the valley.

The proposals would reduce the existing rural gap between Titchfield and the cluster of buildings. The development proposals would continue outward urban sprawl along the valley side, urbanise part of the rural gap and make it harder to understand that Great Posbrook was originally a separate farmstead, surrounded by open farmland. This would cause harm to the character of the Lower Meon Valley and to the valued landscape.

## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1.1. The proposed development would replace part of the sloping pastoral valley side of the Lower Meon Valley with housing development. It has been established at the appeal that this is all part of the same Lower Meon Valley landscape, and that this landscape is a 'valued landscape' in terms of the NPPF paragraph 170.
- 5.1.2. This application proposal is smaller in area than the appeal proposal which was refused. The application proposal would not cause as much harm as the appeal proposal would have, mainly because it covers a smaller area and would not extend as far into the valley. However, it would still change part of the pastoral field which is an integral part of the valued landscape of the Lower Meon Valley to housing development causing permanent harm. It would cause adverse effects on views from the Lower Meon Valley for many years, although in the long term, if proposed planting establishes and matures successfully, the proposed housing would be softened. Planting along the eastern edge of Titchfield (north-east of the proposed housing area) would result in positive changes to views of this urban edge in the long term. The proposed development would make it harder to understand that Great Posbrook was originally a separate farmstead.
- 5.1.3. Overall, the proposals would cause adverse landscape and visual impacts within the Lower Meon Valley, some of which would be permanent. It would cause permanent adverse effects on the character of the valued landscape of the Lower Meon Valley.