
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT ROSE FARM, MALVERN

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONSIDERATIONS

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M16.164(b).R.001E Landscape and visual considerations

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BACKGROUND

Pleydell Smithyman Ltd (PSL) of Ironbridge has been instructed by the Rose Farm Partnership to provide a brief report covering landscape and visual considerations in support of residential development proposals at Rose Farm, Guarlford Road, Malvern. A separate company, Photoglide, were instructed by Rose Farm Partnership to provide views of the site from the Malvern Hills and the viewpoint included in this report was selected by Photoglide and Rose Farm Partnership. This report covers landscape and visuals matters sufficient to inform a decision on an easement application with reference to the Malvern Hills Trust Overground Easement Guidelines (adopted January 2020). This document does not comprise a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment that typically accompanies a planning application.

The proposed application site (the ‘Site’) at Rose Farm, Guarlford Road, Malvern extends to some 25 acres (10.12 ha), and that a number of studies and assessments have previously been produced for the Site, in support of residential development. These include a Baseline Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, produced by PSL, along with a number of Zonal Development Options, also produced by PSL in 2009.

Guarlford Road is noted as being “viewed as one of the iconic Malvern landscapes”, and as such it is acknowledged that the treatment of this corridor will be key in the success of any future scheme.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Site is located to the west of Pound Bank some 1.6 miles from the centre of Great Malvern on the edge of the urban area in a semi rural location. The site consists of a 25 acre (10.12ha) field bounded to the north by a post second world war residential development off Hall Green, consisting mainly of bungalows, which is separated from the Site by a green lane running between Chance Lane and Hall Green. To the east there are larger houses fronting Hall Green and Guarlford Road with large gardens abutting the site. To the east is Chance Lane bounded by a hedgerow and associate hedgerow trees and to the southeast are 4

dwelling fronting on Chance Lane whose gardens about the Site. Forming the southern boundary is Guarlford Road and associated linear wayside common land with grassland & avenue trees which is separated from the Site by a hedgerow and trees belt, within which are ponds and a ditch network.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Landscapes of Worcestershire - Principle Timbered Farmland

Description:

Type Description: a small to medium scale wooded agricultural landscape characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. This is a complex, in places intimate, landscape of irregularly shapes woodlands, winding lanes and frequent wayside dwellings. Its mosaic of agricultural land was cleared directly a from woodland on a piecemeal basis, and from former localised areas of open fields, resulting in a lack of strong settlement nuclei.

Key Characteristics:

Primary:

- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Ancient Woodland character
- Notable pattern of hedgerow trees, predominantly oak

Secondary :

- Organic enclosure pattern
- Small scale landscape, hedgerow trees creating filtered views
- Brick and timber building style of old properties
- Rolling low land with occasional steep-sided hills and low escarpment

Tertiary:

- Mixed farmland use
- Dispersed settlement pattern

Guidelines for woodland and hedgerow management in Principle Timbered Farmlands pertinent to this site are:

- maintain the tree cover character of hedgerow oaks, and enhance the age structure of the hedgerow oak population
- encourage the planting of new woodlands, reflecting the scale, shape

and composition of the existing ancient woodland character, favouring oak as the major species

- conserve and restore tree cover along water courses and streamlines
- seek opportunities to enhance tree cover along highways and other non farmed locations
- conserve and restore the pattern and composition of hedgerow structure through the appropriate management and replanting

SWDP 5: Green Infrastructure

A. Housing development proposals are required to contribute towards the provision, maintenance, improvement and connectivity of Green Infrastructure as follows:

i. for greenfield sites exceeding 1ha (gross) - 40% Green Infrastructure.

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PROPOSED LANDSCAPE SCHEME

A landscape scheme adjacent to Guarlford Road was prepared in March 2018 as part of a previous submission to the Malvern Conservators. The overall principles of this scheme have been retained and, following the provision of a development layout produced by Geoff Perry Associates Architects, further landscape proposals within the Site related to the development have been prepared. The updated landscape proposals are illustrated on the Landscape Master Plan overleaf with details of the central space included on a separate enlarged extract.

A description of the principal areas of the Site is set out below with a focus on how the landscape design has responded to any identified sensitivities including members of the public using common land adjacent to the Site and mitigation of views for local residents overlooking the Site. It is noted that there it is an established planning principal that there is no right to a view and appropriate privacy distances between proposed dwellings and established properties have been maintained.

Guarlford Road Corridor

The Guarlford Road corridor comprises common land and along the southern boundary of the Site is defined by a mature native hedgerow and tree belt. The existing planting would benefit from more regular maintenance, noting the presence of several dead or dying trees. The landscape proposals would improve the southern boundary of the Site and provide an appropriate buffer zone between the proposed built development and the common land alongside Guarlford Road. The boundary would be enhanced by planting a 10m wide native woodland belt using local species e.g. oak, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, crab apple, hornbeam, hazel, holly and guelder rose. Growth of the planting, would over time, reduce intervisibility between new built development on the Site and oblique views from members of the public using the strip of common land along Guarlford Road. The new woodland planting has been designed as part of integrated green infrastructure along the perimeter of the built development that, subject to drainage design details prepared by others, may include sustainable urban drainage features e.g. attenuation ponds and/or swales. These wetland features

could have benefits for a range of native wildlife including amphibians. In addition to the peripheral woodland, a wildflower meadow strip is proposed adjacent to the woodland that would be at least 5m in depth, with more regularly mown amenity grassland closest to the new built development. In addition to the biodiversity benefit of native wildflower meadows, the planting also represents an enhancement to amenity both for residents of the new development and the general public who may access to the open space within the Site via the common land bordering Guarlford Road - either along the new access road or along the existing public footpath near the southwest corner of the site.

Other landscape enhancements relative to the current baseline may include specific habitat provisions (e.g. bird and bat boxes and amphibian, mammal and/or insect refugia). The current land use across the Site is farmland and apart from the peripheral structural planting and the existing pond that would all be retained, the farmland has modest biodiversity value. The proposed landscape measures to the periphery of the site would enable a 10% biodiversity net gain across the whole Site to be achieved, in line with emerging central government planning requirements.

Proposed Access Road

A proposed access road is indicated off Chance Lane close to the junction with Guarlford Road and across the common land. This position on to Chance Lane has been chosen as it is more discreet and can be screened more comprehensively than a direct connection with Guarlford Road and provides a lesser impact on the iconic approach to the Malverns. Subject to agreement of the Malvern Conservators, it is proposed that the enhancement measures include the planting of new avenue trees along the southern side of the route into the Site using species already present within the planting along Guarlford Road such as lime. Additional off-site planting enhancement measures are not shown on the current Landscape Master plan overleaf as they have further maintenance obligations; however in addition to the tree planting other planting proposals could include wildflower meadow or spring bulb planting. Any notable plant species growing within the footprint of the access road will be transplanted into a suitable location within one of the proposed wildflower meadows.

Chance Lane

The native woodland planting belt is proposed to extend part way along the western boundary of the Site to screen public views towards the new built development from Chance Lane (See Viewpoint 4). It is acknowledged however that the Malvern Conservators, other consultees and the Planning Authority may prefer to maintain less restricted views towards the Malvern Hills from this short section of the public highway, however the views are very fleeting in nature and could be restricted by the growth of planting in adjoining gardens, over which there is no control. It is important to note that new built development has been set back into the Site a sufficient distance to maintain appropriate privacy distances from the existing properties. Additional tree planting within the public open space is proposed that would fragment views between the front of the proposed dwellings and the rear of established residential dwellings on Chance Lane that back onto the Site.

Hall Green Close

As indicated on the Landscape Master plan overleaf, a 3m wide emergency access track is required to connect the proposed development with Hall Green Close. This connection would require the localised removal of existing shrub planting of low quality and the construction of culverts in both drainage channels. The surface of the access track is proposed to comprise reinforced grass to further minimise the localised landscape and visual impact.

Orchard Green: Public Open Space

The proposed landscaping at the heart of the development includes a community orchard and naturalistic play area that will be accessible to residents of the development and the wider community. New surfaced footpath links at the northern boundary of the site would link to the existing network and facilitate public access to attractive open space.

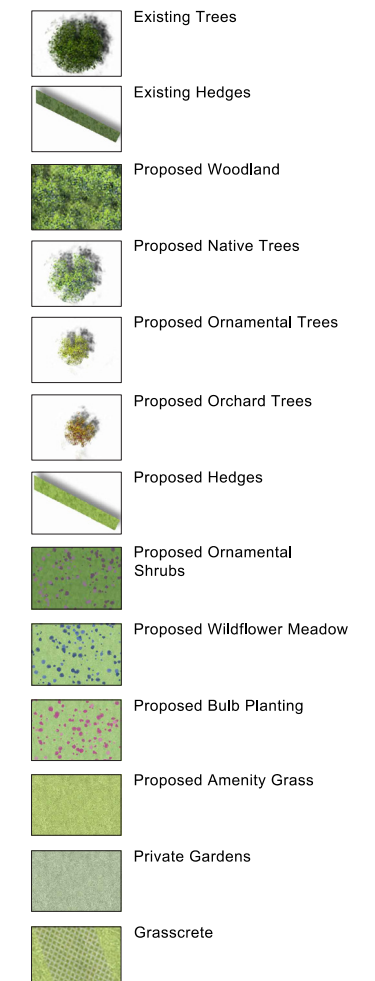
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LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN (NTS)



LEGEND



POS=Public Open Space

NOTES:

1. This Landscape Masterplan is based upon the Planning Layout plan A898 005 prepared by Geoff Perry Associates Limited.
2. The location of overhead services is indicative only.
3. The locations of existing planting is indicative only.
4. The locations of proposed tree and shrub planting is indicative only and may require adjustment due to underground services (existing and proposed).
5. The location of an existing pond, potentially utilised for attenuation is indicated.

A future detailed drainage design prepared by others may utilise areas of open space for additional attenuation or soakaway e.g. swales.

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CORE AREA PLAN (NTS)



Community Orchard



Naturalistic wildflowers and bulb drifts













Attenuation Pond and Native Planting



Native trees and wildflower meadow

LEGEND

-  Existing Trees
-  Proposed Native Trees
-  Proposed Ornamental Trees
-  Proposed Orchard Trees
-  Proposed Hedges
-  Proposed Ornamental Shrubs
-  Proposed Wildflower Meadow
-  Proposed Bulb Planting
-  Proposed Amenity Grass
-  Private Gardens

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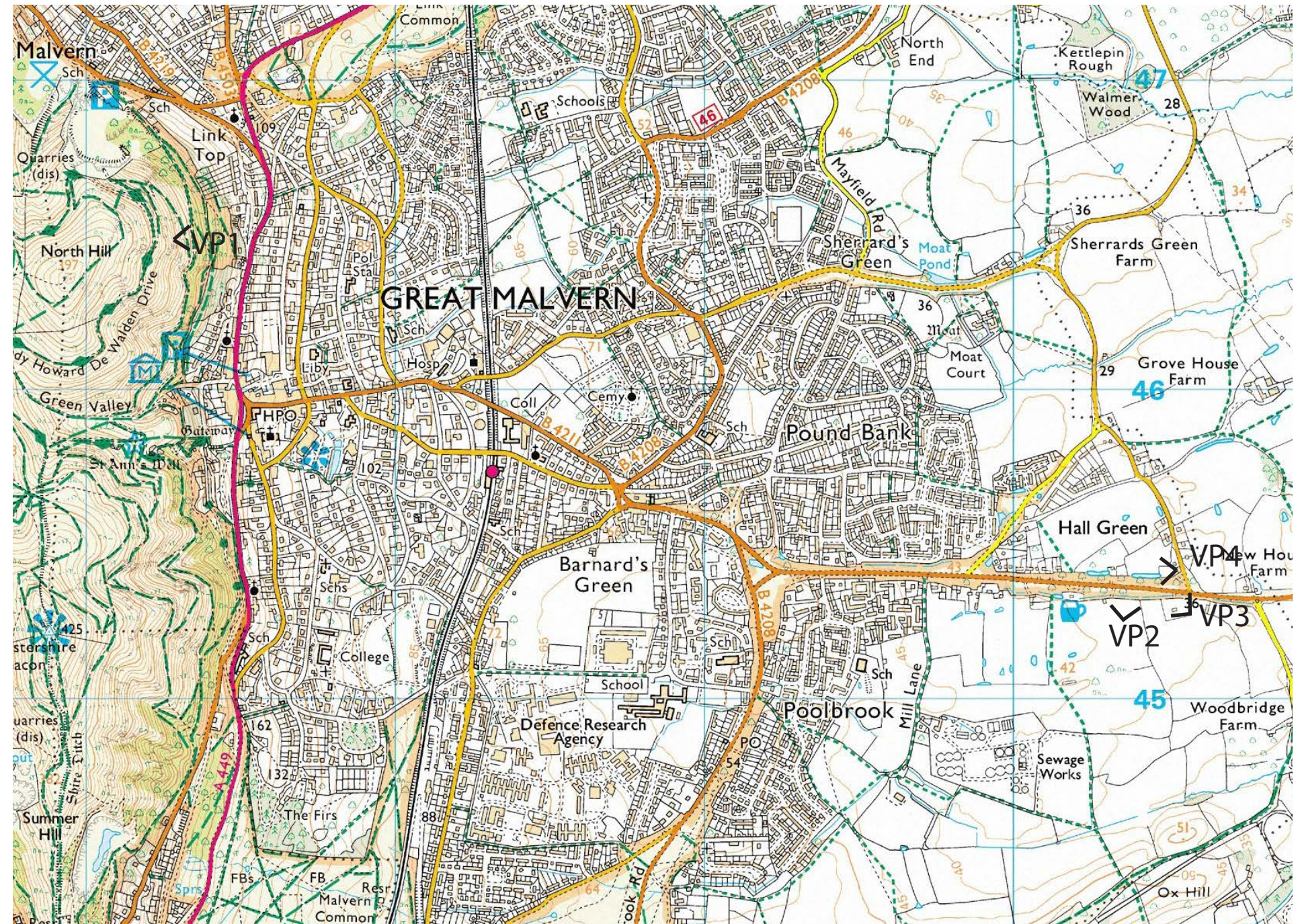
REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS

The photoviewpoints overleaf illustrate how the mitigation planting would appear when viewed from the Malvern Hills and Guarlford Road. It is recognised that there would be partial views of built development that would reduce in extent as the planting grows, however even at Year 1 following construction, the new built development would typically form a modest part of the views due to the mature peripheral planting that would be retained. Furthermore the new housing would be set into the Site and the modest scale of the 2 storey dwellings would be in keeping with surrounding built development pattern. The character of existing housing includes post-war housing estates adjoining the Site to the north and ribbon development of varying ages along Guarlford Road and Chance Lane to the south and east respectively.

Fleeting views of new built development within the Site would be available, most clearly along the proposed access road and new pedestrian access points. In all cases, significant landscape mitigation has been proposed that will minimise the landscape and visual impact of the proposals, notwithstanding the assessment that new residential development in the local context will not have a significant impact on landscape character beyond the site boundary or upon any key public views into the Site.

The landscape mitigation strategy has been designed to reinforce the existing planting, thereby protecting the amenity of the approach into Malvern along the B4211 Guarlford Road.

The Proposed Development when viewed from the AONB (see Viewpoint 1) would be perceived as a barely discernible part of the overall panoramic view dominated by the town of Malvern. The built form of the town is divided by a network of green spaces and tree planting with the settlement edge forming an abrupt transition with the surrounding countryside in places and in other locations a more gentle transition is present where scattered built development straddles town and country. The strength of the existing defensible planted boundaries indicates that built development on the Site (up to 2 stories) could be accommodated with no discernible adverse impact upon the landscape character of the AONB.



viewpoint location plan NTS

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Current Situation



Viewpoint 1 - E 377273 N 246597 - Viewing Distance 300mm - Horizontal FOV 72° - View south eastwards overlooking Malvern from Public Bridleway ascending North Hill of the Malvern Hills

Mitigation at 15 Years Growth



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Current Situation



Viewpoint 2a - E 380322 N 245372 - Viewing Distance 300mm - Horizontal FOV 72° - View northwards overlooking site from Guarlford Road

Mitigation at 15 Years Growth



----- Ridgelines have been assessed from house types provided by the Rose Farm Partnership.

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Current Situation



Viewpoint 2b - E 380322 N 245372 - Viewing Distance 300mm - Horizontal FOV 72° - View north eastwards overlooking site from Guarlford Road

Mitigation at 15 Years Growth



----- Ridgelines have been assessed from house types provided by the Rose Farm Partnership.

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Current Situation

Viewpoint 3a - E 380543 N 245374 - Viewing Distance 300mm - Horizontal FOV 72° - View north westwards overlooking proposed site entrance from Chance Lane : indicates an overlap between viewpoint 3a & 3b



Mitigation at 15 Years Growth

----- Ridgelines have been assessed from house types provided by the Rose Farm Partnership.

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Current Situation



Viewpoint 3b - E 380543 N 245374 - Viewing Distance 300mm - Horizontal FOV 72° - View north westwards overlooking proposed site entrance from Chance Lane

..... : indicates an overlap between viewpoint 3a & 3b

Mitigation at 15 Years Growth



----- Ridgelines have been assessed from house types provided by the Rose Farm Partnership.

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The author of this review is Neil Furber, Associate Director of Pleydell Smithyman Ltd. The author is a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 20 years experience including representing both Local Planning Authorities and Developers since 2002 as a Landscape Expert Witness at Public Inquiry. In addition Neil is employed by the Landscape Institute as a Supervisor assessing applicants training to become Chartered Landscape Architects.

Landscape Character

The existing landscape character describes a rural and undeveloped landscape although the Site adjoins the existing settlement edge and is bounded by roads and/ or built development curtilage on all boundaries. The proposal for residential development on any greenfield site would indisputably change the character from a rural to suburban character type. It should however be noted that no significant stretches of hedgerow would be lost as a result of the proposed development.

The published landscape character assessment refers to the **well wooded character and 'irregular' woodland cover**. The proposed 10m wide tree belts are designed to be the minimum width necessary to achieve a good level of screening; however as part of the detailed design process the planted belts are likely to become more irregular in shape and increased in width in places. As we are not subject to a full set of constraints analysis e.g. hydrology, ecology and masterplanning design it would be premature to design the inner edge of the planting to more closely reflect the baseline landscape character of this wooded landscape.

Proposed Landscape Mitigation Measures

Landscaping on the northern and eastern boundaries of the Site has been included, where appropriate, on the updated landscape plan and reflects the location of the most sensitive receptors and the location of existing peripheral planting that already offers significant screening in places.

Below: Junction of Gualford Road and Chance Lane with 3 No. avenue trees along Chance Lane



Below: Junction of Borrowdale Road and Pound Bank Road with 3 No. avenue trees



The planting along Gualford Road has not been designed to mitigate views from the Malvern Hills of any proposed development on the Site. As demonstrated by the supporting photomontage, the Site would be a barely discernible element in the view, which would continue to be the case in winter.

The visual integrity of the planting along Gualford Road would not be significantly adversely affected from the Malvern Hills due to the intervening distance and the context of the town's built form in the middle-ground. The context of the existing avenue planting along Gualford Road should be acknowledged, noting the avenue is already flanked by existing planting belts and built development with these features lying closer to the Malvern Hills.

The proposed green infrastructure corridors may also contain sustainable urban drainage and/or new recreational routes. The location and design of these green corridors is subject to a detailed constraints analysis and master-planning exercise that would consider a full range of constraints and opportunities including (but not restricted to): hydrology, underground and overground services, archaeology, cultural heritage and ecology.

It is premature for the client at this stage to undertake such a detailed masterplanning exercise when the decision on whether an easement will be granted to enable access to the land has not been made.

The existing native hedgerows along the northern boundary of the site would be in-filled where necessary with a double stagger row of native shrub species dominated by hawthorn but also containing holly, hazel, dog rose, blackthorn and other native species. Occasional standard trees would include oak and field maple.

Whilst we are not aware of any specific guidance from the Horticultural Trade Association or Forestry Commission to avoid planting Horse Chestnut, it is recognised there is a real risk of disease. In this context we are therefore happy to omit this species. It should be noted that Horse Chestnut was only mentioned in passing in the main text of the report and not as part of the plantation mix in the key of the mitigation planting plan.

All planting details submitted as part of any detailed planning application on the Site would be subject to scrutiny by the Local Planning Authority.

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Access

The Overground Easement Policy document published by the Trust states at paragraph 2 section 1 of the document: *'All easements are likely to have some degree of negative impact on the Hills and Commons. At the same time, many easements will bring significant financial benefit to MHT (and as a result, to the Hills and their users).'*

The specific landscape and visual impacts of the scheme upon peripheral MHT land surrounding the Site are clearly below the threshold specified in the Policy document which refers to *'significant adverse impacts'*.

No mature trees and only very localised sections of hedgerow would be removed to accommodate the main access and emergency access routes.

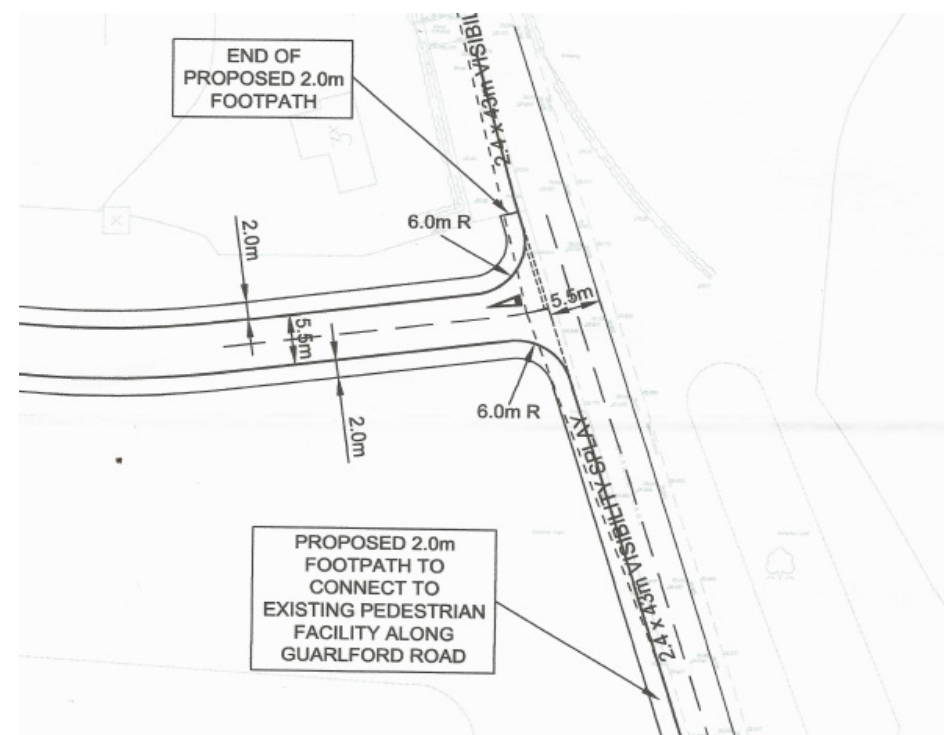
Due to the location of the proposed road, the use of Public Rights of Way and Open Access land surrounding the site would not be significantly impacted by either the easements themselves or any future residential development on the Site. The mitigation measures proposed as part of this submission would minimise intervisibility between the peripheral users of this land and any new built development on the site.

Details of road width, path widths and locations and visibility splay are illustrated on the drawing below supplied by Highway Consultants to the client. The surface material and kerbing will be dictated by the Highways Authority who would adopt the road; however it is likely to be a standard tarmac and concrete kerb design in common with the adjacent existing surface treatment on Chance Lane that borders the Trust land. The level of signage and lighting will be dictated by the Highways Authority; however it is likely that any permanent signage would be low key e.g. 30mph speed limit signs (if required) and a give way sign similar to the current junction between Gualford Road and Chance Lane. In addition there is likely to be a new road name sign similar to surrounding road signs.

The client's highway consultant has advised a second emergency vehicle access would be needed to the north (crossing Trust land) and this is illustrated on the Landscape Mitigation Plan. As the route is only required for infrequent motor vehicle access it is envisaged that the surface could

be reinforced grass.

We are informed by the client's highway consultant that lighting columns on the development will need to be at a minimum of 186m intervals to comply with restricted road status (i.e. roads subject to a 30 mph limit) and there will be additional lighting at junctions. As the access road crossing the Trust's land is approx. 70m in length, there will only be lighting columns at the junction with Chance Lane.



Views and Visibility

As explained earlier in this document, the Site is seen some distance away in the background of views from the Malvern Hills and is located on the distant edge of the settlement, behind the existing built extent of Malvern that dominates the middle-ground of the view. There would be no significant effects upon visual amenity from the Hills; however it is acknowledged that additional planting within the Site e.g. planting within new green corridors separating development parcels would

assist in softening the appearance of new built development in any views.

A viewpoint from the footway along Chance Lane has been provided noting that it is understood from other photography provided by the client that the Site and any residential development of up to 2 storeys on the Site would not be apparent from the public footpath further east due to intervening planting.

The additional viewpoint illustrates that an oblique view from a very localised section of the footway that runs along the eastern edge of the Lane i.e. the road corridor and passing traffic, would be in the foreground of the view. The view beyond the road corridor is across land in the Trust ownership with the green field of the Site beyond and the Malvern Hills on the horizon.

The view is set between two dwellings with the garden plot of one dwelling sitting between the Site and the viewpoint. The land was formerly scrub with no views possible towards the Malvern Hills. It is not clear if the intention of the landowner is to let the scrub regrow (remnant Holly and Birch remain) or if the land is to be cleared further for another use. Clarification of future management and requirements (or not) for any buffer planting on the Site can be advised once the detailed development layout has been determined e.g. if built development is set back sufficiently then views of the Malvern Hills would remain.

Pleydell Smithyman have not received instruction to retake viewpoint photography during winter; however the species, density and depth of the planting is considered appropriate in our experience to provide strong filtering of views in the winter. Photography of similar planting belts on other sites indicates that even over winter, planting would have a strong filtering effect. The page overleaf presents photographs of a 10m wide native planting belt in summer and winter periods.

It has been determined that a specific photomontage of the proposed access point is not needed as the width of the access road would be similar to the existing Chance Lane and can be easily estimated on site. We note that a site visit is part of the Easement application review process.



Summer View



Winter View

Comparison between summer and winter views of semi-mature 10m wide planting belt

Viewing Distance 300mm

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Summary

In summary, the following measures have been presented to address and respond to the potential landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed development:

- The Mitigation plan has been updated to show additional planting on the northern and eastern boundaries;
- Landscaping within the site would be subject to a detailed masterplanning exercise at a future date. It is noted that any landscape design would have to meet the requirements for open space and design quality as set out in the Local Development Plan;
- An additional viewpoint east of the Site from Chance Lane has been included;
- There is no client instruction to produce winter views. However, the effectiveness of a 10m wide planting belt in summer and winter periods taken on another Site has been included;
- Further details on the access road have been provided, noting it is not possible to determine some aspects at this early stage;
- An emergency access only would be required to the north of the Site, as shown on the revised mitigation plan;
- Lighting columns installed as part of the proposed development would need to be at a minimum of 186 metre intervals to comply with restricted road status (i.e. roads subject to a 30 mph limit). There would be additional lighting at junctions. As the access road crossing the Trust's land is approximately 70 metres in length, there would only be a requirement for lighting columns at the junction with Chance Lane;
- The proposed 10 metre wide tree belts are designed to be the minimum width necessary to achieve a good level of screening. However, as part of the detailed design process the planted belts would likely become more irregular in shape and increased in width

in certain places. As we are not subject to a full set of constraints analysis (e.g. hydrology, ecology etc.) and a masterplan has not been finalised, it would be premature to design the inner edge of the planting, at this stage, to more closely reflect the baseline landscape character of this wooded landscape;

- The proposed tree belt would not adversely affect the integrity of the tree lined avenue when viewed from the Malvern Hills; and
- No amendment to photomontages are judged to be required in order to establish whether the landscape and visual impact is significant overall (in accordance with published guidance from the MHT on the assessment of Easements). It is also noted there is an established pattern of avenue trees along minor roads.