



**Land East of Ploughley
Road, Ambrosden**

Proof of Evidence of:

Ben Connolley

BSc (Hons), PGDipLA, CMLI

In respect of:

Landscape Matters

On behalf of:

Archstone Ambrosden Ltd,

Bellway Homes Ltd and

Rosemary May

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Section 1

Summary of Case

- 1.1 My name is Ben Connelley. I am an Associate Director at The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP). I have been instructed by the appellant, Archstone Ambrosden Ltd, Bellway Homes Ltd and Rosemary May, to provide advice, evidence and expert opinion with regard to the effects, in landscape and visual terms, of the appeal proposals, in so far as this is relevant in this case. I rely upon the evidence of Mr David Bainbridge of Savills in relation to planning evidence.
- 1.2 From the outset, my impression of the appeal site was that it has very positive credentials as a location to deliver the scale of development proposed, while responding to the character of the landscape around Ambrosden. It is land that had never been identified as meriting special designatory status in landscape or scenic terms; it is private land with no rights of way across it and although there is some degree of open character within it, in the wider context it is enclosed, being seen from very few locations.
- 1.3 Views from publicly accessible areas are limited. Ploughley Road runs along the western boundary of the appeal site, being well-treed on its western side and with a mature field boundary to its eastern side, such that views are generally contained to the immediate setting. This hedgerow is mature and curtails many views, though its management can result in some views towards the settlement edge of Ambrosden. The character of Ploughley Road is informed by urban uses, including road signage, neighbouring built form and metalled footways, though mature hedgerows can curtail views in some areas. I have not identified any 'significant views into open countryside' from Ploughley Road.
- 1.4 The application has clearly been preceded by a comprehensive assessment of topics relevant to landscape including its habitats, protected species, landscape character, visual amenity, hydrology, tree and hedgerow stock; it conserves wherever possible existing landscape features with minimal losses; it substantially enhances the overall habitats and fabric of the appeal site; delivers enhanced long-term management of existing and new landscape features and enhances social landscape value through increased public enjoyment and access to land which is currently privately owned.
- 1.5 Following the maturation of the landscape mitigation proposals, there are no elevated adverse effects arising from the proposed development upon landscape character. The appeal proposals have been designed to retain the existing mature landscape fabric, which provides a contribution to the character of the local context and provides an opportunity to provide a more suitable transition to the wider open countryside. Furthermore, the appeal site is located within a transitional landscape, with land to the north of it exhibiting features that are more representative of the wider Landscape Character Type (LCT) and the appeal site itself being largely featureless, located adjacent to a relatively hard urban edge. The provision of new public open space alongside new tree planting, in accordance with the guidelines for the host LCT, would serve to reinforce the landscape structure immediately to the north.

- 1.6 I find that for any views in which the appeal proposals would be considered an identifiable component of the view, this would be limited to a short section of a busy road corridor (Ploughley Road), the character of which is already informed by a number of urban elements in local views. At this location, the appeal proposals would only be seen by road users, being low sensitivity receptors, and by roadside pedestrians who I would consider having slightly higher sensitivity at medium. In both cases, I do not consider that either receptor group would be present for the enjoyment of the view within this largely peri-urban context. Importantly, the experience of travelling would remain; where views are possible, there remains an open character to the north of Ambrosden, with built development (including the appeal proposals) appearing spatially appropriate given current development patterns and the existing character of the settlement.
- 1.7 As the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - Third Edition (LI/IEEMA, 2013) (GLVIA3), reminds us, the landscape context for this proposal is not simply the open land of the appeal site; it includes the wider built context, which provides the setting for these proposals. So, while we are all inclined to value open character and 'naturalness' over built form, that inclination should not be a blindfold to the prospects for re-use in a different form which is sometimes a necessary and inevitable pressure on the landscape resource, subject of course to an appropriately sensitive design.
- 1.8 The long-term impact of the proposal on the character of the appeal site context would be no greater than moderate/minor, being an effect that ranges from noticeable alterations to a few of the key characteristics of the baseline landscape resource or aspects of visual amenity, to a slight alteration to some of the key characteristics.
- 1.9 In combination with the overall moderate/minor effect arising from the appeal proposals, it is the case that any appreciation of new built form would be experienced from a very localised area, essentially from a short section of Ploughley Road. Visual receptors experiencing a moderate effect are limited to those immediately adjacent to, or within 150m of the appeal site.
- 1.10 I do not consider that the appeal proposals are inappropriate in a spatial sense. Landscape and visual effects arising from the appeal proposals are extremely limited, while the northward extension of Ambrosden, owing to the delivery of a suitable green infrastructure provision and mitigation measures within the northern areas of the appeal site, seems to me entirely appropriate in scale in terms of the evolution of the settlement. The scale, form and appearance of the development would reflect and enhance the positive characteristics of the surrounding area, within the perceived limits of Ambrosden, and raise the overall standard of development expected. Being well-integrated with the surrounding areas, the development would appear as a natural and logical addition to Ambrosden.
- 1.11 It is not my role to undertake the overall planning balance, but from a strictly landscape perspective and recognising that the application for the built development is in outline, my professional opinion is that the proposals as now formulated in the Design and Access Statement in particular would, overall, be entirely in keeping with current landscape characteristics of the area. It is, as stated above, relevant that notable effects of the proposed development on landscape and visual receptors are extremely localised.

1.12 I believe this scheme represents a positive addition to the area in landscape terms and one which is compliant with relevant guidance and policy when read as a whole. I respectfully recommend that insofar as landscape and visual matters pertain to the determination of this appeal, that planning permission should be granted.



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