



Land South of Green Lane, Chesterton

Urban Design and Townscape Matters

**SUMMARY EVIDENCE OF RICHARD
BURTON**

AOU BA(HONS) DIPLA CMLI

FINAL

Wates Developments Ltd
January 2024

**PLANNING APPLICATION
(REF:23/00173/OUT)**

APPEAL REF:
APP/C3105/W/23/3331122

APPEAL UNDER SECTION 78 OF THE
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT
1990 BY WATES DEVELOPMENTS LTD

1.1 SUMMARY EVIDENCE

- 1.1.1 My name is Richard Weston Burton. I am a practicing urban designer and landscape architect. I am a chartered landscape architect and have been a Member of the Landscape Institute since 1994. In 2013 I was elected an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism.
- 1.1.2 In my capacity at this Appeal, I am acting as a professional urban design witness. I confirm that this evidence is representative of my own views and has been prepared in accordance with my professional qualifications, experience and obligations.
- 1.1.3 I was first instructed by Wates Developments Ltd in August 2023 to review the current planning application (ref: 23/00173/OUT). After my initial review I was subsequently appointed to provide independent urban design evidence at this Appeal.
- 1.1.4 My evidence specifically relates to urban design matters and the suitability, or otherwise, of the proposed development in the context of the Appeal Site and the villages of Chesterton and Little Chesterton. It addresses the alleged design impacts as set out in the Council's RfR and SoC. There are three RfR in the decision notice dated 25 January 2023. RfR 1 and 2 pertain to urban design matters.
- 1.1.5 The Appeal Site is free of any designations and is contiguous with the existing settlement edge. Chesterton has grown principally to the west and the Appeal Site has a direct relationship with the most recent 21st Century housing, rather than the historic core.
- 1.1.6 While the village edge is visible from the Appeal Site, the historic core feels removed, being separated by more recent housing developments.
- 1.1.7 The recent Vespasian Way housing estate is the most visible part of the existing settlement edge in views from the Appeal Site and across it from the south. The settlement edge is abrupt in these views, and the appeal masterplan has rightly acknowledged this as a clear opportunity to improve upon.
- 1.1.8 I have found that the appeal scheme, as submitted, is capable of delivering a high quality and fully sympathetic new neighbourhood in a part of the village where growth has naturally occurred over time. The scheme design responded positively to the village context, reflecting the unique characteristics of Chesterton. I have shown that the components of place, as defined within the National Design Guide, have been carefully articulated within the design response. The masterplan principles have been directly informed by the analysis of the site and local context. The Appeal Scheme has the potential to be a vibrant new neighbourhood, offering much to residents of the whole village.

1.1.9 Within RfR 1 and 2 and their SoC, the Council have alleged harm arising from the Appeal Scheme. In respect to urban design and townscape matters, the Council's assertions can be distilled into the follows:

- The proposals would result in a disproportionate development when considered against the scale of the existing village (RfR 1)
- The proposals would cause impacts to the settlement character which could not be avoided or mitigated by the proposed development (RfR1)
- The proposals, by reason of the scale and impact on the overall landscape and settlement character, would cause harm to the approaches along Green Lane and the unnamed lane to Little Chesterton, and to the overall character of the settlement of Chesterton (RfR2)

1.1.10 There is a degree of overlap across the three areas of alleged harm, but I nevertheless considered them in turn and outline my conclusions based on my main evidence.

The proposals would result in a disproportionate development when considered against the scale of the existing village

1.1.11 The Appeal Scheme footprint, at 6.8ha, represents around a 20% increase compared to the current village footprint. The increase in population referenced by the Council in their SoC is less relevant when considering settlement form, as it is the resultant physical extent and layout of the development that will be perceived by residents.

1.1.12 The actual net developable area represented by the housing is 4.9ha, which equates to around a 15% increase. Based on my analysis of the settlement pattern, urban grain, building heights, street pattern and open space, I have shown that the Appeal Scheme is not disproportionate. Indeed, I have reached the view that the Appeal Scheme is appropriately scaled and will be perceived as an integrated and sympathetic new neighbourhood, location in a part of the village where recent growth has already occurred.

1.1.13 The generous amount of green space within the overall building footprint has enlarged the development footprint, but this contributes significantly to the appearance of a more loose-knit and lower density neighbourhood, reflective of the wider village.

1.1.14 The scale of the housing blocks, building heights and densities are all sympathetic to the village context. This appropriately scaled housing will be viewed in the context of a 'green' and generous landscape setting, and the Appeal Site is physically and visually connected with the existing settlement edge. When all these factors are taken into account, it is my conclusion that the proposals will be perceived as logical and well-

proportioned extension to the village, in a location where growth has naturally occurred.

The proposals would cause impacts to the settlement character which could not be avoided or mitigated by the proposed development.

1.1.15 My analysis has led me to a diametrically opposite conclusion. The essential placemaking components of the Appeal Scheme, its layout, urban grain, massing, landscape and appearance have all been derived from a thorough analysis of the site and the wider village context. Positive aspects of the settlement character had been replicated and embedded within the design response so that the Appeal Scheme is intrinsically sympathetic to its village context. My analysis has objectively appraised the Appeal Scheme against the positive features that contribute to settlement character, and demonstrated a high level of compatibility. As such, the alleged harm to settlement character has been avoided through good design. Indeed, as noted in my main evidence the proposals are capable of enhancing the southern settlement edge given the current abrupt interface with the countryside in this part of the village.

1.1.16 The landscape proposals do not aim to completely screen the proposals, as suggested within the Officers Report (para. 7.27), but rather provide a soft green edge, imitating other parts of the village. The scale of the landscape proposals are such that they have the potential to markedly enhance the settlement edge in this part of the village, along with providing a significant new area (9.8ha) of public open space.

The proposals, by reason of the scale and impact on the overall landscape and settlement character, would cause harm to the approaches along Green Lane and the unnamed lane to Little Chesterton, and to the overall character of the settlement of Chesterton

1.1.17 I have shown that the Appeal Scheme and its design is compatible with the settlement form and character. I have also assessed the way the village would be perceived when approaching along Green Lane and the unnamed lane further west.

1.1.18 I have noted that the new access off Green Lane into the appeal Site is located to the east of the current 'Welcome to Chesterton' signs and that the proposals include creating a new gateway feature at the western edge of Green Lane.

1.1.19 Therefore, on entering the village from the west this new gateway will denote the point of arrival into the village, which is before the vehicular entrance into the Appeal Scheme. This helps to maintain the perception of a well-defined village boundary.

1.1.20 The characteristic enclosure along the approach routes into the village, created by highway vegetation, will be retained and strengthened with

additional planting. The gap in the boundary vegetation along the unnamed lane is proposed to be infilled with native hedgerow plants and designed to provide filtered views to the new development edge and open space. This will maintain the current 'sense of arrival' when entering the village from the west. Further, the proposals, while closer in the view, have the real potential to markedly improve upon the rather abrupt and hard settlement edge that is currently visible from the unnamed lane.

1.1.21 As such, and based on my comprehensive analysis, I have reached the conclusion that the RfR relating to urban design matters are unfounded.

1.1.22 Lastly, with respect to the draft housing allocation, it is my view that the Appeal Scheme can deliver a stand-alone, complementary, and appropriately scaled new western neighbourhood to Chesterton and has the potential to form a logical first phase of the new sustainable neighbourhood of approximately 500 dwellings, should the draft strategic housing allocation LPR37A be taken forward as part of CDC's local plan review.

1.1.23 Further, it seems to me that by including the Appeal Site within the draft housing allocation, it must be acknowledged by the Council that the evidence base prepared in support of the Draft Local Plan 2040 has not raised any in principle design related reasons why this site is not an appropriate location for a well-designed new neighbourhood. Indeed, the analysis of site constraints and green infrastructure undertaken by the Council (that I have referenced within my main evidence) seems to me to be explicit in concluding that it is an appropriate location for housing.