

Landscape & Visual Technical Note

Manor Oak Homes – Land at Dukes Drive - Hanwell

August 2021

1 Introduction

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd have been appointed by Manor Oak Homes Ltd. to assist with the landscape and visual matters associated with an application submission for residential development on land to the immediate north of Dukes Meadow Drive, Hanwell, Banbury.
- 1.2. The site is illustrated within the accompanying Viewpoint Location Plan, provided within **Enclosure 2** of this technical note. The site is located on the northern settlement edge of Banbury, adjacent to the recently established 'Hanwell Fields' residential area built out along the Dukes Meadow Drive corridor. The site is therefore considered to be located within a changing landscape and visual environment, with more recent localised development pushing the settlement edge beyond the northern edge of the Dukes Meadow Drive into the countryside.

2 Site Context

- 2.1. The site is located on the northern edge of Banbury and to the immediate north of Dukes Meadow Drive. The site is not subject to any landscape specific qualitative designations. As noted above, the site's localised context has seen considerable change through the recent expansion of the settlement edge as a result of extensive housing development, which is clearly perceived within the immediate and localised setting to the west, south and east respectively.
- 2.2. The site comprises a single, well contained greenfield parcel, comprising of rough grassland and scrub of low landscape value, with the key landscape features considered to be the robust native hedgerows which contain the site's northern and western boundaries. The site slopes from west to east, with the southern boundary shaped by the curve of Dukes Meadow Drive and afforded a slightly elevated position over the course of the road as you head west along it. The site is set back from the roadside by a sloped highway verge, which is characterised by areas of maintained amenity grass, some tree groups as well as individual specimen trees and small areas of scrub.
- 2.3. The site is separated from the wider countryside setting to the north by the adjacent field parcel, which wraps around its northern and western boundaries. The localised setting to the north is established by a gentle valley, characterised by a rural landscape character between the settings of Banbury and Hanwell, creating a localised bowl between these two settlements. The valley is relatively self-contained and is not

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perceived from within the immediate settlement edge, with prominent field boundary vegetation and woodland blocks establishing a tranquil environment that is less influenced by the surrounding settlement within which the site is located. It is noted that the sloping nature of the site, allows for some intervisibility from the adjacent built up environment, most notably on approach to the site's eastern corner, where views up the east facing slope of the site are perceived, within the context and setting of the adjacent highway and built form, further enhancing the site's close relationship with the established settlement edge.

- 2.4. The site's southern boundary is clearly influenced by the built up environment established along Dukes Meadow Drive. Extensive residential development is perceived on approach to the site from the east and west fronting onto the highway, with prominent three storey residential properties established fronting onto the site's eastern corner positioned around the existing roundabout. Hanwell Fields Park resides to the south of the site, forming part and parcel of the adjacent Hanwell Fields development, which combined with the deep roadside verges and landscaping along Dukes Meadow Drive, serves to successfully integrate the settlement edge and establish a pleasant, landscaped highway setting.
- 2.5. The site is located within a well-established PRoW network that extends out from the northern settlement edge into the surrounding countryside, with routes 120/107 and 239/9 extending into the countryside from Dukes Meadow Drive to the west of the site. Extensive cycle links run parallel to Dukes Meadow Drive, providing positive sustainable links along the northern edge of Banbury and within the adjacent Hanwell Fields development.
- 2.6. Overall, it is considered the site resides within a changing environment, illustrated through the establishment of Hanwell Fields and the more recent BAN 5 development parcel to the west. It is also notable that emerging development has been approved within the BAN 2 development parcel to the east, further establishing the presence of built form beyond the northern edge of Dukes Meadow Drive.

3 Landscape Character

3.1. In terms of the wider national landscape character, within the Natural England National Character Assessment, the site is located within the *'Northamptonshire Uplands'* National Character Area (NCA95).

Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study (OWLS)

- 3.2. At a county level, the Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study (OWLS) identifies the site comprising two Landscape Types (LT) as follows: *Wood Pasture Valleys and Slopes*' which covers the eastern most portion of the site; and *Farmland Slopes and Valley Sides*' which covers the majority of the site both the central and western portions of the site.
- 3.3. The key characteristics of the *Wood Pasture Valleys and Slopes'* Landscape Type are identified as;

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- "Steep sided valleys and slopes.
- Large, interlocking blocks of ancient and plantation woodland.
- Small pasture fields with localised unimproved grassland.
- Tall, thick hedges and densely scattered hedgerow trees.
- Small, intact villages and hamlets."
- 3.4. The Landscape Strategy for this LT is identified as *"Conserve the characteristic mosaic of woodland and grassland along the valley side and bottoms, as well as the unspoilt vernacular character of the villages."* The assessment also identifies a number of Guidelines for this LT as being;
 - "Promote the sustainable management of existing deciduous woodland to safeguard its long-term survival.
 - Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, field maple and hazel, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
 - Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
 - Protect stone walls from deterioration.
 - Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses and valley bottoms by planting willows, ash, alder and, where appropriate, pollarding willows.
 - Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
 - Safeguard, maintain and enhance and the characteristic landscape features of existing parklands including veteran trees, avenues of trees, lakes, woods and walls.
 - Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns and villages with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen any development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
 - Promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type. This ranges from ironstone and slate in the Northamptonshire Uplands, the limestone and stone tiles of the Cotswolds, through to brick and flint, red and blue bricks and clay tiles in the Chilterns."
- 3.5. The key characteristics of the *'Farmland Slopes and Valley Sides'* Landscape Type are identified as;
 - "Prominent slopes and valley sides interrupted by a number of small, narrow v-shaped valleys.
 - Large arable fields on the gentler slopes, small pasture fields on the steeper slopes and steep-sided valleys.
 - A well defined pattern of tall hedges and hedgerow trees.

- Small woodland copses and belts on steep slopes and along watercourses in the minor valleys.
- Small unspoilt villages with rural character."
- 3.6. The Landscape Strategy for this LT is identified as "Conserve the intimate pastoral character of the small valleys and the rural, unspoilt character of the villages. Strengthen the field pattern where it is weak." The assessment also identifies a number of Guidelines for this LT as being;
 - "Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
 - Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
 - Protect stone walls from deterioration.
 - Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
 - Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses and wooded valleys by planting species such as willows, ash and field maple.
 - Maintain the vernacular character of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type. This ranges from the limestones and stone tiles of the Cotswolds through to the ironstones and thatched roofs of the Northamptonshire Uplands.
 - Safeguard, maintain and enhance and the characteristic landscape features of existing parklands including veteran trees, avenues of trees, lakes, woods and walls."

Cherwell District Landscape Assessment 1995

- 3.7. At a local level, the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment prepared in 1995 is now somewhat outdated, however identifies the site as being located within the 'Incised Ironstone Plateau' landscape character area. This is described as; "The Incised Ironstone Plateau is situated to the north of the Ironstone hills and valleys. Both areas have a number of common characteristics, but the plateau landform is substantially different. It is a far less complex unfaulted, complete unit, divided by streams which create a landscape of ridges and valleys which extend around the north-west of Banbury.
 - The plateau top is an exposed area and rough grazing predominates in the most exposed places. Some level and gently sloping areas are under arable cultivation. Fields tend to be large, and lacking in enclosure. Hedges are low and closely trimmed and frequently been replaced with fences. The upland landscape is therefore very open, with long views down the valleys.

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- The valley sides are steep enough to prevent mechanised cultivation and pastoral farming predominates.
- This area is known for its warm coloured Horton stone, and quarrying has had a considerable upon the landscape. Several of the quarries have been reinstated and returned to arable farming, however disused working around Shennington are also being used for landfill purposes, which are unsightly but are not closely overlooked.
- Parts of the plateau are under arable cultivation, with winter cereals and short term sheep grazing with permanent grassland in the most exposed areas. Roads run straight along the tops of the ridges, lined with wide grass verges with occasional patches of heath vegetation lining the roads.
- The attractive village of Wroxton contains many seventeenth and eighteenth century thatched cottages but is best known for Wroxton Abbey."

Banbury Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment (September 2013)

- 3.8. In addition to the above OWLS and CDLA studies, a more site specific Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment was undertaken in September 2013 for a number of land parcels around Banbury. This report was prepared to provide an evidence base to support the Cherwell Local Plan and to supplement and build upon the Cherwell District Council Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity (CDC LSCA) Assessment prepared in September 2010 by Halcrow Group Limited.
- 3.9. This document identifies the site to form a small part of the wider 'Site A' which extends further north, east and west up to the southern edges of Hanwell village. The site forms the southern most portion of 'Site A' immediately adjacent to Dukes Meadow Drive and the existing settlement edge.
- 3.10. It is noted however that the site only forms a small part of the wider 'Site A' which covers a much broader area of landscape to the north, east and west extending up to the edge of Hanwell village, whereas the site is situated immediately adjacent to the current built up edge and main road corridor. Furthermore, the site and its localised setting has undergone extensive development since 2013, when the Banbury Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment was prepared, and which has redefined the northern settlement edge of Banbury including the development at 'Site J / Banbury 5' to the west and 'Site B / Banbury 2' to the east.
- 3.11. As a result, this study is considered to be outdated and does not take on board the up to date specific landscape and visual elements associated with the site itself which forms only a small part of the wider parcel. The site is therefore considered to be located within a changing landscape and visual environment, with recent localised development pushing the settlement edge beyond the northern edge of the Dukes Meadow Drive into the countryside. The site is considered to be of lower sensitivity and value due to the more recent residential development north of Dukes Meadow

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Drive and the urbanising components which characterises the immediate setting, and as a result has increased capacity for some carefully designed sensitive development.

4 Visual Environment

- A photographic record accompanies this statement and is provided within Enclosure 4.1. 2. Short range views of the site are limited to the immediate built up setting along Dukes Meadow Drive on approach from the east (refer Viewpoints 7 & 8) where the sloping nature of the site allows for some intervisibility with the internal fieldscape. However, views on approach from the west (refer Viewpoint 9) of the internal developable part of the site are well contained by the fall of the topography and established intervening roadside vegetation which is typical of this route and the adjacent residential frontages. A minor glimpsed view towards the site's western boundary is afforded from PRoW 120/107 (refer Viewpoint 10) via a small break within the otherwise well-established vegetation structure which contains this section of PRoW. However, as illustrated, only the very upper level of the site's eastern hedgerow, at its north western corner is perceived, ensuring that any potential visual impacts from this setting are likely to be highly limited. It is considered therefore that any short distance views of the site, are limited to within the immediate built up environment and that within this context, the proposed development would not appear alien or overly prominent within the character of these views.
- 4.2. Middle distance views are considered to be highly contained. Views from the southern edge of Hanwell village (refer Viewpoint 1) are contained by the intervening vegetation characterised by significant tree belts and a prominent mature woodland block established within the foreground of the adjacent fieldscape, in addition to the gently undulating topography associated with the intervening valley setting. As such the built edge of Hanwell Fields is not perceived, however, the large scale industrial sheds established within the localised setting to the east of the site, along Noral Way and the recent Bellway development within Southam are visible. Due to the extent of the intervening components described, it is considered that the proposals would not be visible from this setting.
- 4.3. Views from within the lower lying valley setting to the north (Viewpoint 6), are again well contained, due to the intervening valley topography and extensive treelines and woodland blocks. The intervening fieldscape displays an established a compartmentalised character within the sloping valley face and it is considered that the proposed development would not be visible from within the valley setting and would not result in any harm to its sense of perceived remoteness or tranquillity.
- 4.4. A small group of longer distance views have been identified to the north and east (refer Viewpoints 2 - 4) in which the site is perceived within the setting of Banbury. From within these views, the built-up setting of Banbury characterises the landscape on the opposing valley side, with development, including a mix of large scale industrial and smaller scale residential built form, are perceived rising up from the valley floor to the elevated ridgeline beyond the site to the west, noting that the development to the immediate south west resides on higher ground established on ground levels of +139m

AOD. The site forms a relatively minor and small scale greenfield parcel, that is well contained by the surrounding development and the wooded skylines and valley slopes. It is considered that within this context and extended distance, the proposed development would form a minor component within these views, contained within the surrounding settlement edge and would not harm the general visual compositions, with the key fieldscape, sloping valley and wooded areas, remaining intact. It is considered therefore that the proposed development, would not result in any significant harm on these views. Views on approach from the elevated section of the A422, which forms one of the key entrance points into Banbury (Viewpoint 4) are considered to be of low visual sensitivity, with motorists travelling at speed along the busy dual carriageway towards the urban setting of Banbury. Within this context, views of the site will only be fleeting and would be perceived within the periphery of the field of view of drivers, whose primary focus is on the road ahead, rather than any focused perception or appreciation of the wider countryside. Furthermore, the intervening landform and vegetation established alongside the A422, clearly limits broader views of the surrounding countryside, which are limited to only a short stretch of the A422 highway. Overall, therefore, it is considered that the middle and longer distance identified, have capacity in visual terms, to accommodate the nature of change proposed.

4.5. To conclude, the site is considered to be relatively well contained in visual terms. It is acknowledged that the sloping nature of the site has meant that there are some short range and longer distance cross valley view's available, however these would be perceived within the context of the immediate and wider settlement of Banbury, the adjacent Hanwell Fields development and the more recent development that has been established within the BAN 5 development and emerging BAN 2 development parcel, within the immediate and localised setting to the west and east respectively. Overall, it is considered that the site's immediate and localised visual environment, has capacity in visual terms, to integrate a sensitive, high quality, residential settlement.

5 Design Analysis

5.1. The accompanying, Site Analysis and Opportunities and Constraints plan, identifies the site's key landscape and visual matters (refer **Enclosure 1**). Views of the site's eastern facing slope, on approach to the site from the east along Dukes Meadow Drive and the 3 storey apartment dwellings fronting onto the site's eastern corner have been identified, as well as views from the adjacent Hanwell Fields Park, where the elevated nature of the site along the western extents of the site's southern boundary, results in some potential for built form to break the skyline. In character terms, deep development setbacks along Dukes Meadow Drive and the Hanwell Fields Park setting, have established a positive landscape character, with space for extensive tree blocks and shrub stands and amenity grass to be established. These features assist in successfully integrating the settlement edge, within the receiving landscape, albeit prominent built form is clearly perceived to the immediate south east and west, contributing to the site's settlement fringe character.

- 5.2. The initial emerging proposals are illustrated within the accompanying Landscape Framework Plan (refer **Enclosure 1**) which seek to protect and enhance the positive settlement edge character established along Dukes Meadow Drive.
- 5.3. An overview of the framework landscape proposals are provided as follows:
 - Green Infrastructure will incorporate defensible green buffers, recreational opportunities and substantial planting, to create an attractive and diverse setting for the development and settlement edge, including:
 - A landscape buffer along the southern boundary (in addition to the highway verge) incorporating wild meadow, grass verge and native thicket stands, reflective of the wider planting typology established along the wider sections of Dukes Meadow Drive;
 - Incorporation of native tree groups and native understorey shrub planting, established within the site's eastern corner, will sensitively anchor and visually integrate development at the foot of the slope, without the need to fully screen the proposed built form;
 - A landscape buffer along the site's northern boundary to incorporate new footpath links and wild meadow to protect the setting of the adjacent field parcel to the north;
 - Eastern landscape buffer / parkland, incorporating amenity green space, wild meadow and new footpath links. Native specimen trees and tree groups will reinforce a parkland character.
 - Strategic landscape strips will extend through the development, with sufficient development offsets to incorporate significant landscaping and urban tree planting opportunities to assist with visually breaking up the overall massing and perceived scale of development.
 - Key boundary hedgerows and hedgerow trees will be retained and enhanced to establish a defensible green edge to the development and contribute to diversity along the landscape buffers.
 - New internal footpath links will take advantage of this opportunity to increase connectivity within the site and localised setting, with potential links taken across Dukes Meadow Drive.

6 Summary and Conclusions

6.1. It is considered that the emerging proposals for residential development can be achieved without significant harm to the localised character or receiving visual environment. It is acknowledged that the character of the site would change as a result of the proposals. However, the existing built edge already characterises the site and

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the recent development within BAN 5 to the west and the emerging BAN 2 development parcel to the east have extended the settlement edge beyond Dukes Meadow Drive to the north, establishing this precedence. Clearly therefore the site is located within a changing landscape and it is considered that the through the integration of the proposed landscape framework, the site would complement the new recent development extensions and established settlement edge character, where extensive development along the course of Dukes Meadow Drive, has been successfully established.

- 6.2. The incorporation of generous development setbacks will allow for extensive landscaped areas and buffers, which will enhance and protect the landscaped setting of Dukes Meadow Drive and the visual amenity of neighbouring properties and approaching vehicles. Particular consideration has been given to protecting the skyline along the site's southern boundary and to visually anchoring and integrating development at the foot of the slope within the site's eastern corner. This is demonstrated within the indicative section details enclosed.
- 6.3. The site is considered to be closely associated with the established settlement edge, being afforded a high degree of separation from the wider more rural valley landscape setting to the north, noting that development within the site would have no impact on this setting or the neighbouring village settlement of Hanwell to the north west.
- 6.4. A small group of longer distance views have been identified to the north and east, in which the site is perceived within the setting of Banbury. It is considered that within this context and from an extended distance, the proposed development would form a minor component within these views, contained within the surrounding settlement edge and would not harm the general visual compositions from these locations, with the key fieldscape, sloping valley and wooded areas, remaining intact. It is considered therefore that the proposed development, would not result in any significant harm on these views.
- 6.5. It is therefore concluded that development of the site, incorporating a sensitive landscape framework, is supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd

August 2021

Enclosed:

Plan OCP Landscape Opportunities & Constraints Plan LFP Landscape Framework Thrive Masterplan Photographic Record



Enclosure 1 – Plans



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Manor Oak Homes

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Plateaued Landscape

> Landscape / P.O.S buffer incorporating pedestrian access, wild meadow strips & reinforcement planting to retained hedgerow.

Landscaped frontages creating attractive avenue route

Large specimen trees & tree groups to establish high quality landscape setting on higher ground

Areas of wild grassland to reflect character within the plataued setting

Access off Dukes meadow drive

Landscape buffer incorporating native thicket blocks, wild meadow and grass verges

Development set back from southern boundary to protect setting of Dukes Meadow

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Internal green finger incorporating landscaped amenity space and robust tree planting

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Manor Oak Homes

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Enclosure 2 – Photographic Record



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NB IMAGES TO ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera with 50mm lens in line with best practice and current guidance. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 330mm curved through the same radius in order to correctly illustrate the existing landscape context. To ensure considered judgements are accurately assessed, images should not be substituted for visiting the viewpoint.

Viewpoint 2





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NB IMAGES TO ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera with 50mm lens in line with best practice and current guidance. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 330mm curved through the same radius in order to correctly illustrate the existing landscape context. To ensure considered judgements are accurately assessed, images should not be substituted for visiting the viewpoint.

Viewpoint 4





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Viewpoint 6





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