

Review of Landscape and Visual Assessment

Land to the North East of KGV Playing Fields (Northaw Road East), Cuffley

LPA: Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Introduction

- 1.1.1 This report is a review of the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) forming part of the planning application by Lands Improvement Holdings. The LVA reference is KGV-LVA-2015-001, dated June 2015, prepared by Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA).
- 1.1.2 An earlier pre-submission draft LVA report, dated November 2014, was reviewed and commented on by Liz Lake Associates (LLA) in March 2015 (date 20th March 2015). A number of those comments remain valid and are not addressed in the update.
- 1.1.3 HDA provided a response to the LLA review in June 2015, clarifying various aspects of the approach adopted in the LVA.

Methodology

- 1.1.4 Further to the previous note, it was advised that an outline planning application would be submitted once the design had been developed; therefore it is appropriate that the landscape and visual effects of the scheme should be evaluated.
- 1.1.5 With this in mind the draft issue Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been developed into a more complete report for the planning application as highlighted in the previous note, however the degree of harm (the extent of the effects, i.e. substantial, moderate, minor etc.,) has not been assessed for each receptor.
- 1.1.6 As the development proposal has been finalised and detailed proposals are available to illustrate the form, nature, design and scale of the proposed development it was anticipated the applicants would be in a position to identify the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, which is a major scheme proposing up to 121 dwellings and to assess those effects, using the guidance set out in GVLIA3, scope previously highlighted.
- 1.1.7 The LVA has set out the existing situation, the proposals and for the most part identified the key landscape and visual receptors satisfactorily however, the study has not yet fully assessed the likely landscape and visual effects (the degree of change or the overall effect) of the proposed development, but

states where the likely views will be from and whether they are considered open, partial, glimpse or none.

1.1.8

The extent of visibility shown on Figure HDA 8 or 9 has not completely addressed the extent of visibility which will be greater than stated on the plan (it is currently shown “No View” or “Wider area with no view of Site”:

- There are oblique views from properties and gardens in the vicinity of Greenfields/ South Drive west of the School.
- There are views from South Drive itself extending back to Theobold's Road (see LLA VP5 and VP8) within the settlement.
- There are views of the site from Burleigh Way and Kingsway on elevated ground west of Northaw Road East, which have not been identified (see LLA VP7).
- There are views of the site from elevated properties in the vicinity of Burleigh Way, Kingsway, Kingswell Ride and other residential properties – see the reverse views from site towards the elevated residential areas (LLA VP6).
- There are views from the grounds of the school, currently shown un-rendered on the plan, together with the visibility from the school itself and a number of receptors to the edge of the settlement.
- There are views along the PRow adjacent to the south edge of the Site, currently shown as Partial View/ Glimpse (plan HDA8), however the visibility would be greater than stated along much of the footpath post implementation than the No View/ Glimpse suggests on plan HDA9, given the limited new planting proposed along the site boundary and the permeability of the boundary, particularly in winter.

1.1.9

The visibility of the proposed scheme should take into account the year round views and a further site visit by LLA has identified the site is rather permeable, hence the degree of visual change would be very apparent in winter (5-6 months of the year), when visibility is much greater, see LLA photosheets. The report mentions this change in part, however the visual assessment plans are an assessment of summer views (when vegetation is in leaf).

1.1.10

In terms of the landscape and visual assessment we make the following points:

- There is very little in the way of mitigation/screen planting proposed on the school boundary on the masterplan, so it is difficult to see how the assessment score changes from Open View to Partial View over time. Rear garden boundaries (close boarded fences) appear to abut the northern boundary with the school.
- A length of H1 Hawthorn Hedge (category B) would be lost to facilitate the new road access and would change the character of the road in this location, the extent should be cross checked with highways plans/ visibility splays, but there will be a loss to the landscape resource.
- The proposals seek to introduce additional links between the recreation ground/ Public Right of Way and the Settlement across the

site, which in themselves are welcome in terms of connectivity, but would result in the loss of 3 small sections of existing hedgerow to create the 3 new pedestrian path links and would increase the visibility of the proposals from the route.

- At 5.2.11 it states “no views of the site are possible from the recreation ground”. This is not the case when vegetation is devoid of leaf cover.

1.1.11 HDA have stated that the visual assessment covers Site A only, and does not include Site B (HDA9), as they state Site B does not involve development – ie they advise it is a change of use – this is a planning matter for the Case Officer beyond our remit. It should be noted that Site B has been reviewed including in the summary, concluding at 7.2.3 the “*conversion of the existing set aside to mown grass pitches.*” Accordingly, given the context of the adjacent uses, the landscape and visual effects of Site B would be much higher than slight/minor adverse effect due to the loss of agricultural land, should lighting, hard surfacing or other built features such as fencing be introduced (however none of these are mentioned, so are assumed not to be included).

1.1.12 Photomontages have been submitted with the proposed scheme, however they do not appear to be consistent with Landscape Institute (LI) guidelines, as forming advice note 01/11, accordingly they do not conform to best practice. This was conveyed to the applicant in December 2015 by telephone. In addition, the modelling of the proposed forms on the frontage does not appear accurate or verified, the existing and proposed vegetation appears largely artistic, and mixes winter and summer vegetation, providing a rather artificial look. For example, it is apparent that on Northaw Road East the loss of hedgerow and creation of a new junction would form an apparent change in the street scene along much of the western boundary frontage, however the effects are not well visualised. It is not clear if the full extent of the highway changes and hedgerow removal are represented.

Green Belt

1.1.13 Paragraph 2.3.8 refers to HDAs own local scale Landscape Assessment and Green Belt Review (April 2014) which we have not seen and identifies SHLAA site Cuf6 (Site A) as the most suitable site compared to other sites in Cuffley for removal from green belt. Given this is not a WHBC document; reliance upon it in relation to the LVIA is not advised.

1.1.14 Green Belt Assessment and LVIA are entirely different topics and the conclusions drawn in the executive summary claims that development would be possible “*without compromising the integrity of the Green Belt designation*”. Whilst this report is not a review of Green Belt issues, it is hard to see how the development of land in the green belt would not compromise the green belt. By its very nature, development of this parcel would result in a loss of openness, even taking into account visual harm or the localised extent of views due to screening or topography; the physical development of the land itself creates a permanent physical change, which will affect the openness of the land by the very nature of introducing built form into the Green Belt.

1.1.15 The Council's January 2015 Local Plan Consultation draft states, that “**19.12 Cuf6 East of Northaw Road East** is located on the south side of the village. It

has a larger capacity of 110 dwellings, and would make a relatively large contribution to meeting Cuffley's housing need. The site has a significant role in the Green Belt function of protecting the countryside, but only a partial contribution to the purposes of preventing towns merging and preventing urban sprawl. The site is surrounded on all four sides by existing man-made boundaries (Northaw Road East, existing housing, a school, the railway, car parking and a recreation ground). It would therefore be relatively easy to provide a logical and defensible new Green Belt boundary around the site".

Liz Lake Associates, 12th January 2016

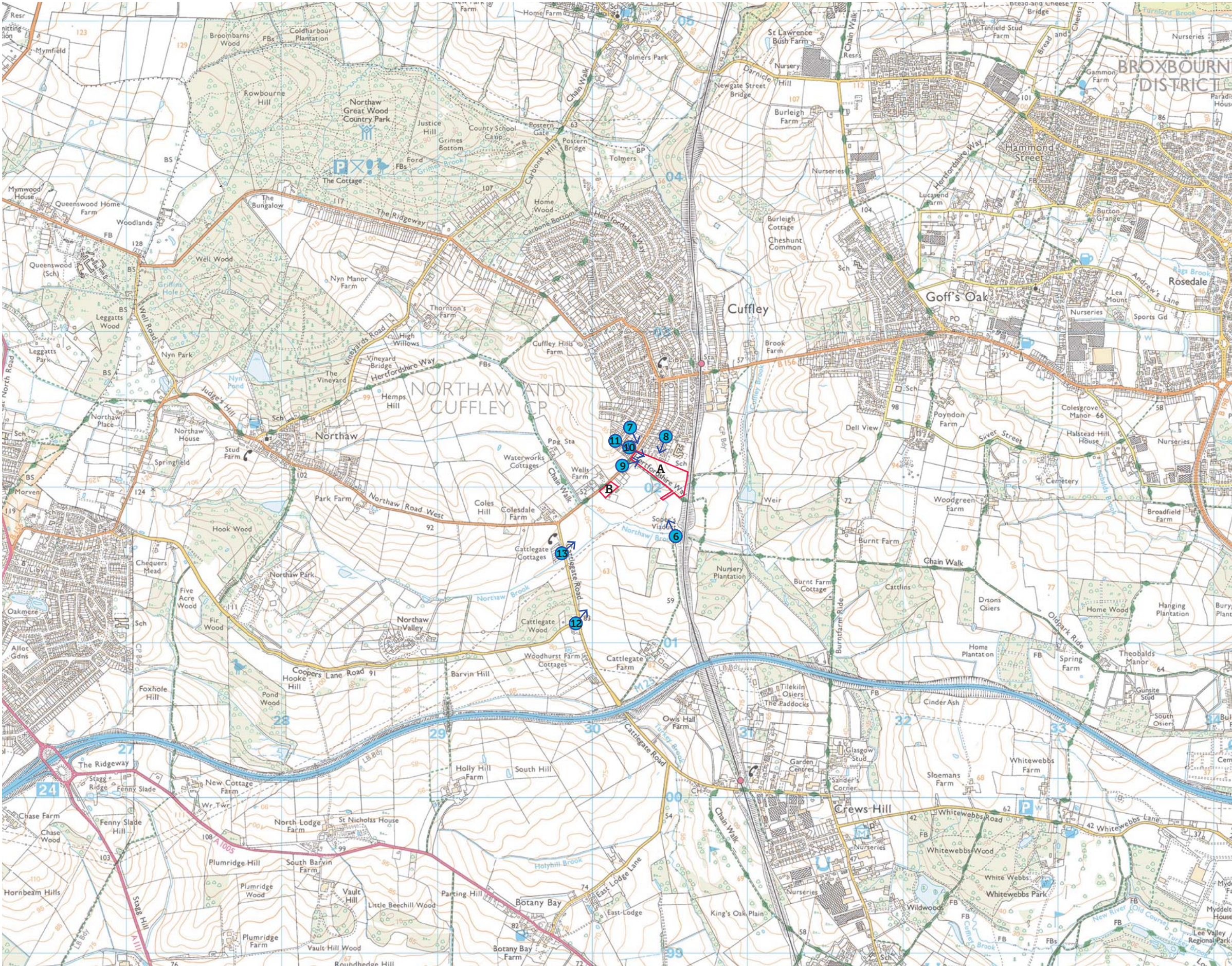
REVIEW OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

LAND TO THE NORTH EAST OF KGV PLAYING FIELDS (NORTHAW ROAD
EAST), CUFFLEY

January 2016

Figure 1 Photo Locations

Figure 2: Photo Sheets





View Point 1: View north into Site, taken from Hertfordshire Way (PROW Northaw Road East), adjacent to southern Site boundary.



View Point 2: View north into Site, taken from Hertfordshire Way (PROW Northaw Road East), adjacent to southern boundary.



View Point 3: View north east into Site, taken from PROW Northaw Road East 006 (Hertfordshire Way).



View Point 4: View east into Site, taken from Northaw Road East opposite Colesdale Road.



View Point 5: View south into Site, taken from South Drive.



View Point 6: View north west towards Site, taken from gap in Site boundary PROW Northaw 015 near to Soper's Viaduct.



View Point 7: View south west towards Site, taken from Kingsway Road / Burleigh Road junction.



View Point 8: View south towards Site taken from Theobalds Road.



View Point 9: View north east towards Site, taken from Northaw Road East.



View Point 10: View south east towards Site, taken from Northaw Road East.



View Point 11: View south east towards Site taken from Colesdale Road.



View Point 12: View from Northaw Road West towards Site, adjacent to Cattlegate Road.



View Point 13 : View north east towards Site, taken from Cattlegate Road.