

Land south of Eccleshall Road, Loggerheads

Landscape Statement of Common Ground

Between the Gladman Developments Ltd

and

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

20 January 2025 – Final Signed

The parties agree to the following:

Methodology

1. The parties agree that the methodology used to undertake the LVIA which was submitted with the Application is in line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition ('GLVIA3').
2. All relevant visual receptors were considered within the LVIA. As explained in paragraph 1.3 of the Application LVIA (CD 1.05) some of the photography was taken during foggy conditions on a single visit in October 2023. The Inspector when they undertake their site visit will hopefully have better visibility conditions and will be able to appreciate the Site in its 'worst-case' scenario in winter with no canopy or leaf cover.

The Appeal Site

3. The Appeal Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations in relation to landscape or heritage value.
4. While the Appeal Site is covered by Local Plan Policy NP21, which covers 'Areas of Landscape Restoration', this policy forms part of a wider set of policies (i.e. Local Plan Policies N18-N22), with Policy N18 covering landscapes of 'very high' quality, and Policy N22 covering areas of 'very low' quality. Policy N21 which covers the Appeal Site, deals with landscapes of the second lowest quality (i.e. 'low'), as set out within the Planning for Landscape Change SPG (2000). The same study identifies the Site within an 'Area of Highest Landscape Sensitivity' which is independent of the landscape quality rating applied to it.
5. Leightons Drumble, designated as a Local Wildlife Site is located partially on-site within the south east section along the stream corridor. No trees on the Appeal Site are covered by Tree Preservation Orders.
6. No resultant views from residential properties are considered to be so substantial that it would cause overbearing to their properties.
7. The Site lies within National Character Area NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain. For the purposes of assessing the effects on the Appeal Site, the NCAs are of too large a scale to be particularly relevant, and therefore it is not used to assess the effects on the Appeal Site or vice versa. They are however useful to understand what the key landscape characteristics of the area are.

8. *Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent structure plan (1996 – 2011)*

- a. The Appeal Site lies within the Sandstone Estatelands: Farmland LCT. It comprises a small part of this LCT.
- b. The characteristic landscape features for this LCT are identified as:
'Well treed stream valleys; small broadleaved copses; intensive arable farming; hedged field pattern; gently undulating landform.' The Appeal Site generally reflects the characteristics of this LCT.
- c. The Appeal Site lies within the Landscape Policy Objective Area 'Landscape Restoration', which is considered in NuLBC Local Plan Policy N21. This Policy Objective Area encompasses landscapes considered to have a 'low' landscape quality, i.e. the second lowest quality level out of five.
- d. The Site is also placed within an 'Area of Highest Landscape Sensitivity' on the Landscape Policy Zone map (note that land is either covered by the zone, or not, i.e. there are no levels or separate categories of sensitivity). Such areas are irrespective of the Landscape Policy Objective and this sensitivity identification assists *'in indicating how easy it will be to mitigate the impacts of development or land use change.'* *Planning for Landscape Change Vol.1 - Paragraph 3.4 Page 9.*
- e. The Planning for Landscape Change document at Paragraph 2.7 explains that the same factors that have been used to establish the Landscape Policy Objective which is 'Landscape Restoration' for the Site also informs the assessment of landscape sensitivity. The Landscape Policy Objective and landscape sensitivity are two separate factors. Paragraph 2.7 Page 5 (ibid) explains in its last sentence, *'The landscapes which are most sensitive to the impacts of development or land use change may justify more restrictive Local Plan development policies than those of lower sensitivity.'*

9. *Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment Study (2022)*

- a. The Appeal Site lies within the Sandstone Hills and Farmlands Landscape Character Type (E), and within LCA E3, Loggerheads Sandstone Hills and Farmlands. It comprises a small part of LCA E3, and a small part of LCT E (which is sub-divided into four LCAs).
- b. The key characteristics of LCT E, Sandstone Hills and Farmlands are:
 - Strongly undulating landform, with intimate valleys and localised, rounded hills with occasional steep slopes;

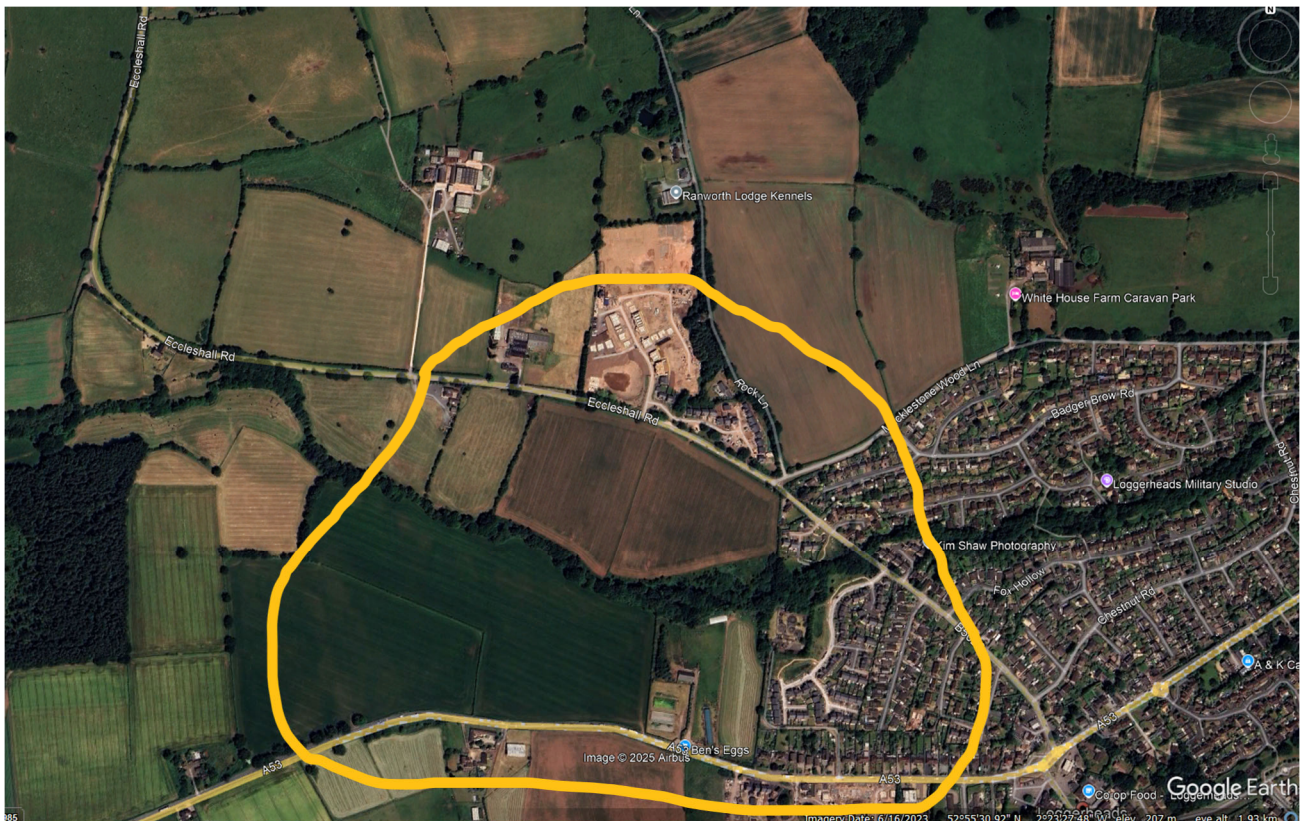
- Large, hilltop plantation woodlands accompanied by fragments of heathland, interspersed with smaller, deciduous woodland, including ancient woodland, and parkland associated with landed estates;
 - Large-scale, open arable fields on flatter ground, with pockets of small-scale, pastoral farming bound by dense hedgerows on steeper slopes;
 - Treed landscape, with well vegetated watercourses and hedgerow trees along roads and in areas of pastoral fields enhancing the wooded character;
 - Views are generally enclosed by hedges, hedgerow trees and woodland;
 - Settled rural landscape, with small linear hamlets, and a small number of large, nucleated villages, and a high density of farmsteads and rural estates linked by a network of narrow, often sunken lanes.
- c. The Appeal Site is relatively reflective of the identified characteristics of LCT E and LCA E3.
- d. The Study assessed the condition of LCT 3 as 'good', and its strength of character as 'strong'.
- e. The Appeal Site lies within the Loggerheads Sandstone Hills and Farmlands (LCA E3) which is described as a settled rural landscape characterised by large nucleated and small linear villages, and scattered medium to large woodlands, including plantation woodlands. The study notes that the land cover is largely arable and pastoral farmland, which is interspersed with blocks of woodland of small to medium size. Woodland is generally broadleaf, with pockets of Ancient Woodland that form a distinctive skyline in the centre and west of the LCA. In terms of arable fields, these are generally rectilinear, organised in a slightly haphazard pattern with pockets of planned enclosure where the pattern is more regular. Smaller pastoral fields, which tend to be irregular, have robust hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Views are long and look over the Sandstone Hills and Farmlands LCT to the west, and electric pylons interrupt the otherwise treed skyline in the south. Whilst this is a settled rural landscape, settlement is largely concentrated in the south, where the large expanded village of Loggerheads and smaller, nucleated village of Ashley are located. The A53 contrasts with small, often straight rural lanes with dense hedgerows that connect settlements. Time depth is generally limited. The study states that *'Whilst there is generally a strong rural character and strong sense of tranquillity, this is locally eroded in proximity to Loggerheads, the A53 and where there is ongoing mineral extraction in the north.'*
- f. The key characteristics of LCA E3, Loggerheads Sandstone Hills and Farmlands are set out below, and the Appeal Site is generally reflective of these characteristics:

- *‘Rolling landscape rising to a high point within the hilltop village of Loggerheads;*
- *Scattered medium to large blocks of woodland, including plantation woodland;*
- *High density of locally designated sites with natural value including woodland, and grassland;*
- *Settled rural landscape with a large, expanded village and outlying historic villages and hamlets; and,*
- *Long views across arable and pastoral farmland to the west.’*

g. The Landscape Management Strategy for LCA E3 is Conserve/Enhance. The three strategic options presented within this document are Conserve, Enhance, and Restore.

h. The Loggerheads fringe within LCA E3 was assessed as being of ‘medium’ sensitivity to residential development of moderate to high density, between 1-3 storeys and comprising a mix of terraced, detached and semi-detached houses (on a scale of High, Medium and Low; as set out in Appendix 1 of Part 1 of the Study).

10. The material effects on landscape character are localised to that at the Appeal Site and the immediate surroundings, as indicatively shown on the plan below by the yellow line:




Policy

11. The Appeal Site is not a valued landscape for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 187a. The broader, rural area lies to the west of the settlement of Loggerheads, and NPPF paragraph 187b is therefore of relevance to the Appeal Site.
12. Core Strategy Policy CSP4: most matters in this policy are concerned with ecological elements, and parts 1, 2, 4, and 5 are not relevant to landscape and visual matters.
13. Local Plan Policy N17 does not preclude development on a site, subject to the tests set out within it.
14. Local Plan Policy N21 which covers the Appeal Site, does not preclude development within the landscapes identified as 'Areas of Landscape Restoration'. Instead it seeks to support *'proposals that will help restore the character and improve the quality of the landscape'*. It goes onto explain that, *'Within these areas it will be necessary to demonstrate that development will not further erode the character or quality of the landscape.'*
15. The putative Reason for Refusal 1 refers to the NPPF, but not specific paragraphs. Relevant paragraphs with regards to landscape and visual matters are 131 and 135 of the NPPF December 2024 (although the paragraph numbers are the same in the 2023 NPPF), as set out within the Officer's Report to Planning Committee (3 December 2024), and paragraph 187b.

Signed and dated:



Silke Gruner on behalf of Gladman Development Ltd



Stuart Ryder on behalf of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council