



Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan Examination

Action Point 16 – provide a note on the approach to assessing the landscape and visual impacts of site AB2

1. ED017, The Landscape and Visual Appraisal forms Part 3 of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study (2020) and has been informed by the findings of Parts 1 and 2 of the Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study (LSCA) – ED023 & ED023a.
2. The objective of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal was to assess, at a strategic level, the suitability of various sites as identified by the Borough Council (including AB2) for residential and/or employment development, against the relevant Sustainability Objective 8 [CD04 pg N7]:

‘To strengthen the quality of the landscape and urban townscape and deliver well designed development which respects local character and distinctiveness.’
3. This high-level assessment of each site, identifies place-specific landscape and visual sensitivity issues that may be constraints or opportunities for development.
4. Judgements concerning whether a landscape may be able to accommodate change were informed by the likely interactions between the landscape and visual susceptibility of the study area, and the key attributes of the type and scale of development under consideration.
5. As set out in paragraph 1.4 of the site selection work [ED029, pg3], the conclusions of the landscape work has informed judgements around the suitability of sites for allocation in the Local Plan.

6. In line with the purpose of the part 3 Landscape Study, four hypothetical scenarios were developed with the Borough Council (recognising the appraisal in November 2022):
 - Larger residential development
 - Smaller residential development
 - Employment¹ (the case for AB2): large units, up to 5 storeys in height comprising a mix of innovative research/business offices and large commercial 'box units'
 - Residential and Employment
7. The landscape character context and sensitive landscape and visual receptors were identified for each site, through desk studies and field survey work. This provided the basis for developing the criteria for assessing the landscape and visual sensitivity of each of the sites to the type and scale of development as per the hypothetical scenarios (as per 4. above).
8. In line with best practice², the approach to assessing sensitivity was based on judgements about value and susceptibility. Value and susceptibility have been assessed against a five-point scale of typical criteria, set out in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 respectively [ED017 pg 10-14].
9. The sensitivity of the landscape associated with each site was assessed through combining the judgements of value attached to the landscape and susceptibility to the proposed development scenario, against a five-point scale set out in Table 2.3 [ED017 pg 14]. The assessment was based on professional judgement, taking account of the interplay between criteria, as well as those which might be more important to landscape character in a particular area.
10. Informed by the understanding of key landscape and visual sensitivities of the site, the potential significant adverse landscape and visual effects of the hypothetical development scenario at each site were identified.
11. Taking into consideration the relevant landscape planning guidelines for the landscape character type and area from Parts 1 and 2 of the LSCA [ED023 & ED023a], site-specific mitigation measures have been proposed to prevent, reduce and where possible avoid the identified potential significant adverse landscape and visual effects.

¹ ED017 para 2.3.2

² Including: An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (Natural England, 2019)

12. However, it is acknowledged that this would not negate the need for more detailed mitigation measures being identified by Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, as well as technical design & siting considerations, undertaken in support of individual planning applications.

13. Site-specific opportunities for improving the landscape to support acceptable change and deliver beneficial landscape effects associated with the hypothetical development scenario have also been identified in ED017.

14. Based on the hypothetical development scenarios (referred to in 4. above), the landscape sensitivity and overall significance of the residual effects in relation to Sustainability Appraisal Objective 8, for each site are also summarised.

15. For AB2, this revealed:

Site reference	Development Scenario	Landscape Sensitivity	Overall Appraisal
AB2	Employment development	Medium to high ³	Major adverse ⁴

16. The site-specific landscape and visual appraisal for AB2 is found in Section 3.3 of ED017 pg 68-70. For ease of reference, & for the purposes of the note, this is extracted in Appendix 1 below. Please note that the site boundary detailed in the preceding map (PDF pg88) relates an earlier iteration of its extent, so does not reflect the addition highlighted in ED008 referenced as AB2A (pg B-2).

17. Policy AB2 [CD01, pg 109] emphasises accordingly that the layout and development of the site will be landscape led, with roads, buildings or structures designed to ensure they are not intrusive in significant views from the surrounding area. There is an expectation in criteria 1 of the policy that the site prepares a masterplan led approach to the site. Proposed modifications to criteria 9 require a landscape and visual impact assessment to be prepared and submitted for the site.

18. The Supporting Information to Policy AB2 (para's 13.17-13.19) also refers to the role of a full landscape & visual assessment, consideration of the height, scale

³ A landscape of medium to high landscape value containing landscape components that are susceptible to the type of change being assessed [ED017 Table 2.3].

⁴ Proposed development scenario is likely to have a major adverse effect on the SA objective with no satisfactory mitigation possible [ED017 Table 2.4].

and form of development, allied to appropriate building materials being used to screen visually intrusive development. The role of a high-quality landscape in providing structure and detail to the character of the development is as well highlighted.

Appendix 1: AB2 Landscape & Visual Appraisal Extract from ED017

Site AB2	Land adjoining corner of A500 and M6 southbound
Development Scenario	Employment development – large units up to 5 storeys in height
Landscape Character Context	The landscape character context is provided by the following National and Local Landscape Character Types and Areas⁵ NCA64 Potteries and Churnet Valley The Summary Description, Key Characteristics and Statements of Environmental Opportunity that have informed the appraisal can be viewed in the NCA Profile⁶ LCT D Ancient Clay Farmlands Refer to Section 4.0, pages 87-89 of the Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment [ED023] and Section 5.2 pages 31-33 of the Landscape Strategy [ED023a] for detailed description including Key Characteristics, Landscape Condition & Strength of Character, Key Landscape Sensitivities and Landscape Guidelines. LCA D1 Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands Refer to pages 90-93 of the Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment [ED023] and page 34 of the Landscape Strategy [ED023a] for area specific description including Key Characteristics, Settlement Fringe Character description and evaluation of Sensitivity, and area Specific Landscape Sensitivities & Landscape Guidelines
National/Local Landscape Designations	Open Space Site 378 Brockwood Hill natural and semi-natural greenspace is located adjoining the northeast boundary of the site
Site Landscape and Visual Character	The site is located adjacent to the M6 motorway in the northwest of the Borough, to the west/northwest of Audley. It is a large area of land comprising a relatively open, rolling pastoral landscape.

⁵ See Figures 2.1 and 4.1 in the Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment (2020) – Part 1 – ED023

⁶ [NCA Profile: 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley - NE509](#)

Site AB2	Land adjoining corner of A500 and M6 southbound
	The landform of the site comprises gently rolling, undulating slopes that slope down from the north and south towards a watercourse that flows east-west through the north of the site. There is another watercourse flowing through the south of the site. Both watercourses are identifiable by trees along their course, which stand out against the open fields. There is a small field pond in the southeast of the site. The site comprises predominantly irregular pastoral fields of varying sizes, with small fields generally in the north and around Brook Farm, and larger fields across rising landform in the south of the site. Fields are bound by generally intact and well-managed hedgerows with occasional trees. Tree vegetation generally defines watercourses, former tracks and more irregular field boundaries. Groups and lines of trees also form parts of the west site boundary with the M6. The site has a generally open character, with open gently rolling hillsides and large skies punctuated by trees. There are several PROW footpaths linking through the site from local roads and under the M6 to connect with the wider network. The Two Saints Way long distance path passes along Moat Lane and Barthomley Road along the south site boundary. The site has a strong rural character despite it being bound by the M6 to the west. It is in generally moderate to good condition and has local scenic qualities. The landscape character of the site and its surroundings is typical of the Ancient Clay Farmlands, with dispersed settlement pattern of farms and clusters of residential dwellings. Traffic on the M6 is locally intrusive in parts of the site, in terms of visibility of and noise from vehicles. However, the site retains a strong rural character with long open views across the surrounding rural landscape, towards more distant hills often framed by trees
Site Landscape and Visual Sensitivity	The site and the surrounding area are assessed as having medium to high landscape value and high landscape susceptibility to the development type being proposed. Overall, it is considered that the site is of generally medium to high landscape sensitivity to employment development.
Potential Significant Adverse Effects	• Potential for development to be viewed as a conspicuous, large scale urban development in the generally intact, pastoral landscape of the Ancient Clay Farmlands.

Site AB2	Land adjoining corner of A500 and M6 southbound
	• Potential for intrusive and uncharacteristic urban structures in the rural landscape setting, particularly where it has potential to form harsh new urban edges and rooflines that break treed skylines and alter the rural settlement pattern. • Potential for change from rural to urban context for users of the PROW network and visitors to Brockwood Hill. • Potential loss of vegetation features including woodland, hedgerows, riparian trees and scattered trees that contribute to ancient character of the landscape. • Potential for inappropriate screening vegetation that would be uncharacteristic in the landscape.
Scope for Mitigation	• Avoid development that would form prominent urban sprawl on the gently rolling hills of the Ancient Clay Farmlands. • Limit the height, scale and form of development to ensure that it does not form a prominent built edge and urban massing, and to avoid the roofline breaking treed skylines. • Provide substantial greenspace and suitable landscape buffers through the site to break-up the urban form and contribute to separation between built areas. • Retain and enhance the PROW footpaths through the site between open spaces and the wider PROW network, as part of an appropriate landscape strategy to provide greenspace and corridors through the proposed development. • Retain and enhance vegetation features as part of the landscape strategy for the proposed development. • Ensure that proposals for new planting are in keeping with local landscape character.
Enhancement Opportunities	• Enhance the sense of place through use of appropriate building materials and styles in respect of new development. • Screen visually intrusive development where appropriate with landscape character. • Expand and link vegetation within and around the proposed development edge. • Enhance the interface between the new and existing settlement areas and with the rural landscape, considering how existing settlement is experienced across the exposed, undulating landscape.

Site AB2	Land adjoining corner of A500 and M6 southbound
Overall Appraisal	Employment development on this site would have a major adverse effect on the SA objective to strengthen the quality of the landscape and urban townscape and deliver well designed development which respects the local character and distinctiveness