LAND AT ELLESMERE
LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

in connection with an outline planning application for Land at Ellesmere

August 2014

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Burbury Investments

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1. Introduction

1.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment considers how a proposed development will affect the landscape where it is to be built. This looks at the effects both within the site boundary, as well as any possible effects outside it. The Assessment looks at two different aspects of the landscape: firstly, the physical features of the site (the land form, its trees and hedgerows etc) and the way these effect how the site looks (its 'character'), which together are called 'the landscape resource'; and secondly, where the site can be seen from, and which parts of the site, and the development, can or will, be seen (its ;visibility'). In doing this, the Assessment also references national, county and local level planning and landscape guidance documents.

1.2 Having built-up a picture of the surrounding landscape, the Assessment then considers what potential effects a new development may have. These potential effects are then used to guide the design of the development to ensure the most suitable design and arrangement of the proposed buildings and the way the site should be planted, reducing potential negative effects to create a 'best fit' solution within the surrounding environment.

2. Guidance

2.1 The Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment have written guidance on how to carry out a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). This assessment has been carried in line with that guidance.

3. The Site

3.1 The proposal site is located on the south side of the town of Ellesmere. The area has a semi-rural character, and the landscape is gently undulating with irregular field patterns and localised areas of high ground. The site is surrounded by the town of Ellesmere, the Shropshire Union Canal and the open countryside.

3.2 The Shropshire Union Canal is a tourism and leisure route, providing a key opportunity for the proposed leisure features of the development. A number of historic buildings are linked with the canal, and there is a high volume of pedestrian and canal boat activity along it.

3.3 The application site is a set of five existing grass fields currently used for grazing. Most of these are surrounded by hedgerows and some mature trees with a number of large trees within the fields.

3.4 Due to the undulating nature of the landscape, areas of high ground and mature hedgerows, the visibility of the site is limited to the local area and it is not possible to see all five fields at once from any one view. Generally, views are limited to partial views overlooking two or three fields at a time. No long distance views are possible from the surrounding area, including from the elevated ground at Welsh Frankton. Long distance views are defined as being over 2km. Views are considered from public viewpoints (the roads, canal paths and footpaths) around the site, and from the footpath that crosses it.

4. The Proposal

4.1 The intention is to develop the site at Ellesmere to provide a wide range of leisure facilities and 250 houses. The leisure part of the development will comprise of a 200 berth marina and associated boating facilities, hotel, pub and play barn, a spa centre with both indoor and outdoor sports activities, holiday lodges, and a touring caravan park. Generally, the larger and less dense development has been located in the least visible parts of the site to the east, closer to the town's amenities. Smaller scale development for the holiday cabins and caravans are located to the more rural and open parts to the west. The housing is to be located adjacent to the existing housing along its northern boundary.

5. Effect on the Landscape Resource

5.1 The existing fields will be developed to for a mixture of leisure, tourism and residential development. Very few trees will be removed, although a large number of (generally moderate quality) hedgerows will go, however, substantially more will be planted in the proposals. Similarly, whilst much of the existing grazing land will be removed, large areas of wetland and wildflowers will be replanted.

5.2 Although the character of the landscape would be sensitive to this scale of development, the site has been recently allocated by Shropshire Council as an area for housing, leisure and tourism, which influences how the site is considered in assessment terms. Therefore, the large amount of proposed

planting and number of improvements to the existing vegetation and wildlife habitats on the site will over time, allow the development to become part of the town of Ellesmere, as well as be in keeping with the existing semi – rural landscape of the area.

6. Effect on Visual Amenity

6.1 The selected viewpoints and visual assessment show that the application site is only visible from public locations close to the site. Combined with the positioning and layout of the buildings this will result in the proposed development having limited visibility within the wider landscape. Views of the site that are possible will be seen in the context of the leisure activities of the canal and over time as the proposed planting and enhancements to the existing trees and hedgerows mature will help to maintain the appearance of the well wooded skyline and the undulating countryside.

7. Summary

7.1 This is a predominantly recreational development located within a semi-rural setting adjacent to the town of Ellesmere and the Shropshire Union Canal. Despite its scale, the existing landscape and design of the proposals will limits its negative effects and create a balanced addition to the town, while maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape.

7.2 Therefore as a whole, it is considered that the proposal should be considered acceptable in terms of its impact on the surrounding landscape and be in keeping with the existing recreational uses associated with the Shropshire Union Canal.

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