

**SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF MARK FLATMAN:  
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ISSUES**

**ON BEHALF OF:**

AURORA PROPERTIES (UK) LTD

**IN RESPECT OF AN APPEAL FOR:**

LAND TO THE NORTH OF BRADMORE WAY, BROOKMANS PARK, HERTFORDSHIRE.

**PINS REFS:** APP/C1950/W/22/3307844  
**LPA:** Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
**LPA REF:** 6/2022/1097/OUTLINE

**January 2023**

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## 1 SUMMARY PROOF AND CONCLUSIONS

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### 1.1 Summary and conclusions

1.1.1 My name is Mark Flatman. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and a Director of Liz Lake Associates, Chartered Landscape Architects and Urban Designers (LLA). I have a degree and a Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Greenwich University and I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI).

1.1.2 I have worked in professional practice since 1996. During this time, I have prepared landscape proposals for a wide range of projects including private landowners, historic landscapes, and educational, commercial and residential developments in town, settlement fringe and rural settings.

1.1.3 I have prepared Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) to accompany planning applications for broad a range of projects including residential, health, leisure and recreation, commercial, industrial and enabling development. I have also prepared the landscape and visual assessments required for the Environmental Impact Assessments for major infrastructure projects, minerals and waste development, as well as residential and commercial developments.

1.1.4 Brookmans Park is a modern commuter village established in around 1935, when the Brookmans Park Estate (comprising a former parkland owned by the Gausen family until 1923) was sold off to developers, who wanted to create a modern settlement within easy reach of the City, accessible by train.

1.1.5 The Appeal Site itself comprises an open irregular shaped agricultural field, with a gentle gradient across the Site that falls from northeast to the west. The more elevated land to the east has seen the location of a number of different features over the years, including the BBCs Brookmans Park Transmitter Station built in 1928-29 and lying adjacent to the east side A1001 Great North Road; meanwhile, Brookmans House (the Gausen's residence) which overlooked the former parkland estate to the southwest, has long since been demolished (after a major fire in 1891), within part of the golf course and clubhouse facilities.

### 1.1.6

The proposed scheme shown on the illustrative landscape masterplan incorporates the following,

- Retention, management and enhancement of the existing mixed native vegetation and mature trees beyond the Site boundaries, together with new trees to create more diversity and structure and connectivity of green infrastructure.
- The existing gap in the north east corner of the Site will be planted with mixed native hedge and trees to provide a wildlife buffer connecting corridor between Peplin's Wood and the golf course, forming a strong robust boundary.
- Creation of a strategic buffer that would be fenced to prevent access and to provide an offset of at least 15m (in line with Natural England requirements). In reality, the carefully designed proposals ensure a much more significant buffer has been provided ranging from a minimum of 15m and up to 70m to the development edge, comprising new landscape features, including species rich grassland, woodland and native scrub planting.
- Set back development from the eastern boundary and strengthen the landscape buffer alongside the existing edge with new hedge, scrub and tree vegetation adjacent to Brookmans Park Golf Club.
- Ensure an appropriate offset from the settlement edge north of Peplins Way and Bradmore Way, to allow for new tree planting and features (such as orchard trees and species rich grassland) within areas of open space. This will ensure a soft interface with the rear gardens extending along Peplins Way and help reinforce character, as well as connecting the southern spur of Peplin's Wood with the golf course for wildlife and biodiversity reasons.
- Provision of wildlife friendly SUDs features, within open space including species rich planting and longer grass, including meadow and/or heathy grass to enhance the biodiversity and landscape characteristics of the area.
- Provision of native trees, as well as orchard trees, by including 'heritage apple' trees within species rich grassland throughout the layout.

- Provision of attractive areas of public open space (including 2no. play spaces) that promote creative play and increase connectivity and circulation, for the health and wellbeing of the local community. The provision of doorstep and local play elements will include natural and rural character features for play areas, as well as trim trail features with a variety of activities aimed at a range of age groups.

1.1.7 The design of the proposed scheme ensures permeability, legibility and connectivity. The design will continue the streetscene and existing character of Bradmore Way (which includes pedestrian paths set behind the verge) by extending it further into the site. As a result, the existing vista along Bradmore Way remains well connected and legibility is maintained, so that people can still appreciate the view of the woodland along the road. In addition, most of the internal roads within the layout allow for outward vistas and views towards the existing wooded backdrop on higher ground. The scheme also provides public access, which includes circular walks that will allow people more to appreciate more of the woodland and its edge from close up, rather than from a single distant point towards the end of Bradmore Way.

1.1.8 Although there will be a loss of grassland, the scheme includes the following new elements that have been developed with the scheme ecologist, to increase the landscape resource of the Appeal Site and to provide added wildlife and biodiversity benefits,

- c.360 metres of new native mixed species hedgerow.
- c.1.18 hectares of new native mixed species broadleaved woodland.
- c.2.55 hectares of species rich modified grassland (wildflower meadow).
- c.0.25 hectares of wetland planting, including aquatics, wetland meadow grass for the SUDs basin.
- In excess of 185 new trees, comprising a mixture of street trees, focal trees and orchard trees (such as heritage apple).

1.1.9 It is considered that the scheme is of high quality design, the outline layout shows one way in which this can be delivered and there is no reason for the Council to consider that the proposed scheme would not be of high-quality design as required by saved Policy D1. The character and context of the built area is predominantly two

storey residential homes set within the existing settlement of Brookmans Park. The development of the Appeal site will therefore inevitably bring a change to the agricultural field but in all other respects the scheme will be consistent with the character and context of the existing area that satisfies D2 and RA10.

1.1.10 The outline scheme prepared by Ashby Design has been landscape and ecologically led, it has been carefully considered and illustrates one way a high quality scheme can be delivered for this Appeal Site. It carefully considers the opportunities and constraints associated with the Site and context, it is very well related to and well connected with the settlement of Brookmans Park, it is well contained by existing features that would all be retained, including the well vegetated (embanked) railway line, woodland (Peplin's Wood and The Legg), as well as a golf course and enclosed by a rising landform. The scheme includes new open space, green infrastructure, as well as public access which will serve the new and existing local community.

1.1.11 Overall it is considered that the design of the scheme also successfully delivers on the points required as part of policy SP9 Placemaking and High Quality Design.

1.1.12 There will inevitably be a degree of localised harm on the landscape of the Appeal Site itself in this location as there will be a loss of agricultural grassland and the open character of the site itself will change, but it is not harmful to the character of the area because;

- The Appeal Site is position on the inward facing landform against the railway line, contiguous with the modern (visible) settlement pattern to the south.
- The existing presence of a well-established settlement edge and railway line are features that impart suburban characteristics across the Appeal Site. The golf course represents a modern land use within a wooded framework to the east.
- There would be no loss of existing distinctive features of value such as trees, woodland or hedgerows. Furthermore, existing mature belts of woodland in the wider landscape beyond the Appeal Site will continue to form the strong framework and backdrop for the proposed development, in exactly the same way that they do now for the existing settlement.

- Extended, restored or new landscape features forming new structural landscape elements equates to a much greater landscape resource within the Appeal Site than currently exists.
- The development comprises new tree planting (including street trees), together with native hedgerow planting (either as infill, supplementary or new sections), native shrub planting, tussocky (species rich) meadow grass, amenity grass and amenity space with shrub and ground cover beds for residents that delivers some key characteristic features associated with the LCA.

1.1.13 Accordingly, the effects of the development on the landscape will be limited and localised.

1.1.14 The Council has not highlighted any issues with visibility being wider than the limited and localised aspects that were appraised in the LVIA and nor has visibility been raised as a Reason for Refusal.

1.1.15 The proposed scheme does increase the extent of built development, which will be an inevitable spatial change that will change the openness of the Green Belt at the edge of the settlement. However, it is recognised that the Appeal Site is well contained by strong and permanent features, including woodland to the north, the embanked mainline railway to the west, adjacent settlement to the south, whilst to the east the land is contained by strong planting and the golf course. Therefore, there is a very limited change to visual or spatial openness arising from the proposed scheme in the wider landscape, such that the integrity of the wider Green Belt can be maintained without harm.

1.1.16 There will be no physical or perceptual reduction in the gap affecting coalescence between Brookmans Park and Welham Green.

1.1.17 For all the reasons stated above and taking into account the evidence provided to support the aspects associated with landscape and visual issues, the LVIA and issues associated with openness, I am satisfied that all matters have been satisfactorily addressed and as such there is no reason why the proposed scheme should not be granted planning permission.

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