

# Land North of Bradmore Way, Brookmans Park

## Summary Proof of Evidence – Effects on the Character, Appearance, and Openness of the Green Belt

Appeal by Aurora Properties (UK) Limited

LPA Reference: 6/2022/1097/OUTLINE

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# Robert Browne Summary Proof of Evidence

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Qualifications and Experience

1.1.1 This evidence has been compiled by Robert Browne, Director at Wynne-Williams Associates, a firm of Chartered Landscape Architects, registered with the Landscape Institute.

1.1.2 I hold a BSc (Honours) degree in Geography, an MA in Landscape Architecture, and I am also a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI). I have over 6 years' experience in both planning and design projects across the commercial, residential, education, and care sectors. I specialise in landscape planning work and regularly produce landscape and visual impact assessments (LVIAs), townscape and visual impact assessments (TVIAs), landscape character assessments (LCAs), site appraisals including Green Belt Assessments, and provide expert evidence for planning appeals on behalf of both appellants and Local Authorities. The scale of my work varies from sites including a single proposed dwelling to advising on the effects of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

## 1.2 Appeal Context

1.2.1 The appeal is against the refusal of planning permission for "Outline planning permission with all matters reserved except access, for up to 125 dwellings, a care facility for up to 60 bedrooms (Use Class C2), and a scout hut (Use Class F2)". The site is located on Land North of Bradmore Way, The Brookmans Estate, Brookmans Park. The site is currently undeveloped and is in use for agriculture and is located completely within the Green Belt. Planning permission for the scheme was refused for 6 reasons, with this evidence relating to Reasons 1 and 2.

1.2.2 I was appointed by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in November 2022 to prepare evidence for this Inquiry. I have reviewed the relevant application documents and applicable policy documents, and I have made a site visit to appraise the appeal site and its environs in terms of landscape character and visual impact. My evidence provides my professional opinion on the potential effects of the appeal scheme on the existing landscape character and appearance, as well as the openness of the Green Belt. My

methodology adheres to guidance set out in GLVIA3, as well as Landscape Institute TGN 02-21.

- 1.2.3 I have established the planning context for the appeal by identifying the relevant national and local planning policies.

## 2 Summary of My Opinion

### 2.1 Landscape Susceptibility and Sensitivity to Change

- 2.1.1 I have considered the relevant baseline landscape character documents ranging from a national to a regional scale, as well as character observations made on site. It is my opinion that the area displays many of the characteristics identified within the baseline studies, in particular the local landscape character assessment. I have identified the relevant landscape receptors to the appeal scheme and assess the site itself to hold medium/high susceptibility, the Brookmans Park settlement edge to hold medium susceptibility, Peplins Wood to hold high susceptibility, and the northern parcel of LCA:54 Potters Bar Parkland to hold medium susceptibility to change.
- 2.1.2 Using Landscape Institute TGN 02-21, I have assessed the landscape value of the site and surroundings. Despite not holding any national landscape designations, I judge the site to hold high/local landscape value. It forms an important part of the character setting to Brookmans Park and an important link to the wider rural surroundings.
- 2.1.3 For each receptor I have assessed the sensitivity to the appeal proposals by combining the identified landscape value and susceptibility. The Brookmans Park settlement edge and LCA 54: Potters Bar northern parcel were assessed to hold moderate sensitivity, the site itself to hold moderate/high sensitivity, and Peplins Wood to hold high sensitivity.

### 2.2 Magnitude and Significance of Landscape Change

- 2.2.1 I have considered the predicted magnitude and significance of landscape change that would result from the appeal scheme. Within the site itself the landscape effects will be significant with a considerable alteration from the baseline characteristics. In terms of the immediate surroundings, there will be a notable change in the character of the settlement

edge to Brookmans Park, with built development encroaching further into rural land. A high level of change is also predicted to the character of Peplins Wood. Effects will be restricted to a local level, however, with limited effects on the wider area or landscape character area (LCA 54) as a whole. The intrusion of built development would be permanent and irreversible.

- 2.2.2 The significance of landscape effects during construction for the site itself, Brookmans Park settlement edge, and Peplins Wood are assessed to be substantial adverse, with effects on the northern parcel of LCA 54 to be moderate adverse. By Year 15, landscape effects are predicted to reduce to moderate adverse for the site itself and the Brookmans Park settlement edge, and slight adverse for LCA 54. Landscape effects on the character of Peplins Wood will not be mitigated and are predicted to remain at substantial adverse by Year 15.

## 2.3 Magnitude and Significance of Visual Change

- 2.3.1 When considering visual effects of the appeal scheme, I have identified the most sensitive receptors to be residents at home along Bradmore Way and Peplins Way. Highly sensitive receptors also include people using the public footway along Bradmore Way and Peplins Way where views contribute to the landscape setting. Receptors with a moderate level of visual sensitivity were identified as people using Brookmans Park Golf Club and road users along Bradmore Way and Peplins Way.
- 2.3.2 I assess visual effects to remain at a substantial adverse level for residents along Bradmore Way and Peplins Way by Year 15 as proposed planting will not mitigate the loss of longer views to higher topography and Peplins Wood. The same is true for my assessment of visual effects on pedestrians along Bradmore Way. Moderate adverse effects are predicted for pedestrians along Peplins Way and people using Brookmans Park Golf Club by Year 15, with effects reducing to a negligible level for people in vehicles.

## 2.4 Effects on the Openness of the Green Belt

- 2.4.1 When considering the effects on the openness of the Green Belt, I assess the appeal scheme to cause significant harm. It presents a substantial spatial and visual intrusion

within the Green Belt that cannot be mitigated by measures outlined in appeal documents. The development will be permanent and not remediable and would lead to a significant increase in activity during construction and through its day-to-day use after completion.

## 2.5 Conflicts with Local and National Planning Policy

- 2.5.1 It is my opinion that the appeal proposals conflict with NPPF Paragraph 130, sub-section C, as they are not sympathetic to local character and the landscape setting for the site. The scheme also fails to recognise the intrinsic value of the countryside, placing it in conflict with NPPF Paragraph 174(b). In addition, the irreversible harm to the openness of the Green Belt conflicts with NPPF Paragraph 147 and the scheme undermines the ability of the site to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (NPPF Paragraph 138 sub-section C).
- 2.5.2 In reference to local planning policy, the proposals do not maintain, enhance or improve the character of the existing area and are therefore in conflict with Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Policies D2 and RA10. The scheme also fails to enhance the sense of place for Brookmans Park, placing it in conflict with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission Policy SP9. The identified harm to Green Belt openness places it in conflict with the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Policy GBSP1.

## 3 Summary Conclusion

- 3.1.1 For the reasons above, I conclude that the appeal scheme would result in permanent and irreversible harm to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding Brookmans Park settlement edge, as well as significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

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