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Landscape and Visual Summary APP/6

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Bloor Homes

April 2021

SANDLEFORD PARK

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Reference	Date	Prepared	Authorised
Summary	29 March 2021	JC	JC

- 1.1 This is the summary evidence of Julian Cooper. I am a Director of COOPER Landscape Planning, previously Director of Landscape Architecture at SLR Consulting, and before that the Managing Director of Cooper Partnership, Chartered landscape architects and environmental planning consultants of Bristol. I hold a BSc Degree in Geography, a Post Graduate Diploma in Landscape Design; I am a Fellow of the Landscape Institute, and an Overseas Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. I have been practicing for over 40 years.
- 1.2 I was first involved on Sandleford Park in 2013, as a Director of SLR Consulting, at which time I expressed my opinion that Sandleford Park was suitable for a sensitive and well-mannered development such as now is proposed. I was involved in discussions with Officers of the Council on the layout and I attended technical meetings with officers and attended public exhibitions. I advised on the landscape layout of the master plan of the previous planning application in 2018, but I did not prepare the LVIA, nor did I carry out the assessments .
- 1.3 Extensive, friendly and largely productive technical discussions were held with officers over a long period, including with Ms Bettina Kirkham, the then landscape consultant for the Council. Her suggestions for new viewpoints and montages were all accepted, and, to my knowledge, Ms Kirkham was content with the assessment approach, the master plan and the viewpoints. She was also satisfied with the methodology used, being GLVIA 3 2013. I note that subsequently Ms Kirkham made only minor comments on the 2018 application 18/0764/OUTMAJ.
- 1.4 I was not involved in the current application, neither the master plan, nor the LVIA, as by that time I had left SLR Consulting to set up my new practice, Cooper Landscape Planning. However, having reviewed the application documents, I confirm my support for the current landscape master plans, which I also consider to be both appropriate for the site and well considered. Nevertheless, I will make clear in the evidence if there any further changes to the detailed design that I consider appropriate, for example the central valley crossing, or the parkland carriageway.
- 1.5 I have reviewed and rewritten the landscape tables and the landscape assessment text to cover the missing 2019 landscape character assessment produced by LUC, and I provide additional comments on internal landscape character areas, comparing them with the SPD.
- 1.6 For completeness, I confirm that I provided comments on the Liz Lake September 2020 landscape response to the application.
- 1.7 It is my view that:
 - i. the proposals work well on the ground;
 - ii. the strategic and the detailed landscape and visual objectives of the SPD have been followed in design terms, and its landscape and visual principles successfully adopted.
 - iii. there is no evidence for a valued landscape designation, even more so that this is an allocated site;

- iv. the visual assessment shows that there will be little long term visual harm but many long term visual benefits;
 - v. the views from Sandleford Priory would be an improvement on the existing;
 - vi. the proposals conform to the 2019 landscape character guidance;
 - vii. matters of detailed design can be dealt with in reserved matters or planning condition, as acknowledged in the SoCG; and
 - viii. I have proposed options for detailed areas that show how this could be achieved.
- 1.8 The wide range and type of benefits of this scheme have been either underestimated or ignored by the Council. These include:
- i. the redesign and reuse of 86 ha of fields and woodland to new parkland for the benefit of future residents of Newbury, including public access and tree planting;
 - ii. 74% of the site will be laid to new parkland, existing and new woodlands, and open space, play areas and footpaths, as recommended by the SPD;
 - iii. the creation of a parkland landscape in view from the former Sandleford Priory;
 - iv. the planting of many new trees and shrubs as part of this substantial new parkland, as part of a detailed design for the parkland to be agreed, based on that in the SLGI plans;
 - v. the retention of as many veteran and mature and other trees as possible, on which new proposals are provided in the Appellant’s Statement of Case;
 - vi. a well-considered management scheme to provide for the future of the parkland and woodland;
 - vii. new open public access to the whole of the parkland open space;
 - viii. new pedestrian access linking the parkland to the existing and new housing areas, and to the college; and
 - ix. a properly planned strategic landscape for this area, providing a structure for the future.
- 1.9 The proposals would accord with both the 2013 and the 2019 landscape character guidance. The landscape assessments, the capacity, and sensitivity studies need to be read as a family. The new 2019 guidance serves to reinforce that of the now superseded guidance, which is the normal process of evolution. Above all, the strategic principles of both assessments have been satisfied and any differences between them are not significant. The findings of the two landscape assessment in the 2019 and 2021 LVIA’s are similar and not material to the significance of the findings.
- 1.10 Few of the visual effects are significant, and many are beneficial rather than adverse. This is the direct opposite to Liz Lake’s overall comments at Page 15 on her consultation comments where it is said that ‘...the LVIA already acknowledges that proposal results in significant harm to the landscape and visual resources of the site’. Reference to the assessment tables in the LVIA show the opposite: in its conclusions the LVIA explains that there is a *mix of adverse and beneficial effects* because of the proposals, which is hardly surprising for a development of this size, and that the

residual effects are mostly beneficial.

- 1.11 This is an allocated site where the proposals follow the SPD, therefore the harm and benefits will have been assumed by the Council in any event, and the SPD assumes that adverse effects are inevitable.
- 1.12 This allocated site does not pass the test of being a Valued Landscape in the meaning of Paragraph 170a of the NPPF.
- 1.13 Reserved matter designs have been progressed and my options are set out in the evidence. These show that design solutions are available, and they can be properly dealt with by Reserved Matters, or at detailed design.
- 1.14 In Section 2 of this evidence, I set out what I saw to be the main landscape and visual issues to be addressed. These are repeated below, together with my conclusion.
- 1.15 **The Benefits:** I have shown that these are numerous and are either underestimated or ignored by the Council in Reasons for Refusal 3.
- 1.16 **The SPD:** it is my view that the scheme accords with the landscape and visual design aspects of the SPD (I will leave others to deal with the mechanisms).
- 1.17 **Landscape Character:** notwithstanding the new Landscape Character Assessment, I consider that the application satisfactorily addressed the site's key characteristics, value attributes and sensitivities, and that the new character guidance is an evolution of the old.
- 1.18 **Comments on Visual Impact:** these are subjective, but I consider that the visual assessment as submitted was appropriate, and that the Council comments are mostly overstated.
- 1.19 **Valued Landscape:** in my opinion the local authority have not made any case for this to be a Valued Landscape.
- 1.20 **Detailed Design:** matters set out in the Statement of Case, and at Appendix 4 of that document, include: the valley crossing, encroachment in to northern valley (the Crooks Copse Link), NEAP/LEAP locations, engineered SUDS features and their proximity to the woodlands, Ancient woodlands and their buffer, Ancient and veteran trees, access to Sandleford Park West, the Monks Lane Access, Emergency access. Most are addressed by evidence or are subject to detailed design at a later stage.
- 1.21 For these reasons I respectfully suggest that there is no landscape and visual reason why planning permission should be refused for these well considered proposals.

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