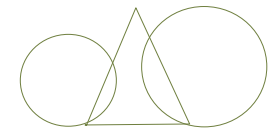

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Site – Homefield, Lindsell, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 3QJ

Client – Hunter

Contact – Smart Planning, Old School House, Rettendon Turnpike, Battlesbridge, Essex, SS11 7QL

Date - 06-06-2023



Moore Partners Ltd

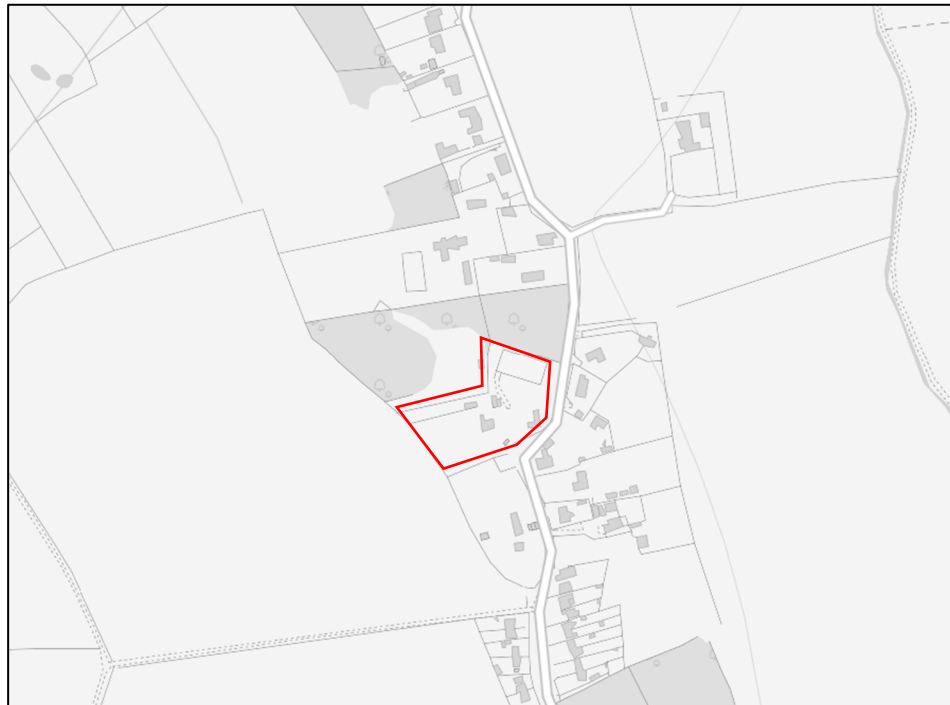
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Introduction

- 1.1 The landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) was carried out for Mr and Mrs Hunter on the site known as Homefields, Lindsell.
- 1.2 It was commissioned through Smart Planning to;
 - assess the site and determine the value of the existing landscape features.
 - appraise the visual impact of the existing site within the local landscape.
 - Assess the impact the proposed development of the dwellings would have on the site and surrounding landscape.

Figure 1 – the site



2.0 Scope and methodology

- 2.0 This site appraisal was carried out in line with guidance laid out in 'Guidelines for landscape visual impact assessment' 3rd Edition by the Landscape Institute. It consists of a baseline assessment from information collated on a site visit on the 05-06-2023. This includes details of the existing landscape resources and features within the site. The views in and out of the site, the site's place in the wider landscape. The transport routes and public rights of way around the site.
- 2.2 The assessment has been made at local level in the immediate landscape setting, due to the scale of the site.
- 2.3 The preliminary plans for the proposed development have been studied and the conclusions drawn on the impact this will have on the landscape resource, the views into the site from the wider landscape, transport routes and public rights of way.

Fig 2 – site location in the landscape



3.0 Landscape Character of the wider area

3.1 National Landscape Character Area

The site lies in national character area 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. This is described as *'ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century.'* Source Natural England National Landscape Character assessment

3.2 County landscape Character Area

Essex County Council landscape character assessment classifies the area as Central Essex Farmlands (B1)

Described as an area of *'extensive area of gently undulating arable farmland bisected by the Chelmer Valley. Irregular fields are enclosed by thick but intermittent hedgerows, or just marked by grassy banks and ditches. In long views scattered small woods and copses, and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small, isolated hamlets and farmsteads, often straggling along lanes, with a few widely separated towns and larger villages. Narrow strip greens and moated farmsteads are distinctive features of the area. Away from the A120, A130, A12, M11 road corridors/Stansted Airport and its flightpath.'* Source Essex landscape character assessment 2003 Chris Blandford associates.

3.3 District Landscape Character area

The site is within the Uttlesford landscape character area of B11 Lindsell and Bardfield Farmland Plateau. The key landscape features of this area are described as -

- Glacial Till farmland plateau in Central Essex farmlands.
- Open, broadly rolling plateau, dissected by Pods Brook and Stebbing Brook.
- Mainly arable farmland with many shelterbelts forming dark backdrop to many views.
- Shelterbelts often thickly planted containing a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees
- Horse pasture visible near settlements.
- Linear settlement pattern along roads and lanes, or scattered farmsteads; there are no major villages, although Lindsell has an historic church.
- Vernacular architecture pale cream or white-washed plaster with thatched roofs, some half-timbered buildings.
- Tall species-rich hedgerows along many lanes; some hornbeam coppice visible.

4.0 Site context

4.1 Surrounding land use

The site lies to the north of Lindsell village along the public highway to Holders Green. Residential properties run in a strip along the east and west side of the road and are a mixture of ages and architectural styles. Immediately to the north is an area used as paddock for grazing horses. Beyond this are residential properties running along the line of the road. To the east are residential properties including a new development. To the south are also residential properties. To the west is open agricultural, arable fields. The wider landscape beyond the dwellings is arable fields divided by hedgerows.

Fig 3 – the site in the wider landscape.



4.2 **Public rights of way.**

The public highway runs along the eastern boundary of the site.

To the west of the site a public footpath runs along the southern boundary of the arable field. Along the western boundary of this field there is designated public byway. These have views across the flat, arable land to the site, see figure 2.

4.3 **Topography and drainage**

The site is flat with relatively flat land around. An agricultural drainage ditch follows the hedge line along the site's western boundary, joining a further ditch line along the southern boundary. These drain into the pond on the eastern side of the site adjacent to the highway.

4.4 **Current land use**

Located in the centre of the site is the current dwelling. To the northeast is an area consisting of a manege, stables and grazing for horses.

The area to the south and west of the house is being used as a domestic garden, with a garage, out buildings, lawn and trees.



Figure 4 – current site layout

5.0 Baseline assessment of landscape features

For purposes of this LVIA the site has been divided into two sections- the north-eastern section currently used for stabling, a manege and grazing. The southwest used as a domestic garden, the dwelling is central to the site.

5.1 The northeast area

A mature hedge of native species and including a large mature oak tree separate the site from the highway. provides a good screen between the site and the road, creating rural feel to the country road. The southern section contains some dead elm and hedge die back behind the existing stables, which could offer an opportunity for new planting. The northern boundary is separated from the adjacent hawthorn scrub and grazing land by a post and rail fence. Within the site the ground is heavily grazed grass land, with a manege occupying the northern edge.



fig 5 – northeast side of the site looking north showing the stables, manege, grassed area with the mature hedge behind. Section of poorer hedge to the rear of the stables.

5.2 The south and western section

To the south and west of the dwelling the site is domestic garden.

A highly valuable native hedge runs along the western boundary to the east side of the ditch. A large mature oak is growing at the northern end. These are valuable landscape assets providing screening of the site from the open fields and public rights of way to the west. It is considered to be a historic field boundary; the size of the shrub species suggests some significant age to the hedge. It has good ecological value as a wildlife habitat and as an ecological corridor to surrounding hedges and woodlands within the wider landscape. It contains species including oak, hawthorn, field maple, ash and dogwood with a ground flora of dogs mercury.

Along the southern section of the garden is a line of large mature ash trees running along the old ditch line. These are also high value landscape assets both within the site and in the wider landscape where they are visible as a group from the surrounding fields.

The pond to the eastern boundary with the road, is surrounded by mature field maple and white willow trees, it has ecological value, and is visible to road users.

Within the garden area the site is laid to lawn with a group of mature hawthorn and cherry plum running around part of the lawn. These have some landscape value within the site but are not visible from outside the site boundaries, so visual value is limited from the wider landscape. There are two old fruit trees within the lawn area. A band of nettles, and some native shrubs run inside the ditch line along the southern boundary. They do not form a solid boundary hedge line along here. Two large mature Lawson cypress trees to the north of the lawn are large enough to be viewed in the wider landscape over the height of the boundary hedges.

The outbuildings within the site include two concrete block and corrugated iron farm sheds. A garage, a small green house and a timber shed.



Fig 6 - Map of base line landscape resources



Fig 7 Western boundary hedge from the field (west) side
Looking along the field edge/ footpath



fig 8 Oak tree in the western boundary hedge looking from within site



Fig 9 Garden area looking west from the driveway



fig 10 Pond on the eastern boundary with highway



Fig 11 Outbuildings looking north.



Fig 12 Fruit trees and scrub on the southern edge of the lawn

6.0 Visual Resources

6.1 Views into the site

6.1.1 Views from the highway.

The site is well screened from the highway. The existing hedge running along the eastern boundary restricts views in from road users both approaching from the north and the south. The trees around the pond at the south-eastern edge of the site also restrict the views into the site. The exception is the existing entrance gate way. Views from the residential properties to the east of the highway are also obscured by the 1.8m high close board fences running along the frontages adjacent to that side of the highway.



Fig 13 Southern site road boundary and pond



Central area of site boundary



Northern section of site boundary and oak tree

6.1.2 Views from the public rights of way

There are views into the site from the public rights of way across the open, flat arable land to the west. The site is screened by the mature native hedgerow running along the western boundary. The mature oak at the northern end is also an important landscape feature. The group of mature ash along the southern boundary are also a valuable landscape feature, visible on the skyline.

Views from the public rights of way to the east are screened by the residential properties to the east of the road.



Fig 14 the view north towards the site from the public footpath to the south showing the mature native hedge line along the western boundary of the site.



Fig 15 Looking east from the byway across the open arable fields towards the site. The oak, native hedge line and group of mature ash are visible and screen the site.

6.1.3 Views from the wider countryside.

The views of the site from the wider countryside to the west are screened by the existing hedge as above. From the open countryside to the east by the residential properties along the east side of the highway. Residential properties and the trees along the boundary, to the south also screen the site from the open arable land. From the north the hawthorn scrub in the adjacent paddock offers some screening.

6.2 Views from the site.

There are limited views from the site due to the significant native hedges to the east and western boundaries.

To the north the site is open to the adjacent grazing land with a post and rail fence, however the views are limited by the existing hawthorn scrub.

To the south the site bounds the adjacent residential property. The boundary is open post and wire fencing. The ground flora scrub and ash trees within the garden currently screen some of the views, along with the native shrubs in the adjacent plot.



Fig 16 – Post and rail fence and adjacent scrub on northern boundary

Ash tree and ground flora on south boundary

7.0 Proposed development and design implications.

7.1 Proposed development

The proposed development is for the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings. The closure of the existing access onto the highway and installation of a new access further north. A new internal site road. The construction of 5 new detached dwellings, garages, and associated landscaping. The new dwellings are situated towards the eastern side of the site and face inwards onto the new access road.



Fig 17 – Proposed site plan

7.2 Landscape design implications

7.2.1 Existing landscape assets.

The site is located in a rural landscape and the new scheme should be informal and planting features should compliment the existing landscape features.

Importantly the existing boundary hedge and trees to the west should be retained in its current state. It is an important landscape asset and provides a high level of screening from the public rights of way to the west. The open, flat arable nature of the land to the west makes this hedge an important visual asset as well as ecologically and arboriculturally. Any new fencing if required should be to the eastern side of the hedge to maintain the existing rural views from outside the site.

The hedge and mature oak running along the eastern boundary with the highway are also important, providing good screening of the proposed houses from the highway and residential properties to the east. If possible, this could be retained to maintain the existing rural nature of the highway.

The large ash trees along the southern boundary should be retained to maintain the current skyline in the wider landscape. The removal of the non-native conifers however would not detract significantly form this skyline when viewed from outside the site.

The pond in the southeast of the site will be retained and offers an opportunity to enhance the landscape and ecological value, subject to findings of any ecological report.

7.2.2 New landscape features

Due to the rural nature of the site the new landscaping should be informal and include the use of native species.

The size of the proposed plots allows for the use of new native hedging within the site to divide areas.

Any new fencing should be open such as post and rail to avoid an urban look to the gardens.

The open nature of the northern and southern boundaries offers an opportunity for additional native hedging between the site and the adjacent plots.

Planting to the front gardens should be arcadian in feel with tree and shrub planting to soften views of the new dwellings from the proposed internal road.

The eastern boundary hedge, along the highway, has a section of dead elm at the southern end adjacent to the existing access this section could be re-planted, and the existing access blocked up and with new native hedges and trees.

New hard surfaces should reflect the rural nature of the site and be SUDs compliant.