

CALL FOR SITES RESPONSE, SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE: GIRTON GOLF CLUB LAND

Landscape and Visual Statement

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Call for Sites Response,
South Cambridgeshire:
Girton Golf Club Land
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LANDSCAPE & VISUAL STATEMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

General

- 1.1 RPS has been commissioned by [REDACTED] to provide a Landscape and Visual Statement (LVS) regarding potential effects on landscape and visual receptors of a potential housing site at the Golf Club Land at Girton in South Cambridgeshire in response to the Council's 'Call for Sites'.

Baseline Methodology

- 1.2 For this LVS a desktop review of published data, such as landscape character assessments, OS maps, Google Street View and aerial photography was undertaken. This identified potential landscape and visual resources that might be affected by the proposed development.
- 1.3 This LVS has been produced mainly as a desk-based exercise. A site visit to the site has been undertaken, and the advice contained within this report has been produced based upon a review of available information and professional judgement.
- 1.4 The relevant planning policies are outlined in section 2. The landscape baseline is outlined at paragraphs 2.11 to 2.19 and the visual baseline is outlined at paragraphs 2.20 to 2.27 of this report.

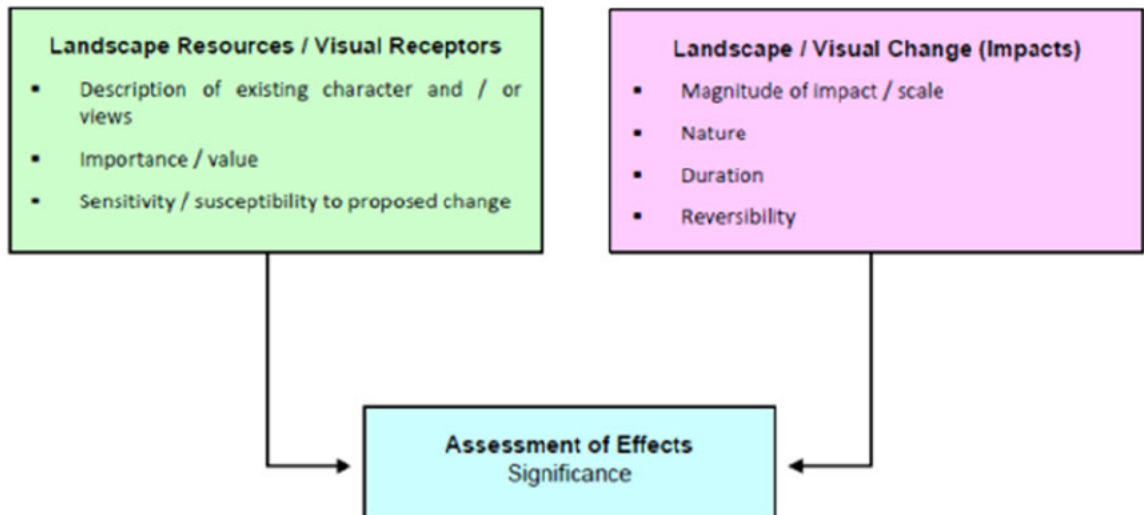
Assessment Methodology

- 1.5 The assessment for this LVS has been undertaken based broadly on the following relevant guidance on landscape and visual assessment:
- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3)*.
- 1.6 The statement reviews the existing situation, and then considers the likely effects of the proposed change of use in relation to the baseline conditions when the development is complete. The significance of the landscape and visual effects are assessed at a high level, through consideration of the sensitivity or susceptibility of the resources/receptor to the proposed change of use and the magnitude of change.

Assessment Methodology Summary

- 2 The potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development are assessed by considering the impact magnitude on particular landscape and visual resources and receptors,

as summarised in the diagram below. For the purposes of this LVS, sensitive landscape and visual receptors, within the immediate context of the site have been included.



Planning Baseline

Local Plan

- 2.1 Planning policy that is relevant to the site is contained within the South Cambridgeshire District Council’s Local Plan (adopted in September 2018).
- 2.2 The relevant landscape policies and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan are:
 1. Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character

“Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which is it located.”

The policy goes on to say that the East of England Landscape Typology is the relevant more local and finer grain landscape assessment. The policy mentions two Supplementary Planning Documents which support policy NH/2 as follows:

“To assist in retaining the distinctive nature of the South Cambridgeshire landscape the Council provides more detailed guidance about landscape character areas in the District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the Landscape in New Developments SPD to ensure that development respects both the distinctiveness of these National Character Areas and the more detailed local landscapes.”

2. District Design Guide: High Quality and Sustainable Development in South Cambridgeshire (adopted March 2010). This SPD sets out the landscape and settlement character by Landscape Character Area (LCA) but, also goes on to describe design

principles for new development within each character area. The relevant LCAs and design principles for the potential housing site are set out in the Landscape Baseline section later in this document.

3. The Landscape in New Developments SPD (adopted March 2010). Sets out design principles for development in Appendix 2 at the Joint Character Area (JCA)/National Character Area (NCA) scale. The relevant landscape principles within this SPD are set out in the Landscape Baseline section later in this report.

Other Material Considerations

Statutory Landscape and Planning Designations

- 2.3 The site does not fall within or lie close to AONB or National Park landscape designations.
- 2.4 There are no registered historic parks and gardens within the 2km radius of the site.
- 2.5 The site at the Golf Club land at Girton is located outside the settlement boundary but, within the Cambridge Green Belt, which also extends across land to the east, north and west.
- 2.6 The site does not fall within a Local Green Space as described in Policy NH/12 in the Local Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.7 The NPPF July 2018 promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and supports a prosperous rural economy.
- 2.8 Section 12 of the NPPF is concerned with well-designed places. Paragraph 127 b) explains that developments should be “*visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*”. Paragraph 127 c) requires that developments “*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. While not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)*”. Developments should also “*establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangements of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit*” (paragraph 127 d).
- 2.9 Section 13 of the NPPF is concerned with protecting Green Belt land. An essential characteristic of Green Belts is their openness and a key purpose relevant to landscape and visual resources is to safeguard the countryside from encroachment.
- 2.10 NPPF Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, is of relevance to this appraisal. Paragraph 170 explains that “*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: “protecting and enhancing valued landscapes ...” and “recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”*”.

Landscape Baseline

- 2.11 This site is located on the edge of the village of Girton, north of Cambridge, between the main nucleus of the settlement to the south and a smaller area of residential, commercial and

agricultural development to the north. The village lies within a wider area of relatively flat open farmland and horticultural land, comprising a regular pattern of arable and pasture fields generally defined by hedgerows. The site comprises a single field of rough grassland, most recently used as a practice ground by members of Girton Golf Club and is defined by hedgerows, native trees and shrubs and garden boundary vegetation. A steel lattice pylon tower lies in the northern part of the site in an area of ruderal vegetation and scrub. The majority of the settlement extends to the south, to the A14. A smaller part of the settlement, comprising residential, agricultural and commercial development extends to the north.

- 2.12 Two storey detached houses on High Street and Fairway and a single three storey house on High Street lie immediately to the south. Rear garden boundary treatments define the southern site boundary, comprising mainly timber fencing, ornamental clipped hedges, trees and shrubs. A well-managed roadside hedgerow approximately 2.5m high beside Oakington Road defines the eastern site boundary. Beyond this boundary to the east lies a complex of buildings at Gretton School and a triangle of horse paddocks with stables enclosed by hedgerows. Beck Brook wraps around the north and west boundaries and the mature trees and shrubs associated with this feature defines these site boundaries. This feature and land within the western part of the site are associated with a flood risk zone. Residential properties and the large commercial buildings at the Cambridge Self-Service Storage facility lie beyond to the north. Grazing land and Girton Golf course lie to the west. To the north-east, beyond Oakington Road and beside Beck Brook lies an arable field. To the north lies a small substation within a compound.

Landscape Value

- 2.13 GLVIA3 Box 5.1 sets out a range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes, which include: Landscape quality (condition); scenic quality; rarity; representativeness; conservation interests; recreation value; perceptual aspects (including tranquillity); and, associations.
- 2.14 The value of the landscape of the site and surroundings is considered to be medium. The elements of rough grassland and scrub which comprise the majority of the site are not in good condition and have limited scenic quality. The surrounding hedgerows and trees are typical of the locality and have an ordinary condition. These elements are not rare within the Fen Edge character area and are not particularly important examples. The most valued aspect of the site and surrounding landscape is the ecological corridor of the Beck Stream which passes through this part of the village. This would be retained and a green buffer provided, as appropriate, to ensure its value is maintained. The site has no recreational value and offers limited visual amenity value to the local community due to its well contained nature. Most views into the site are private views from adjacent houses. The relative openness of the site can be appreciated in some distant views across neighbouring fields. Therefore, whilst the site has some wildlife interest, this is not considered sufficient to elevate the landscape to one that is highly valued.

National Character Areas (NCAs)

- 2.15 The site is located in NCA 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands. The site is located towards the eastern edge of this NCA. The key characteristics of NCA 88 relevant to the proposed development are:

- *“Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.” the site is located in the east of the NCA.*
- *“Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys,*”
- *“Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.” ...there is evidence of both regular and irregular piecemeal field enclosure patterns in the study area of the site although the predominant character is regular, typically modern enclosures from the national Historic Landscape Characterisation mapping on Defra’s MAGIC site.*
- *“Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads.”* Girton has historically developed along Cambridge road however, the expansion of the settlement to the west, around a network of roads, has changed this linear form.

South Cambridgeshire District Landscape Character

- 2.16 The site lies within within the Fen Edge LCA and Lowland Village Farmlands Landscape Type (LCT).
- 2.17 The SCDC District Design Guide SPD sets out design principles for each LCA. The most relevant for each LCA are as follows:

Fen Edge LCA

- *Ensure any village extensions are located on the high ground of the Fen Islands, avoiding incremental development on the flat, low-lying fen.*
- *Ensure new developments on the edges of villages are integrated by thick hedgerows, copses and shelterbelt planting reflecting the local mixes. Ensure a transition between Fen and Fen Island by retention and creation of small hedgerowed paddocks.*
- *Maintain linear or rectilinear form of the settlements and avoid closes and cul-de-sacs where possible.*
- *Integrate water features, such as ditches dykes and ponds, into new developments as part of open spaces.*

South Cambridgeshire District Council Landscape in New Developments SPD

- 2.18 The SCDC Landscape in New Developments SPD, provides general landscape principles for this NCA which falls within the District. Relevant principles are as follows:
 - *“Planting woodland blocks based on hedgerows and there is scope for the creation of new woodlands: smaller woods to river valleys and larger woods on higher plateau areas, with scope to enhance linkage within traditional woodland areas.”*

- *“Planting woodland belts and corridors, preferably based on existing and traditional hedge lines and field patterns, particularly in very open areas where hedges have been removed.”*
- *“Restoration, conservation of existing hedgerows and planting of new hedgerows.”*
- *“Careful design and planting of village approaches and the expanding edges of existing urban areas and the new developments which are often hard and have little relationship with the landscape.”*

2.19 The site has a partly rural, farmland character however, the disused nature of the land, the energy infrastructure and the immediate context of residential, commercial, community and leisure developments lend a typical settlement edge character to the site and its surroundings within the Green Belt.

Visual Baseline

- 2.20 Visual receptors include, people within residential properties, travelling along roads, using public rights of way, involved with other recreational activities, at their place of work and using commercial and public facilities. These groups are deemed to have different sensitivities to the proposed change of use.
- 2.21 A desk based visual assessment and a site visit were conducted to establish the possible extent of visual influence of the proposed residential development at the site. Principal views, sensitive visual receptors and the approximate visibility of land within the site have been noted.
- 2.22 RPS conducted the site visit on 15th March 2019 in dry, overcast weather conditions with good visibility. The actual visibility of the site is normally greater in winter (when trees and hedgerow have no leaves). On this basis the GLVIA states a preference that the ‘worst case’ winter scenario is used for visual assessment. Figure 1 illustrates photograph viewpoint locations and Figures 2 to 5 include panoramic photographs for each viewpoint.
- 2.23 The nearest residential properties lie immediately south of the site at Fairway and the High Street. Approximately 10 detached two storey houses have rear or side elevations orientated towards the site (See Photos G1 and G2 Figure 2). Upper floor windows within these properties would enable residents to gain views over garden boundaries and vegetation to the site, mainly in winter. In the summer, vegetation within rear gardens and around the site boundary would screen most views.
- 2.24 Buildings at Gretton School lie approximately 20 to 50m to the east of the site. Pupils and staff in first floor rooms would gain views through trees within the grounds and over the boundary hedgerow into the site.
- 2.25 Filtered, near views through boundary vegetation from Oakington Road can be gained as vehicles approach the site from the north (See Photo G3 Figure 3). As the road continues south the boundary hedgerow obscures views into the site (See Photo G4 Figure 3). When travelling north towards the site the roadside hedgerow screens views into the site area. Houses either side of High Street frame views over the site area and the pylon tower to vegetation and glimpses of development beyond (See Photo G5 Figure 4). Occupiers of vehicles and

- pedestrians using the roadside pavement are able to gain a brief view into the site through the field gate in the hedgerow (See Photo G6 Figure 4).
- 2.26 Views south-west from the bridleway beside Beck Brook east of Oakington Road can be gained towards the site and houses on the edge of Girton (See Photo G7 Figure 7). Trees filter views of the site and the line of pylon towers form a prominent element in the view.
- 2.27 Hedgerows and trees would obscure all other views into the site from surrounding roads, golf course or properties.

3 POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

General

- 3.1 Using a combination of objective evidence and professional judgement, the potentially significant effects on the landscape resource and receptors and the effects experienced by people living and travelling through the landscape during the operational phase are outlined below.

Design

- 3.2 The proposal would comprise residential dwellings and potentially a community building located on the eastern part of the site, outside of Flood Zone 3.
- 3.3 The scale, massing and spacing of dwellings would seek to reflect existing neighbouring and nearby residential development.
- 3.4 These proposals would include the following landscape mitigation features;
- Retention of the hedgerow on Oakington Road to maintain the character of the route through the village.
 - Native woodland planting in the northern corner of the site beside the substation to screen views of new houses when travelling south on Oakington Road and link with habitat on Beck Brook.
 - Tree planting behind the hedgerow on Oakington Road to break up any views of elevations of dwellings.
 - Enhancement of the western half of the site for public open space and biodiversity benefits.

Potential Landscape Effects

Effect on SCDC Fen Edge Landscape Character Area

- 3.5 A small cluster or a linear arrangement of new housing and community building set within the eastern part of the site would form an intensification of built development at Girton. Location of development beside Oakington Road could be arranged to reflect the established pattern of residential properties either side of High Street to the south and to some extent, the row of detached residential properties on the western side of the road to the north, providing a stronger physical link between these two parts of the village of Girton. The scheme would respond to the specific site constraints of the Flood Zone 3 land beside Beck Brook and overhead power line and pylon and would take advantage of the existing hedgerows, mature trees and adjacent residential development and nearby school buildings to partly conceal new houses within this part of the village and limit intervisibility with the wider farmland of the Fen Edge. A residential scheme in this location would form a minor extension of the settlement edge and an intensification of built development in this fragmented part of Girton's settlement pattern, changing the balance of built and rural land uses. However, this would not extend

development into the open countryside and would not significantly change the openness of the Green Belt in this location, which currently washes over development within the northern part of Girton.

- 3.6 There would be a small loss of a section of roadside hedgerow and a certain degree of loss of openness within the site following development however, by setting back new houses behind the hedgerow on Oakington Road views of the new development from this road would be limited. The well contained parcel of land is not readily intervisible with the majority of the adjoining landscape or settlement to the north or south and the field pattern would not be significantly changed.
- 3.7 Effects would be largely localised in a settlement edge location which is not designated for its landscape quality. A small number of new residential properties in an area of grassland on the edge of Girton would be unlikely to result in significant harm to the value or character of the Fen Edge landscape.

Night time effects

The site currently contains no lighting however, the neighbouring residential and school sites include street lighting and light sources within buildings which exert some influence over the site area at night. Development within the site would introduce street lighting at the site entrance and along the access road, and light sources within properties which would change the night time character of the site, extending lighting within a partly lit urban edge context into a relatively dark landscape. However, the proposals would be unlikely to result in significant harm to the night time character of the landscape.

Potential Visual Effects

- 3.8 As a result of the placement of new houses on the eastern side of the site, residents at properties on Fairway would experience limited change in view from ground floor windows and rear gardens. Oblique views from first floor windows would include new houses, partly visible through intervening vegetation, as an extension to residential development on High Street. Views from upper floor windows of the residential property on High Street, immediately to the south of the site, would include new houses within a grass field, as the focus of the view. Due to the scale and nature of the change and the proximity of the viewer, this may result in significant levels of visual effect.
- 3.9 Filtered and fragmented views through trees gained by staff and pupils at Gretton School would include glimpses of some new houses. These would form an extension of existing properties at High Street and would not be uncharacteristic in this context.
- 3.10 Occupiers of vehicles and pedestrians using the roadside pavement of Oakington Road would gain heavily filtered views of new houses in winter only, when travelling south in Girton. When passing the site, travelling north or south, views over the hedgerow of rooftops of new houses may be possible. When travelling north out of the main settlement area of Girton, houses either side of High Street would frame views of the new houses, visible above the roadside hedgerow and in front of the pylon tower.
- 3.11 Mid-distance views south-west from the bridleway beside Beck Brook would include the tops of new houses, visible above the boundary hedgerow and filtered, in places, through existing

mature trees. The new houses would be visible in the context of existing houses in Girton and the pylon tower, which would continue to form the most prominent element in the view.

4 CONCLUSION

Summary of Potential Landscape and Visual Effects

- 4.1 A small residential development, potentially including a community building, within the eastern part of the site would reflect the pattern and scale of existing housing located to the south and north within Girton. The Flood Zone 3 land to the west would be retained as open and enhanced through landscape and ecological proposals as open space. There would be no significant harm to the Fen Edge landscape character area and development would not significantly change the openness of the Green Belt within this part of the village.
- 4.2 Occupiers of one residential property on High Street immediately south of the site may experience significant effects on views following development at the site, due to the sensitivity of the receptor, their proximity and the open nature of views. Views experienced by other residents, staff and pupils at Gretton School, walkers using rights of way and pavements and occupiers of vehicles on Oakington Road are unlikely to result in significant effects due to screening by hedgerows, trees and existing development. The level of harm to the overall visual amenity of receptors at Girton would not be significant.

5 REFERENCES

Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition*.

Web based resources:

National Character Area Profiles:

NCA 87; <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6417815967891456>

NCA 88; <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5091147672190976>

East of England Landscape Typology - <http://landscape-east.org.uk/east-england-landscape-typology>

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Local Plan and saved policies:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/the-adopted-development-plan/south-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2018/>

Including the following relevant SCDC SPDs

- Development Affecting Conservation Areas (adopted January 2009)
- District Design Guide: High Quality and Sustainable Development in South Cambridgeshire (adopted March 2010)
- Landscape in New Developments SPD (adopted March 2010).

DEFRA's MAGIC Interactive Map

<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

All accessed March 2019



FIGURES



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Legend
 Site Location
 View Point locations

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



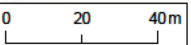
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Client **Abbey Properties Cambridgeshire Ltd**
 Project **Call for Sites Response, South Cambridgeshire: Girton Golf Club Land**
 Title **Viewpoint Location Plan**

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1		-

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Viewpoint: G1



Viewpoint: G2

3290-0008-02



Date of photographs: 15/03/2019
Lens type: 50mm

Call for Sites Response, South Cambridgeshire: Girton Golf Club Land
Figure: 2



Viewpoint: G3



Viewpoint: G4

3290-0008-02



Date of photographs: 15/03/2019
Lens type: 50mm

Call for Sites Response, South Cambridgeshire: Girton Golf Club Land
Figure: 3



Viewpoint: G5



Viewpoint: G6

3290-0008-02



Viewpoint: G7