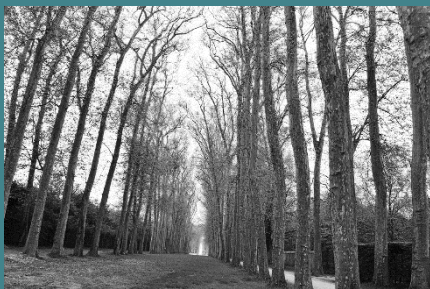


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PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Landscape and Visual Matters

Gary Holliday BA (Hons), M Phil, FLI

APPEAL REF: APP/C1760/W/24/3354052
LPA REF: 24/00174/OUTS

Client

Gladman Developments Ltd

Project

Land at Halterworth Lane, Romsey

Date

24 February 2025

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Michael Gary Holliday. I have a BA (Hons) degree and a Master of Philosophy degree (MPhil) in Landscape Design from Newcastle University. I am a Fellow of the Landscape Institute and a Director in FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. I have been a partner/director of the practice for over 24 years and have over 36 years' experience of landscape and development projects from initial conceptual design through to final completion and long-term aftercare. I am a Professional Practice Assessor and a member of the Membership Admission Panel on behalf of the Landscape Institute. I am also a registered Assessor with Building with Nature (BwN) which is an initiative developed by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to raise the standard of multifunctional Green Infrastructure.
- 1.2 FPCR have been involved with the appeal site since December 2020 when asked by Gladman Developments Ltd to advise on landscape matters in relation to the application. FPCR produced the LVA accompanying the application and the landscape proposals.
- 1.3 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal reference is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Planning Application

- 2.1 The appeal scheme has been developed in response to the constraints and opportunities presented by the site. These include its landscape and settlement context.
- 2.2 The application was submitted by Gladman Developments to Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) and validated on the on the 24 January 2024.
- 2.3 The application was refused by TVBC on the 23rd April 2024 under delegated powers. As part of the decision notice there were 14 reasons for refusal (RfR).
- 2.4 Since the time of the refusal, the Council have confirmed in their Supplementary Statement of Case, February 2025 that the appeal should now be allowed, subject to conditions and a Section 106 agreement.
- 2.5 In light of the updated position of the council, the Inspector issued a Pre Inquiry Note (2) which suggested a format for the running of the Inquiry. This included a Round Table session covering the matter of "*Character and Appearance and effect on strategic gap*".
- 2.6 This proof of evidence has been prepared to assist in discussion at the round table session covering this matter.

3.0 THE PROPOSED SITE – LOCAL CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

The site and context

- 3.1 The Site is located to the east of Halterworth Lane to the east of Romsey. The Site comprises an area of 12.8ha and consists primarily of two arable fields along with two stable structures within the Site. The irregularly shaped fields are delineated by existing trees and hedgerows, the hedgerows are gappy in places along the Site boundaries. The PRoW footpath: 198/15/1 is located on an east to west axis, linking Highwood Lane to the east, through the Site towards Halterworth Lane to the west.
- 3.2 To the east of the Site the area comprises larger arable fields, which also includes of a series of overhead power lines and transmission towers on a north to south axis through the adjacent field network. Further to the east Highwood Lane is bordered by mature hedgerow and tree cover along large lengths of the route, while there are sections of Highwood Lane that have a more open aspect.
- 3.3 There are a number of two storey, detached and semi detached residential properties located along Highwood Lane to the east, these properties back and front towards the Site.
- 3.4 Halterworth Primary School and Chatterbox Community Pre-School are located adjacent to the Site to the South, with the buildings comprising a mix of single and two storey buildings. To the south east, the detached bungalows located off Elmtree Gardens back on to the Site.
- 3.5 The housing adjacent to the Site includes the properties that front onto Halterworth Lane and back on to the Site to the north west, these properties are a mix of two storey detached and semi-detached properties. These properties are set within gardens, with mature trees and hedgerows along the boundary of the Site, a number of properties have an open aspect across the Site. Housing located adjacent to the Site on Halterworth Lane is predominantly two storeys in height and most are detached properties.

The Wider Landscape Context

National Character Area

- 3.6 The site lies within National Character (NCA 128) 'South Hampshire Lowlands'. This NCA covers an extensive area. The key characteristics for this National Character Area are set out in the LVA at CD 1.7 from paragraph 4.1.

The Hampshire Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2010)

- 3.7 The Hampshire Integrated Landscape Character Assessment characterises the landscapes of the county into 62 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The Site lies within 'LCA 2D: Romsey to Eastleigh Wooded Lowland Mosaic'. The description of LCA 2D is set out in the LVA CD 1.7 from paragraph 4.4.

Test Valley Landscape Character Assessment (2018)

- 3.8 A Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared for Test Valley Borough Council. The assessment divides the landscape of the district into thirteen Landscape Character Types, of which the Site lies within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 3: Mixed Farmland and Woodland – Medium Scale. The assessment identifies forty Landscape Character Areas (LCA's), with the Site located within 3A Baddesley Mixed Farm and Woodland. The key characteristics of the 3A Baddesley Mixed Farm and Woodland LCA are set out in full at paragraph 4.7 of the LVA CD 1.7. The characteristics most relevant to the appeal site include,
- *Predominantly rural character with mixed farmland.*
 - *Trees, woodland and hedges create a sense of enclosure and intimacy and provide strong containment to the settlement edge of Romsey and North Baddesley limiting views.*
- 3.9 The LCA includes the following description on 'Key Detractors';
- *'Some urbanising and intrusive elements including pylons in the south-east of the area where a number cross open fields in close proximity; occasional oversized gateways to properties/businesses; large scale commercial buildings to the north-east of North Baddesley; and solar developments north east of Abbey Park Industrial Estate and south of Lee Drove*
 - *Poor sense of seclusion or tranquillity close to busy roads and built-up areas.*
 - *In places lost or degraded hedgerows have resulted in large open areas.*
 - *Limited number of public rights of way restricting recreational opportunities and enjoyment of the countryside.'*
- 3.10 The LCA includes the following description on 'Local Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues'
- *'Pressure for additional development and the potential erosion of the surrounding historic landscape and remaining wetlands arising from further development extending from the main settlements.*
 - *Potential merging of North Baddesley and Romsey and loss of separate identity of settlements.'*

Designations

- 3.11 The site and its immediate surrounds are not subject to any national or local statutory or non-statutory landscape designations such as a National Park or Special Landscape Character Area.
- 3.12 The Site is located with the 'Romsey – North Baddesley, Local Gap'. Policy E3 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan. North Baddesley is located approximately 0.9km to the south east of the Site.

Topography

- 3.13 Within the Site the topography is generally between 37m to 39.5m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) across the Site. Along the northern boundary of the Site the topography changes from approximately 37m AOD adjacent to the rear of the properties that back onto the Site along Halterworth Lane rising to approximately 39.5m AOD to the north eastern corner of the Site. The length of the eastern boundary of the Site is located between 39-39.5m AOD, making it the

highest point within the Site. To the rear of the properties located off Elmtree Gardens the contours are between 38.5m to 39m AOD, with the 38.5m contour continuing along the boundary of Halterworth Primary School before gradually descending to 38m AOD located at the boundary of the School with Halterworth Lane to the west.

Landscape value

- 3.14 The LVA CD 1.7 contains an appraisal of landscape value from paragraph 4.27. This examined the role of the site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in LI Technical Guidance Note 02-21, Assessing Landscape Value outside of National Designations. The LVA concluded that the site and its immediate context was of "Medium" landscape value.
- 3.15 I do not consider the site to be part of a "Valued Landscape" as paragraph 187a of the NPPF and this has not been suggested by the council.

Visual Baseline

- 3.16 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the site in the LVA. This explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints were selected which support the analysis.
- 3.17 Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point, or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users.
- 3.18 As the Inspector will visit the site, there is no need in this proof to repeat the descriptions of the relevant viewpoints, which are set out in the LVA CD 1.7.

4.0 THE APPEAL SCHEME

- 4.1 The FPCR team worked with the wider design team to develop sensitive proposals and an appropriate landscape scheme.

Landscape Design and Green Infrastructure (GI) proposals

- 4.2 The landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are detailed in the Design and Access Statement CD 1.6 accompanying the planning application. In summary these proposals include:
- The provision of 4.45 hectares of land dedicated to landscape, GI, public open space, play and habitat related proposals – representing approximately 34%, a generous proportion of the total Site area;
 - The retention of the majority of the Site's existing hedgerows, trees and tree groups with removal limited to a number of sections of hedgerow to provide access off Halterworth Lane to the west and short sections of hedgerow within the centre of the Site to facilitate access.
 - Existing planting will be complemented by new planting along the northern and eastern boundary to create a green edge to the adjacent landscape.
 - Existing planting will be complemented by new planting along the southern and western boundary to create a landscape buffer to the adjacent properties.

- Tree-lined streets and on plot landscaping will provide attractive routes through the built development, helping to further integrate the built development into its surroundings.
- The creation of a new SuDS basins through the open space of the Site will provide sustainable drainage and habitat creation.
- Provision of a series of informal public open spaces throughout the Site.
- New habitats across the open space will incorporate a wildlife pond, new flower rich grassland, and new reptile habitats.
- The PRoW 198/15/1 will be retained and enhanced – it will be retained in a landscaped green corridor through the Site.

Landscape Management

- 4.3 All of the landscape areas and public open space features will be managed and maintained. This would be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan (LMP), to ensure the successful establishment and continued thriving of the landscape proposals.

5.0 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

- 5.1 The LVA contains an analysis of the landscape effects of the appeal scheme. The effects are summarised below.

National level- NCA 128 'South Hampshire Lowlands'

- 5.2 The Site lies within National Character area NCA 128 '*South Hampshire Lowlands*'. The site occupies a very small area of this large NCA. Landscape effects are assessed as Negligible at both completion and at year 15, given the overall scale of this receptor, and the fact that extensive areas of this landscape would not be affected.

The Hampshire Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2010)

- 5.3 At a county level the Site lies within the 'LCA 2D: Romsey to Eastleigh Wooded Lowland Mosaic'. The proposed development is of a relatively modest scale and nature in the context of the broader LCA. The new development would be located adjacent to the existing settlement of Romsey to the south and west with arable fields and Highwood Lane located adjacent to the Site to the north and east. Overall the effects are considered to be negligible on completion and at year 15.

Borough Character Area - Test Valley Landscape Character Assessment (2018)

- 5.4 The Site is located entirely within the LCA 3A Baddesley Mixed Farm and Woodland, within the Test Valley Landscape Character Assessment.
- 5.5 The proposed development is of a relatively modest scale and nature in the context of the broader LCA. The development is located adjacent to the existing settlement edge of Romsey, while enclosed from the wider landscape by the existing GI context.
- 5.6 The landscape effects on the LCA at completion and at year 15 are considered to be minor adverse.

Site and Immediate Context

- 5.7 The primary change would arise as a direct result of the replacement of fields with residential development and associated infrastructure. Whilst built development would inevitably alter the physical fabric and character of the Site, the proposals will retain and enhance existing landscape features where feasible and introduce new GI across the Site and along the Site boundaries.
- 5.8 The proposed development is located in close proximity to the existing properties located off Elmtree Gardens and the Halterworth Primary School adjacent to the south and properties located off Halterworth Lane to the west.
- 5.9 The proposed housing development will be set back within the Site from the northern and eastern Site boundaries allowing for areas of new GI to establish and integrate with the existing GI. The proposed housing development will also be set back from the existing properties that back onto the Site to the south and west with new areas of GI located along the boundaries of existing dwellings providing a buffer to the Site.
- 5.10 The PRoW 198/15/1 located through the Site on an east to west axis will be incorporated into the Site along its existing alignment and improved, with existing trees retained along the PRoW route. Areas of open space will be located on either side of the PRoW corridor with the proposed housing set back from the PRoW. Links across the wider Site from the PRoW will be possible along connecting footpaths located along green corridors and tree lined streets through the Site. A new footpath connection into the Site is proposed from the south western boundary of the Site adjacent to Halterworth Lane, this footpath will provide connections through the open space along a series of green corridors before linking to the PRoW 198/15/1 to the north.
- 5.11 The existing and proposed GI located through the Site will form a series of green corridors, which will break up the built form of the proposed development, with existing hedgerows through the Site and along the boundary being reinforced with new native planting. The proposed GI will include a series of open spaces across the Site, while new hedgerows, trees and informal planting within areas of POS will serve to enhance biodiversity and habitat value across the Site. Proposed attenuation basins within the areas of open space of the Site will be enhanced through the implementation of marginal planting and management of the proposed attenuation basin will improve the overall biodiversity within the Site.
- 5.12 The proposals would not erode the wider landscape setting, with the proposed development in keeping with the scale of the adjacent built form to the south and west, while the existing GI located across the Site will be retained. The Site is already separated from the wider landscape context by the existing GI through and surrounding the Site and the proposals will be successfully assimilated into the surrounding context. Overall, the proposals have responded to the constraints of the Site including topography, views and existing landscape features and retains and enhances the vast majority of existing GI across the Site where feasible.
- 5.13 The overall landscape effects upon the Site and the immediate landscape arising from the proposals are assessed as moderate adverse at completion and moderate/minor adverse at year 15.

6.0 VISUAL EFFECTS

- 6.1 The Visual Envelope (VE) (Figure 6) CD 1.7 of the proposed development identifies the surrounding land from within which views towards any part of the proposed development are likely to be possible. The VE is not however, an indicator of the effect of the proposed development on the view but simply, its visible extent in the surrounding landscape.
- 6.2 There could be some very limited locations (beyond the extent of the VE shown) that afford a potential distant or very limited view to a part of the development. Equally, there will be areas within the VE that would not experience any views to the development. The visual receptor references described below are shown on Figure 6 of the LVA, CD 1.7.

Residential Properties and Settlement

Highwood Lane (Receptor A)

- 6.3 Residents of properties located off Highwood Lane are located to the north, north east and east of the Site. Halterworth Farm is located to the north of Highwood Lane, while circa 4 dwellings are located to the south of Highwood Lane. Approximately seven properties are located along Highwood Lane to the east. For the residents of Halterworth Farm, foreground views to the south will remain unchanged with the buildings set back from the road beyond a private driveway, gardens and boundary hedgerows. This combined with the existing hedgerow along Highwood Lane will restrict views south towards the Site
- 6.4 For the properties located to the south of Highwood Lane the proposed development will be located approximately 115m to 250m to the south and south west of the properties located beyond an area of existing arable fields and existing hedgerow boundaries. For the properties located along Highwood Lane to the east, the proposed development will be located approximately 240m to the west at its closest point. Existing views across arable fields in the foreground to the west will be retained, with some views towards the proposed residential development with associated GI located beyond. Where views towards the proposed development will be possible, views towards the Site will be set in the context of existing partial to glimpsed views of existing rooflines and rear facades of properties located along Halterworth Lane within Romsey.
- 6.5 The overall visual effect for these residential receptors has been assessed as moderate / minor adverse at completion and moderate / minor adverse at year 15.

Botley Road (Receptor B)

- 6.6 Residents of properties located off Botley Road are located to the south of the Site. For the majority of residential properties located to the south of Halterworth Primary School views towards the Site will not be possible, with the Primary School already being the prominent feature in the view. Where views towards the proposed development will be possible, views will be from rear upper floors, while glimpsed and oblique towards the Site for the proposed Primary School extension land.
- 6.7 At completion views from these residential properties in close proximity to the Site will be to glimpsed views of the existing vegetation located along the primary school boundary with the proposed primary school extension land located beyond.
- 6.8 The overall visual effect for these residents would be negligible at completion and at year 15.

Elmtree Gardens (Receptor C)

- 6.9 Elmtree Gardens is located adjacent to the south of the Site. Properties include approximately eleven detached bungalows that back onto an area of land adjacent to the boundary of Halterworth Primary School.
- 6.10 Where views towards the proposed development will be possible, views will be from rear ground floors and gardens, towards the area of the Site for the proposed Primary School extension land.
- 6.11 At completion views from these residential properties in close proximity to the Site will change from views of arable fields to close range views of proposed hedgerow planting located along the Site boundary with the proposed primary school extension land beyond. As the proposed GI located along the Site boundary matures, this will provide a level of screening and filter views of the primary school extension within the Site.
- 6.12 The overall visual effect for these residents has been assessed as major / moderate adverse at completion and moderate adverse at year 15, as a worst case scenario, but would depend on the nature of use of the school extension land as it could well be used for displaced outdoor sports/recreation.

Halterworth Lane (Receptor D)

- 6.13 Halterworth Lane is located adjacent to the Site to the west. Views are possible from the two-storey semi-detached and detached properties front towards and back onto the site.
- 6.14 For the majority of properties that front onto Halterworth Lane foreground views of the existing adjacent road and hedgerow and tree boundary to the east will not alter significantly.
- 6.15 Existing views towards the Halterworth Lane boundary hedgerow will remain unchanged with the treed hedgerow boundary along Halterworth Lane retained, except for short sections where Site access is proposed into the Site at two locations.
- 6.16 For the residential properties that back on to the Site views will be from rear upper, ground floors and gardens.
- 6.17 At completion views from these properties in close proximity to the Site will be to the proposed open space and housing located beyond. As the proposed GI located along the Site boundary in the form of boundary native hedgerow and tree planting matures, this will provide a level of screening and filter views of the proposed development within the Site.
- 6.18 The overall visual effect for these receptors has been assessed as moderate adverse at completion and moderate adverse at year 15.

Jenner Way and Feltham Close (Receptor E)

- 6.19 These properties are located approximately 120m to the north west of the Site, and there are potentially glimpses towards the site, but overall the visual effects would be negligible at completion and at year 15.

Public Rights of Way (PROW) and Other Footpaths etcPRoW - Footpath - 198/15/1 (Receptor F)

- 6.20 The PRoW 198/15/1 is located on an east to west axis, linking Highwood Lane to the east, through the Site towards Halterworth Lane to the west. Views from this PRoW 198/15/1 will vary along the route.
- 6.21 Within the Site the PRoW is comprised of a footpath which is bordered by timber post and rail fencing to the north and an existing line of hedgerow and trees along the route to the south.
- 6.22 Where the 198/15/1 passes through the Site existing views across open arable fields will be replaced with views of the proposed residential development and green space. The PRoW located through the Site will be incorporated and enhanced on its existing alignment passing east to west, through an area of proposed open space with the proposed housing set back from the PRoW.
- 6.23 On the approach to the Site from the west along the PRoW views towards the proposed development will constitute a recognisable change in the view. Existing views of the rear elevations of properties located off Halterworth Lane will be replaced with views towards the proposed GI located along the Site boundary with the proposed development located beyond.
- 6.24 Visual effects for users of the PRoW are assessed as major / moderate adverse at completion and moderate adverse at year 15. An attractive, yet different context to the path can be provided through the site.

Roads & Transport UsersBotley Road and Elmtree Gardens (Receptor G)

- 6.25 For users of Botley Road views will be predominately focussed along the road as it passes through the housing with few if any views towards the Site.
- 6.26 Visual effects for users of the vehicular route are assessed as negligible /none at completion and at year 15.

Halterworth Lane (Receptor H)

- 6.27 Views towards the Site are possible from this road adjacent to the Site to the west. For users of Halterworth Lane views will be predominantly focused on the vehicular route, except for two short sections of the route located adjacent to the proposed Site access.
- 6.28 Views towards the proposed housing within the Site would be limited.
- 6.29 Visual effects for users of the road will be predominantly confined to sections of Halterworth Lane located adjacent to the proposed Site access and are assessed as moderate / minor adverse at completion and minor adverse at year 15.

Highwood Lane and Green Lane (Receptors I and J)

- 6.30 Views from the road users along Highwood Lane and Green Lane will be distant, glimpsed and confined to a short sections of road where there are breaks in the tree and hedgerow cover.
- 6.31 Overall visual effects for users of the roads are assessed as negligible at completion and at year 15.

Halterworth Primary School (Receptor K)

- 6.32 The Halterworth Primary School is located adjacent to the Site to the south.
- 6.33 Views from the single and two storey buildings of Halterworth Primary School largely front onto Halterworth Lane and side onto the Site.
- 6.34 Partial views will be possible beyond the tree and hedgerow planting towards areas of open space which will include the SuDS basin and the housing set back from the Site boundary.
- 6.35 Visual effects for these receptors are assessed as major / moderate adverse at completion and moderate adverse at year 15 as the proposed planting matures.

Stroud King Edward VI Preparatory School (Receptor L)

- 6.36 The Stroud King Edward VI Preparatory School is located at the junction of Highwood Lane and Green Lane to the north east.
- 6.37 As the proposed GI matures, distant views will be focussed on the proposed hedgerow and tree planting located along the Site boundary with the proposed residential development, with associated landscaping and access roads located beyond.
- 6.38 Visual effects for the school users are assessed as negligible at completion and at year 15.

7.0 LOCAL GAP

- 7.1 The site forms a part of a larger designated Romsey – North Baddesley Local Gap. Sites designated as “Local Gap” are covered by Policy E3 of the Test Valley Borough Council, Local Plan 2011. Policy E3 states that ‘Development within Local Gaps will be permitted provided that:
- a) it would not diminish the physical separation and/or visual separation; and
 - b) it would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.
- 7.2 Compliance with this policy is a matter of judgment and I consider that the proposals would not compromise or unduly diminish the purpose of the gap or its integrity.

Test Valley Borough Council: Local Gaps Assessment - Stephenson Halliday December 2023 CD 7.3.

- 7.3 Stephenson Halliday was commissioned in 2022 by Test Valley to undertake a Landscape and Local Gaps Assessment, to inform the development of the evidence base for the emerging Test Valley Borough Local Plan.
- 7.4 The purpose of the assessment was to study the efficacy and the effectiveness of the existing Local Gaps designated in the extant and emerging Local Plan, together with recommendations for Test Valley Borough Council's (TVBC's) consideration as to how the Local Gaps should be addressed in the emerging Local Plan.
- 7.5 The study includes a detailed methodology and assessment criteria.
- 7.6 A detailed assessment was completed for the Romsey – North Baddesley Local Gap. This is found from page 52 of CD 7.3.
- 7.7 For ease of reference an extract from the study showing the “Gap” is reproduced below,



- 7.8 Land use is described in the study as “varied within this Local Gap, comprising of mixed agriculture, turf production and a solar array.”
- 7.9 The heading “*Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements*” notes *The mature vegetation to settlement edges (with the exception of parts of Halterworth Lane, where the settlement edge character is more open) contributes to the sense of separation, as does the layered landscape created by treed hedgerows and small blocks of woodland within the gap.*
- 7.10 The evaluation section of the study notes under the heading “*Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?*”
At present the strategic value of this is limited, due to the relative absence of green access links. Many structural landscape features within the gap, such as hedgerows, shaws and occasional woodland blocks provide opportunities for green infrastructure connectivity, and could, with enhancement, have potential for strategic value.
- 7.11 Under the heading “*To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?*” the study states,
The strategic importance of the Local Gap has been eroded in the south by cumulative developments both adjacent to the gap (light industrial development to the immediate south west) and within it (the solar array which is adjacent to the light industrial development).
- 7.12 A further criteria was “*Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?*”
- 7.13 The study notes
This expansive area of predominantly open land is relatively prominent in the wider landscape albeit perceptibly influenced by urbanising features due to weak settlement edge integration and the presence of pylons and the solar array.
- 7.14 And “*How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?*” stating
Whilst the gap’s scale and openness are important in prevent coalescence, its contribution to separate settlement identity has been weakened in places due to the erosion created by the developments within it.
- 7.15 In the concluding section the study notes “*Potential defensible boundary features*” and states
These include tree lined field boundary hedgerows, the tree lined Highwood Lane and A27 and tree and garden boundary vegetation lined settlement edges
- 7.16 The recommendations for the Gap, repeated in full below are,
Vegetation structure within the existing gap contributes in part to the sense of separation between Romsey and North Baddesley, particularly noting woodland and treed settlement edges in the south and east. Past settlement expansion and exposed settlement edges has weakened the function of the Local Gap in places. Consideration could be given to amending the Local Gap boundary in the west of this gap, where the existing settlement edge has eroded the rural character. Highwood Lane creates a natural boundary within the gap, by virtue of its mature treed/wooded character. Amending this part of the Local Gap would not undermine the

strategic intent or purpose underpinning it, as the inter-layered field boundary hedgerow vegetation at and beyond Highwood Lane helps reinforce the perceptual qualities of the gap.

(my emboldening)

- 7.17 The authors of the assessment consider that the existing settlement edge has eroded rural character, and that Highwood Lane creates a natural boundary. Removal of the parcel of land containing the appeal site would not undermine the purposes underpinning it, and vegetation would help reinforce the perceptual qualities of the gap. The appeal scheme would therefore not undermine the purpose of the gap and the green infrastructure shown within the appeal proposals could contribute to positively reinforcing the perceptual qualities of the gap.

8.0 POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework December 2024

- 8.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's commitment to delivering sustainable development. A holistic approach is encouraged, balancing benefits with impacts across all aspects of the development process. The NPPF more widely is dealt with in the Proof of Jason Tait, so I only draw attention to the specific section on landscape.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment.

- 8.2 Paragraph 187a identifies how the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by (amongst others), protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status, or identified quality in the development plan).
- 8.3 Part (b) of Paragraph 187b states that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised.
- 8.4 The council have not suggested that the site is not part of a "*Valued Landscape*". The scheme takes account of the character of the local area and will protect the majority of the trees and hedges.

Test Valley Planning Policy

Test Valley Borough Council, Local Plan (adopted 2011)

- 8.5 The reasons for refusal cite policies, Policies E2, E3 and COM2 in the reason for refusal relating to character and local gaps.

Policy E2: Protect, Conserve and Enhance the Landscape Character of the Borough

- 8.6 This policy aims to ensure the protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the Borough. It states that development will be permitted if does not have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the immediate area and the landscape character of the area within which it is located and is designed to ensure that the health and future retention of important landscape features. Proposed landscaping and landscape features should enable it to positively integrate into the landscape character of the area.
- 8.7 Development of any green field site will inevitably lead to some adverse landscape and visual effects, but this scheme is carefully located and designed to minimise landscape impact, by retaining the features of value such as mature trees, and by providing a strong landscape

structure. This includes a strong edge treatment to the east, which will also enable a strong distinction between Romsey and North Baddesley.

Policy E3: Local Gaps

- 8.8 This policy notes that Development within Local Gaps will be permitted provided that:
- a) it would not diminish the physical separation and/or visual separation; and*
 - b) it would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.*
- 8.9 The evaluation of the Local Gap explored in section 7 of this proof, and shows that the appeal site is not critical to the underlying function of the gap and will not compromise or unduly diminish the purpose of the gap or its integrity. The appeal scheme with its strong landscape structure, particularly to the east could over time reinforce the distinction between Romsey and North Baddesley.

COM 2 Settlement Hierarchy

- 8.10 This policy is noted in reason for refusal 2 but relates to settlement hierarchy and seems not relevant to landscape here.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Conclusion

- 9.1 The scheme could be developed with limited effects on the character and appearance of the area. The site itself comprises two simple arable fields, wrapped around to the west by the existing settlement, which influences the character of the site itself.
- 9.2 There would be a minor adverse effect on LCA 3A Baddesley Mixed Farm and Woodland, as described within the Test Valley Landscape Character Assessment, due to the scale and nature of the broader LCA, and the development being located adjacent to the existing settlement edge while enclosed from the wider landscape by the existing GI context.
- 9.3 There would inevitably be a greater effect on the site and its immediate context. The primary change would arise as a direct result of the replacement of fields with residential development and associated infrastructure. Whilst built development would alter the physical fabric and character of the Site, the proposals will retain and enhance existing landscape features where feasible and introduce new GI across the Site and along the Site boundaries.
- 9.4 The proposals would not erode the wider landscape setting, with the proposed development in keeping with the scale of the adjacent built form to the south and west, while the existing GI located across the Site will be retained and enhanced. Overall, the proposals have responded to the constraints of the Site including topography, views and existing landscape features and retains and enhances the vast majority of existing GI across the Site.
- 9.5 The overall landscape effects upon the Site and the immediate landscape arising from the proposals are assessed as moderate adverse at completion and moderate/minor adverse at year 15.
- 9.6 In terms of visual effects, these are largely limited to changes to private views from the existing properties around the edge of the site, from the roads adjacent to it, and from footpath 198/15/1, which runs through the site between Halterworth Lane to Highwood Lane. Whilst the context of part of the route would inevitably change, and attractive route could still be maintained.
- 9.7 The site lies within an area designated as Local Gap under Policy E3 of the Test Valley Local Plan. Stephenson Halliday was commissioned in 2022 by Test Valley to undertake a Landscape and Local Gaps Assessment, to inform the development of the evidence base for the emerging Test Valley Borough Local Plan.
- 9.8 The recommendations in the study regarding the Romsey North Baddesley Local Gap were,
“Vegetation structure within the existing gap contributes in part to the sense of separation between Romsey and North Baddesley, particularly noting woodland and treed settlement edges in the south and east. Past settlement expansion and exposed settlement edges has weakened the function of the Local Gap in places. Consideration could be given to amending the Local Gap boundary in the west of this gap, where the existing settlement edge has eroded the rural character. Highwood Lane creates a natural boundary within the gap, by virtue of its mature treed/wooded character. Amending this part of the Local Gap would not undermine the strategic intent or purpose underpinning it, as the inter-layered field boundary hedgerow vegetation at and beyond Highwood Lane helps reinforce the perceptual qualities of the gap.”

- 9.9 The authors of the assessment considered that the existing settlement edge had eroded rural character, and that Highwood Lane creates a natural boundary. Removal of the parcel of land containing the appeal site would not undermine the purposes underpinning it, and vegetation could help reinforce the perceptual qualities of the gap. The appeal scheme would therefore not compromise or unduly diminish the purpose of the gap or its integrity and the green infrastructure shown within the appeal proposals could contribute to positively reinforcing the perceptual qualities of the gap.
- 9.10 Test Valley now consider that the appeal scheme should be granted planning permission and that the landscape harms (even how they have assessed them) do not outweigh the benefits of the development. In my opinion there are no landscape or visual impacts on the local landscape, or undue adverse effects on the purpose and role of the “*Local Gap*” that should weigh significantly against the granting planning permission.

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