



Golf Lane, Whitnash

**LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL TO DETERMINE THE POTENTIAL
OF THE SITE FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

T0293
MAY 2011

Objective: To appraise the landscape issues of the site at Golf Lane, Whitnash, Leamington Spa to determine its potential for residential development

1. Site Visits

- 1.1. Two site visits were made of the site and surrounding landscape. A joint visit to the site was made by Alison Potterton, a Chartered Landscape Architect from One Creative Environments Ltd, with Paul Campbell and Mike Jones of Richborough Estates on 28th April 2011. A further visit to appraise views from footpaths within the surrounding landscape was made by Alison Potterton on 15th May 2011.

The site is approximately 4ha in size. It lies immediately south of Whitnash defined by Fieldgate Lane (off Golf Lane) to the north, Golf Lane (turning to an un-adopted track) to the west, the Birmingham to London railway line to the east and detached dwellings in large gardens to the south.

2. Findings of Initial Site Visit on 28/04/2011

2.1. Visual

There are expansive views out from the elevated southern section of the site to the surrounding countryside north and east. The new extensive red brick residential development on the southern edge of Sydenham is a dominant built form on the horizon with views of the urban area of Leamington Spa beyond. Views of isolated farmsteads set within woodland on localised land rises in a rolling rural landscape are possible and include Hill Farm in Radford Semele. Views west are curtailed by the Golf Club which sits at a higher level than the site and the dense hedgerows and Lombardy poplar trees which line both sides of Golf Lane. There are views of the Golf Clubhouse from the elevated section of the site which would indicate views are possible back into this section of the site from the Clubhouse. There are no views of the adjacent large residential property Hazelmere to the south of the site. There is one narrow view through a gap in the dense hedgerow to the countryside south of the site. There are clear views from houses along Fieldgate Lane which borders the northern boundary of the site. A fragmented hedgerow and trees provides some visual filtering. The residential development north of Fieldgate Lane is clearly in view from the elevated section of the site. However it should be noted that the orientation of the majority of houses is such that views from these properties are oblique and there are limited views from the ground floor – most are first floor views (not accounted for in a LVIA). The dense hedgerow along the eastern boundary which borders the Birmingham to London Rail line is an effective screen to much of the site.

2.2. Vegetation

Dense native hedgerows to the southern, western and eastern boundaries of the site provide strong containment and good visual screening. Native hedgerow species consists of: dense hawthorn, field maple, and blackthorn, with some ash and oak trees. Hedgerow heights are approximately 4-6m. Tree heights range from approx. 7-12m.

2.3. **Planning policy**

The site is identified in the Warwick District Local Plan (2006 - 2011) as an Area of Restraint. Planning Policy DAP2 stipulates the following: *Development will not be permitted within the Areas of Restraint, where it would harm or threaten the generally open nature of the area. It is important to protect the areas of restraint from development proposals that could alter the predominantly open character of these designations. Their value and importance lies in their contribution to the structure and character of the urban area, providing open areas in and around towns and preserving open wedges that separate particular elements of the urban form. The areas of restraint, although not additional areas of Green Belt, also serve to prevent surrounding villages merging into towns preventing urban sprawl.*

Government policy accepts the importance of protecting open space that contributes to the character and attractiveness of the urban areas. This aim is replicated in the Structure Plan which requires policies to protect areas of restraint that have a fundamental role in making urban areas attractive places in which to live.

The Areas of Restraint shown on the Proposals Map provide protection for key areas of open land within and adjacent to towns. In defining Areas of Restraint, consideration has been given to the need to protect sensitive areas to ensure that the character and setting of settlements is safeguarded. The purpose of the Areas of Restraint is to protect this character and appearance. Proposals that introduce built development in a way that harms the open character of these areas (including the cumulative impact of developments) will not be permitted.

2.4. **Conclusion**

It was agreed that assessing views back into the site was imperative. A desk top study was carried out to identify the broad Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) from where views into the site may be possible. The ZVI was identified as extending to the low ridgelines extending from the southern edge of Sydenham over to Radford Semele, Hill Farm and Pounce Hill Farm.

3. **Field Visit on 15/05/2011 to assess views back into the site**

3.1. **Visual**

This involved walking identified Public Rights Of Way within the identified Zone of Visual Influence.

There are no views possible into the site from the PROW leading up to Hill Farm, Radford Semele, the property itself, nor from the PROW down to Pounce Hill Farm. Views along the first section of the PROW and Hill Farm are screened by a natural land rise and the contained nature and orientation of the farm house. The PROW leading to Pounce Hill Farm is enclosed by tall, dense hedgerows 3-5m high either side. Field gate openings into adjacent pasture land west of the PROW allow for open, panoramic views over to the low ridgeline of Whitnash, characterised by development sitting within a mosaic of tree cover. The linear well vegetated embankments along the rail line provide an effective soft vegetated screen along the

base of the low ridgeline. The Golf Clubhouse and car park is clearly visible, sitting on the top of the ridgeline. The site however, lies at a lower level and is effectively screened by intervening vegetation. There is only one view of the site from the PROW closest to and immediately adjacent to the site, where filtered views are possible of the upper section of the site only. This view however is seen within the context of a wide panorama comprising many different landscape and built elements. The site is difficult to locate since it is framed and filtered by trees and sits below the skyline against the dense treed backdrop of Golf Lane/Mollington Hill. There are no views possible from PROW's north of the site. It is possible that there may be a long distant view from Radford Barn which sits on a land rise with views over the pastureland and Whitnash.

3.2. **Background Review - WDC's assessment in 2009 of sites put forward to be considered in the SHLAA.**

An assessment of all sites put forward to be considered in the SHLAA was carried out in 2009. This included a Landscape Assessment of all the sites (ref:146/08- Appendix A. Final -February 2009) which led to the Council's selection of preferred sites in the then emerging Core Strategy. Mike Jones has advised that this document has since been abandoned in favour of work on a new Local Plan which is presently out to consultation and doesn't, as yet, contain site allocations.

The abandoned core strategy proposed the allocation of various sites. It did not propose the release of land at Golf Lane. The conclusions it came to in terms of landscape issues were identified in the Landscape Assessment. These are as follows:

- The site is well contained and it would not have a major impact on the overall landscape setting of Warwick and Leamington Spa
- It identified that the railway corridor to the east of the site has previously been identified as a potential Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC), as has the golf course to the west
- Critically it found against the site on the basis of it representing a gradual creep of urbanisation and development of the land to the east in what it describes as 'a narrow finger of land between the railway and Golf Lane'.

3.3. **Conclusion**

Meeting the requirements for DAP2- Area of Restraint, will be an issue. The design and layout of the development proposals and provision of Open Space to maintain the open character and appearance of the site will be required. This will have an effect on density of development. It is recommended that high quality, low density development is proposed to ensure the open nature of the site is maintained. We would recommend that the public open space requirement for the development be located in the visually sensitive upper area of the site, and this, together with a sensitively designed development layout, which works with the contours and allows for the provision of a treed internal streetscape, would provide significant mitigation of the localised visual impact and soften the effect of built form which would be seen within a mosaic of treed vegetation.



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Other than this issue we feel there are no other landscape and visual constraints which are detrimental to the development of this site for residential use. The site is a well-defined and contained parcel of land directly associated visually to existing residential development adjacent. We do not feel it would lead to an on-going gradual creep of urbanisation southward. When viewed from the wider perspective, the site sits quietly in its setting against a backdrop of higher land and native woodland. In fact it is the Golf Clubhouse which is visually intrusive on the skyline. The existing property Hazelmere, which sits above the site, surrounded by mature trees/hedgerows, acts as a natural halt to development, both visually and strategically.



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Approval Record

Revisions

Ref	Description	By	Date
(-)	First Issue		

Quality control

Prepared by:	Alison Potterton	Associate Director Landscape Architecture	23/05/2011
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