

## **Appendix #**

### **FC Landscape Architect Survey: 17 April 2013**

#### ***General Site Context***

In very broad terms the site sits within a relatively flat and extensive plain (Vale of Evesham) and is encompassed to the south by distant hills on the skyline - west (Bredon), South (Cotswolds) and East (Meon). The site is situated within this plain on a very slight rise in the land that stretches from Sheen Hill in the west and to Thistly Hill in the east where it connects with the edge of the Cotswolds. The low ridge rises from about 60m to 81m max (Baylis's Hill) with the south slope being steeper than to the north where the gradient is very slack. It is this slight elevation that makes the area distinctively different from elsewhere in the plain, as it provides enough elevation for panoramic views over the Vale.

Apart from the low ridge one is mostly aware of close views adjacent to the road, the open character of arable fields adjacent to the roads and distant views of the surrounding hills. Middle distance views tend to be foreshortened by trees, hedges and other landscape elements, trees in gardens and parkland (Norton Hall).

Enclosure patterns are generally geometric and large to medium scale with hedges lacking mature trees due to past clearance and the death of elm hedge trees.

The characteristic of the landscape being partially open is as a consequence of long agricultural history and Dutch elm disease decimating what would have previously appeared through coalescence as a heavily treed landscape. This combination of 'planned' and 'accidental' openness through history is true for large areas of lowland England.

The site falls within two of the Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment areas: Village Claylands and Principal Village Farmlands, though it is difficult to discern between these two landscape character areas on the ground. Both area character descriptions state that woodland is not historically a characteristic but mention tree planting in association with hedges, watercourses and settlements. In the case of Principal Village Farmlands (the smaller of the two areas affected by the proposal) the LCA states that woodland would 'dilute their distinctive character' (Note 1).

There are no statutory designations identifying the area as of 'outstanding natural beauty', nor are there any particular defining historic landscape features (such as ridge and furrow) other than that provided from the difference in landform and the fact that the fields have been 'open' and farmed

for a very long time. I cannot see that this is sufficient to justify the permanent absence of woodland in this case. The current proposal for landscape change is as a consequence of factors in our time that are global, national, local and individual – much the same as factors that have shaped the landscape of England throughout time.

Landscape is not an independent entity; it must also be considered through the lens of how it is experienced by people. In this particular case the landscape is accessed mainly by people travelling by car along the country road north of Church Honeybourne, or by foot, or horseback on the few rights of way, which do not seem to be heavily used. It would be fair to say that save for the odd visitor to Baylis’s Hill and a few local walkers, horse riders and farmer workers the proposals will not have a significant impact. In fact the area of Bushy Hill and Kites Hill is so visually tucked away and inaccessible the proposal will have negligible impact. The fact that few people are affected by the proposal would lead me to the opinion that the landscape change from farmland to woodland is not significant.

The revised plan indicates open space associated with the low ridge/public right of way of Baylis’s Hill (to retain views) and neighbouring residencies; which seems reasonable and proportionate and mitigates against the negative consequences of the proposed woodland creation.

**Significance of Landscape and Visual Impacts**

	<b>Bushy Hill and Kites Hill</b>	<b>Pebworth Fields</b>	<b>Baylis’s Hill</b>
Visual Impact - Long distance into site from distant hills	Negligible	Negligible	Minor
Mitigation	Not needed	Not needed	Not needed
Visual Impact - Middle distance into site from neighbouring communities	Negligible	Minor from Pebworth due to distance	Medium from parts of Church Honeybourne
Mitigation	Not needed	Not needed	Not needed
Visual Impact -Short distance into site from adjacent roads and rights of way	Negligible	Medium impact from adjacent road and public right of way.	Medium potential impact from adjacent road and public rights of way
Mitigation	Not needed	Planting kept back and graded edge against public road	Planting kept back and graded edge against public road
Visual Impact -	Not accessible.	Western portion not	Potential significant

	<b>Bushy Hill and Kites Hill</b>	<b>Pebworth Fields</b>	<b>Baylis's Hill</b>
Views out of the site	Medium – for Bushy Hill Barn.	currently accessible, but medium visual impact from Pebworth Fields House and Right of Way to the East.	impact from public right of way due to loss of distant views and sense of openness.
Mitigation	Planting kept back from local property - agreed with owner.	Planting kept back from local property - agreed with owner.	Open space retained on ridge beside ROW. Significant views identified & retained.
Landscape Impact – Change to overall landscape character	<p>Falls entirely within Village Claylands LCA</p> <p>Major landscape change – very few people impacted.</p> <p>The outcome is likely to be neutral in the long term</p>	<p>Northern section falls within Principal Village Farmlands LCA, which states new woodland would adversely affect distinctive character, - major landscape change but few adversely impacted.</p> <p>Southern section within Village Claylands LCA</p> <p>Moderate change for car drives on public road.</p> <p>The outcome is likely to be neutral in long term.</p>	<p>Falls entirely within Village Claylands LCA</p> <p>Major landscape change</p> <p>Significant landscape change for a few people as arable land on low ridge becomes woodland on low ridge.</p> <p>The outcome is likely to be neutral in long term.</p>
Mitigation	In the big picture proposed woodland links with scattered woodland, shelterbelts and estate tree on ridge to the East (Norton Hall Farm).	Extensive open area retained around Pebworth Fields House that links with the adjacent unplanted farmland to the north	Open space retained in large swathe on ridge top to retain landscape character associated with openness and distant views. Significant views identified and

	<b>Bushy Hill and Kites Hill</b>	<b>Pebworth Fields</b>	<b>Baylis's Hill</b>
			retained.
Further suggestions to consider (see accompanying plan)	Consider additional planting in SW corner to remove the slight visual impact of the proposed planting going perpendicular to the contours. Blend hedge with trees on former railway cutting	The western edge adjacent to the road might be graded in structure to retain a more open character through wider ride along edge for maintenance vehicles and shrub planting to grade the height.	Minor modification to arrangement of planting on the northern edge to retain view to Bredon Hill and Honeybourne village/church.

### ***Landscape Determination***

Whilst the proposed change of arable farmland to broadleaf woodland might be deemed in certain locations to be a significant landscape change I do not believe that it is negatively adverse. At some point the resulting mature broadleaf woodland may well be deemed as positively beneficial, but I suspect it is rather neutral in essence (it is merely a change from one landscape to another).

In my opinion the amended scheme, whilst being recognised in part (Baylis's Hill) to be a significant landscape change that puts it at odds with the Local Authorities Landscape Character Assessment for Village Claylands the mitigation that is proposed in the amended planting plan is a reasonable compromise that retains something of the open landscape character and long distance views from this key landscape feature (the slightly raised land). I also believe that the proposed planting scheme also meets the UKFS Landscape Guidelines.

It is important to note that both Landscape Character Assessment, with its guidance and UKFS Landscape Guidelines are guidance to aid landowners with their land-use planning. I do not see how either can be used or restrict change that is not significantly negatively adverse, which I do not believe is the case with this scheme.

Footnote.

I realise now, having visited the site, that this is an almost impossible request as it is not possible to say that one piece of land whose value is that it is open and has been farmed for a very long period is of a better quality than

somewhere else. If there were evidence of historic artefacts, structure or clearly definable patterns this might have been more realistic.

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