



High Peak Borough Council

Land at Dinting Vale, Dinting, Glossop

Application Ref. HPK/2022/0456

**Review of Landscape & Visual Impact Appraisal produced by
TPM Landscape Architects**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 FPCR have been commissioned by White Peak Planning, on behalf of High Peak Borough Council (HPBC), to review the Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal produced by TPM Landscape Architects and other relevant associated landscape documents submitted to accompany a planning application by Wain Homes, Application Ref. HPK/2022/0456.
- 1.2 This independent review has been undertaken by FPCR a Landscape Institute registered consultancy, that has undertaken and reviewed landscape character assessments, and landscape and visual impact assessments for a wide range of development proposals.
- 1.3 The work has involved a document review and a site visit during December 2022. The review has been undertaken in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 1/20 which provides a structured and consistent way to analyse whether the Appraisal reflects the approach advocated in the industry standard methodology (referred to as GLVIA3) and has led to reasoned and transparent conclusions. The review process is detailed in Section 2 with the findings summarised in Section 3.

2.0 METHODOLOGY AND REVIEW

- 2.1 Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 1/ 20 (10 Jan 2020), sets out a framework for carrying out reviews of LVIA's in a structured and consistent way that reflects the approach to assessment advocated in GLVIA3.
- 2.2 TGN 1/ 20 sets out that there are three main components of a review of a LVIA or LVA leading to a report containing the overall conclusion in respect of the completeness, competency and reliability of the LVIA/ LVA.
 1. Checking the methodology used to undertake the assessment, the criteria selected (including balance between), and the process followed.
 2. Checking the baseline, content and findings of the assessment.
 3. Checking the presentation of the assessment findings.
- 2.3 The TGN sets out a series of questions or headings by which the LVIA is examined. These questions have formed the basis for review as set out in the following sections.

Step 1. Checking methodology, criteria and process

- 2.4 This section of the review checks the methodology, scope and process used in the assessment and how these relate to GLVIA3. This involves reviewing the following:
 - a) ***Does the scope of the assessment meet the requirements set out in the Scoping Opinion and/ or as defined in the LVIA or LVA and if substantively different, are the reasons clearly set out and explained?***
- 2.5 The project is not subject to a screening request or scoping opinion as it is not of a scale or nature to warrant an EIA. The LVA provides the information set out within the methodology which is clearly set out and references GLVIA3.
 - b) ***What consultations have been carried out and have responses been acted upon?***
- 2.6 No landscape consultations appear to have been carried out. For a scheme of this scale, it is good practice to seek agreement with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) of the viewpoints to be used

for the LVA before the assessment is carried out however there is no evidence of this. That said, the LVA contains a range of nearby and more distant viewpoints that seem to provide a reasonable representation of views.

b) Has the scope and methodology of the assessment been formally agreed with the determining authority? If not, why not?

- 2.7 The scope and methodology for the LVA does not appear to have been agreed with the LPA however the project does not constitute EIA development.

c) As part of the methodology, has the terminology been clearly defined, have the criteria to form judgements including thresholds been clearly defined and have any deviations from good practice guidance (such as GLVIA3) been clearly explained?

- 2.8 The methodology for the assessment is set out in section 1 of the LVA and refers to best practice guidance including GLVIA3. It does not refer to the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 02/21 “Assessing landscape value outside national designations”, which provides up-to-date guidance on the factors to consider. Definition tables with judgement criteria and thresholds for landscape and visual susceptibility, quality, value, sensitivity, magnitude of change and overall judgements are set out in the methodology at Appendix 2.

d) Does the assessment demonstrate a clear understanding and provide a separate consideration of landscape and visual effects?

- 2.9 The assessment includes separate considerations of the landscape character (section 6) and the visual resource (section 7), demonstrating an understanding that these elements are separate yet related.

e) Does the assessment demonstrate comprehensive identification of receptors and of all likely effects?

- 2.10 In terms of landscape, the appraisal briefly covers the relevant landscape character areas at both national and county level as well as referencing the HPBC Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document (SPD5, March 2006). It considers landscape susceptibility and sensitivity, value, magnitude of change and overall effects upon national and county landscape character areas and local settlement areas however it does not specifically consider the site itself and its immediate context.
- 2.11 The appraisal identifies visual receptors; residential, public footpath users, and road users, which are represented through eight viewpoints. There is no mention of the potential for views from the adjacent settlement of Gamesley. Whilst there may well be no intervisibility between the village and the site, this should be considered as part of the appraisal given its close proximity.
- 2.12 A simple summary table setting out the various landscape and visual receptors within the categories sensitivity, magnitude of change and overall effects at year of completion (year 1) and year 15. Effects during the construction stage are not covered however. It is good to see this information in tabulated form which demonstrates the thinking behind the identified potential landscape and visual effects in a comprehensive and transparent way.

f) Does the assessment display clarity and transparency in its reasoning, the basis for its findings and conclusions?

- 2.13 As set out above, the inclusion of a table for the landscape and visual effects make the appraisal clearer and more transparent.

Step 2. Check the baseline, content, and findings of the assessment

- 2.14 This stage in the review process considers the description of the baseline, both in narrative as well as in illustrations by plans, photographs and drawings etc. This also includes publicly available aerial photography, and other available resources. A site visit has also been undertaken to check actual findings of the assessment.

- 2.15 This stage of the review includes the following:

a) What is the reviewer's opinion of the scope, content and appropriateness (detail, geographic extent) of both the landscape and the visual baseline studies which form the basis for the assessment of effects (supported by appropriate graphic such as ZTVs etc as appropriate)?

- 2.16 The appraisal briefly covers landscape related local planning policy and local published landscape character assessment, including key characteristics. The Visual Envelope (VE) is considered at Section 7 but it would be helpful if this was clearly identified on Figure 11: View Locations. While the extent of the study area appears reasonable, including the VE on Figure 11 would enable the representative viewpoints to be seen in context with it and offer more transparency.

- 2.17 Although brief, the baseline descriptions are at an appropriate level of detail for an assessment of this nature. A topography plan (Figure 7) is included which is helpful given the varied landform across, and surrounding, the site and plans showing existing vegetation (Figure 8), which provide localised visual barriers to the site, as well as the local public right of way network (Figures 6 and 8) are also included within the LVA.

b) Has the value of landscape and visual resources been appropriately addressed (including but not necessarily limited to) considerations of: local, regional and national designations; rarity, tranquillity, wild-land and valued landscape?

- 2.18 Landscape Value is addressed at National, Regional/ Local and Settlement level but not in accordance with the latest guidance found in TGN 02/21: "Assessing landscape value outside national designations". Whilst this is not prescriptive, it does give a recognised range of factors that are helpful in considering landscape value and ultimately in providing a more robust assessment. If this guidance were followed, the Landscape Value judgements would be more transparent. The site itself and its immediate context are not specifically assessed. Paragraph 2.2 details three 'key aspects' (elements/ characteristics/ character) that are considered to determine the landscape character and value of the site and surroundings however this does not appear to have been followed through in Section 6.0: Landscape Appraisal (Landscape Value, page 26).

c) Have the criteria to inform levels of sensitivity (both landscape and visual) and magnitude of change been clearly and objectively defined, avoiding scales which may distort reported results?

- 2.19 The criteria for susceptibility to change, quality, value, sensitivity and magnitude of change are included at Appendix 2.0 of the appraisal.

d) How well is the cross-over with other topics, such as heritage or ecology, addressed?

- 2.20 Ecology is briefly touched upon at 5.7 and 5.9 in respect of planting and biodiversity guidelines for the Settled Valley Pastures Landscape Character Type, and at Section 8.0: Mitigation, however there is no further cross-over and heritage is not covered.

e) Is there evidence of an iterative assessment-design process?

- 2.21 The proposed development is briefly outlined at 1.4 and while there is no specific mention or evidence of an iterative design process informed by the findings of the landscape and visual appraisal, the Landscape Masterplan included at Section 8.0: Mitigation goes some way to demonstrate that the layout is informed by the existing landscape setting and features.

f) Is it clear how the methodology was applied in the assessment, e.g.: consistent process, use of terms, clarity in reaching judgements and transparency of decision-making?

- 2.22 The potential effects and proposed mitigation measures (and how these reduce the effects) are set out at Sections 6.0 (Landscape Appraisal) and 7.0 (Visual Appraisal) and overall judgements are included in tabulated form which helps to see how these are reached.

g) How appropriate are the viewpoints that have been used?

- 2.23 The viewpoints provide a reasonable spread of locations – from close to the site to more distant.

h) How appropriate is the proposed mitigation, both measures incorporated into the scheme design and those identified to mitigate further the effects of the scheme, and mechanisms for delivering the mitigation?

- 2.24 The proposed mitigation is clearly described within the appraisal along with the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application. The site layout appears to show the boundary vegetation retained as far as is practicable with new planting along the western edge of the site adjacent to Adderley Place, Avening and Woodside View. Existing retained and new tree planting is proposed along the northern edge of the new housing, within the open space, as well as along the public right of way crossing the site. This, together with the internal tree planting throughout the layout, will help 'break-up' the roofscape in the wider, more elevated, views. A predominantly 'green' pedestrian and cycle route links the public footpath with the residential area to the south along the western edge and an exercise trail is incorporated within the eastern edge, both of which are positive features and welcomed as part of the overall scheme design. A comprehensive management plan should be secured by condition.

i) What is the reviewer's opinion of the consistency and objectivity in application of the criteria and thresholds set out in the methodology for assessing the sensitivity of receptors, the magnitude of changes arising from the project, the degree/nature of effects, and the approach to judging the significance of the effects identified, in the case of EIA projects?

- 2.25 This is not an EIA project. Comments as 2.20 and 2.23 above.

j) What is the opinion on the volume, relevance and completeness of the information provided about the development or project including, where relevant, detail about various development stages such as construction, operation, decommissioning, restoration, etc.?

2.26 The information provided is brief yet relevant with overall judgements of potential level of effects. Different development stages –completion (year 1) and establishment (year 15) are covered within the appraisal, however the construction stage is not.

k) Does the document clearly identify landscape and visual effects which need to be considered in the assessment? and

2.27 The appraisal identifies landscape and visual receptors and the likely effects upon them.

l) Have levels of effect been clearly defined and, in the case of LVIA, have thresholds for significance been clearly defined and have cumulative landscape and visual effects been addressed?

2.28 Levels of effect are clearly defined. As a non-EIA landscape and visual appraisal, thresholds for significance are not required.

Step 3. Critique of the presentation of the findings of the assessment

2.29 This phase of the review involves examining the ‘presentation’ of the assessment including report text, figures/ illustrations, visualisations, and other graphic material forming the LVIA or LVA, and answering the following:

a) Does the LVIA/ LVA display transparency, objectivity and clarity of thinking, appropriate and proportionate communication of all aspects of the assessment of landscape and visual effects, including cumulative effects.

2.30 The approach and methodology set out in the appraisal is generally transparent and objective and proportionate to the type of project being assessed. Weaknesses and omissions have been identified.

b) Have the findings of the assessment been clearly set out and are they readily understood?

2.31 The findings are briefly set out at Sections 6.0 and 7.0 of the appraisal and can be understood.

c) Has there been clear and comprehensive communication of the assessment, in text, tables and illustrations?

2.32 The text is generally easy to read and clear. The assessment tables provide a helpful summary of the thought process and judgments. Illustrations are adequate.

d) Are the graphics and/or visualisations effective in communicating the characteristics of the receiving landscape and visual effects of the proposals at agreed representative viewpoints?

2.33 It is helpful that the viewpoints indicate the approximate site extents where applicable and include specific details relating to each viewpoint such as description of view, change to the view and any mitigation. No visualisations (i.e. wireframes) are included yet may have been appropriate from the distant views (viewpoints 5/ 6/ 7).

e) Are the graphics and/or visualisations fit for purpose and compliant with other relevant guidance and standards?

2.34 The plans are not to scale, it would be helpful if they were.

g) Is there a clear and concise summation of the effects of the proposals?

2.35 The appraisal includes a simple summary, including tables, of the identified landscape and visual receptors, the likely change to the identified receptors and resulting effects upon them, along with a brief conclusion.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 This section summarises the review and addresses the following points:

1. Confirmation of the brief issued to the reviewer setting out the scope of the review.

3.2 FPCR's brief for the work was to provide an independent review of the appraisal work submitted with the application. The agreed brief included a review of the material, in accordance with Landscape Institute TGN 1/20 "Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA's) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs)".

2. A summary of how the review was undertaken.

3.3 The review involved a site visit and a review of submitted planning documents including the 'Landscape & Visual Impact Appraisal', 'BDC Colour Site Layout' and the 'Design and Access Statement'. The review also included a study of aerial photography and relevant landscape character assessments including HPBC Landscape Character SPD.

3. A summary of findings of the review of the assessment methodology.

3.4 The appraisal includes a brief methodology which references GLVIA3. It does not specifically reference the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 02/21 "Assessing landscape value outside national designations", which provides up-to-date guidance on the factors to consider and would assist in determining the landscape value of the site and its context.

3.5 There are clear definitions of landscape susceptibility, quality, value, sensitivity, magnitude of change and judgement criteria/ thresholds which are comprehensively set out at Appendix 2.0. The methodology also sets out definitions of visual susceptibility, quality and value, magnitude of change, sensitivity and judgement criteria/ thresholds.

4. A summary of findings of the review of the scope of the assessment.

3.6 The scope of the appraisal is relatively high level yet covers the majority of issues normally included or expected in a landscape and visual appraisal for a scheme of the size proposed. It does not cover construction stage landscape or visual effects and does not assess the site itself or its immediate context – this appears to be encompassed within the 'settlement' level assessment. It covers an appropriate geographical extent.

5. A summary of findings of the review of the actual assessment of effects.

- 3.7 The appraisal identifies landscape and visual receptors and assesses the likely effects upon them which seem reasonable. The receptors that have been identified seem appropriate.

6. A summary of findings of the presentation of the assessment.

- 3.8 The appraisal can be followed and generally follows a logical approach. The photo viewpoints provide a reasonable representation of views and assist in making judgments on likely visual effects, which are mostly limited to an area close to the site.

7. A summary statement by the reviewer in respect of appropriateness, quality, comprehensiveness, compliance and conformity with relevant guidance and regulations.

- 3.9 While the LVA is relatively high level, it broadly follows the guidelines and is adequate to be proportionate to the size of scheme proposed.

8. Recommendations for further information to be sought (if necessary).

- 3.10 It is good practice to include a construction stage assessment for each landscape and visual receptor and an assessment of the site itself and immediate context is usual practice – the LVA could have been explicit in that the assessment and resulting judgement relates to the site. That said, this information is not going to alter the overall judgements of the LVA.

9. Overall conclusions on the adequacy of the assessment and whether it is sufficient to support making an informed planning decision.

- 3.11 Overall, the appraisal is relatively high level but is considered to be adequate for and proportionate to the size of scheme proposed and for the purpose of accompanying a planning application. As mentioned at 3.10, for completeness and to be robust, the appraisal could include the outstanding assessments however this is not critical to the decision making process or to form part of the overall consideration of the planning balance.