

**Proposed Residential Development
Patshull Road, Albrighton**

Application 24/02108/OUT

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A review for Shropshire Council

by

ESP Ltd

Creative Industries Centre
Wolverhampton Science Park
WV10 9TG



August 2024

1 Executive summary

- 1.1 This is a review of a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) prepared in July 2024 in support of an outline planning application for a proposed residential development at Patshull Road, Albrighton, Shropshire.
- 1.2 The methodology of the LVIA generally follows national guidance.
- 1.3 The methodology is generally appropriate for the nature of the proposed development and scale of likely effects, although requires minor amendments to take account of '*Stages in the project life cycle*' [GLVIA3].
- 1.4 Some amendments are required to the LVIA and LVIA Figures to ensure that the results are reliable and that they can be relied upon to assess whether the proposals comply with Local Plan policies relating to landscape and visual matters.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 ESP Ltd were commissioned by Shropshire Council in July 2024 to carry out a review of a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA)¹ submitted by the applicant in support of a proposed residential development at Patshull Road, Albrighton, Shropshire.
- 2.2 This review includes recommendations to ensure that, upon revision, the LVIA would be robust and satisfy policies within the Development Plan regarding the landscape and visual amenity.

3 Quality Assessment Review Brief

- 3.1 Shropshire Council required technical support on the landscape and visual implications of the proposed scheme. The intention was not to replicate or undertake an additional LVIA at this stage.
- 3.2 The scope of this review is to advise whether:
- The LVIA has been carried out in an appropriate manner in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)² and supporting technical guidance;
 - The proposed development complies with Council's Local Plan policies on landscape and visual amenity;
 - Regard has been given in the LVIA to the content of the Council's pre-application advice³;
 - The mitigation proposed is appropriate in addressing any predicted adverse impacts; and
 - The findings of the LVIA are reliable and can be supported.

¹ *Land at Patshull Road, Albrighton, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, July 2024 by Pegasus Group*

² *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Routledge 2013*

³ *Pre-application response, Shropshire Council, dated 11th November 2020 for application PREAPP/20/00424 as appended to Planning Statement by Hughes Architects*

4 Methodology

- 4.1 The LVIA submitted by the applicant was reviewed in detail, both the written text and the illustrative material provided in support of the text – maps, plans and viewpoint photographs. Other submitted documents, including the Design & Access Statement, Planning Statement, the proposal drawings, and the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan were reviewed as part of this exercise. A Green Belt Assessment – also produced by Pegasus Group – was also submitted, which is strongly predicted on the findings of the LVIA, notably its assessment of visual effects.
- 4.2 In addition to the assessment of the LVIA for compliance with the best practice set out in GLVIA3, regard has been given in this review to the content of the Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note on Visual representation of development proposals⁴ (TGN 06/19); Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs)⁵; and the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on Assessing landscape value outside national designations 02/21 (TGN 02/21)⁶

⁴ *Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19. The Landscape Institute, 17 September 2019*

⁵ *Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs), Technical Guidance Note 1/20. The Landscape Institute, 10 January 2020*

⁶ *Assessing landscape value outside national designations Technical Guidance Note 02/21. The Landscape Institute, 26 May 2021*

5 Brief Description of the Proposed Development

5.1 This proposal comprises the following:

- 800 no. dwellings;
- A Care Home of up to 80 beds;
- A Secondary School.
- A Local Centre including supermarket, GP Surgery & Pharmacy; and
- Associated access, infrastructure, drainage and landscaping.

5.2 It is noted that the '*key new landscape features proposed*' are:

- A community orchard set within a wildflower meadow near the centre of the site;
- A native woodland belt along the southern boundary of the site;
- Sustainable drainage systems to manage surface water run-off and provide amenity with wildflower meadows.

5.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - methodology

5.4 Appendix 1 sets out a methodology for the assessment of landscape and visual effects which takes account of GLVIA3. This methodology assesses the effects by identifying susceptibility, value, sensitivity, magnitude and overall significance. It also considers whether the effects are likely to be adverse or beneficial.

5.5 TGN 02/21 is referenced at 1.1 in Appendix 1: Detailed Methodology; the LVIA has generally been undertaken with regard to the assessment of landscape value outside national designations.

5.6 The methodology does not take account of '*Stages in the project life cycle*' [GLVIA3] although within the LVIA itself the likely visual impacts are provided for years 1 and 15, but not for the construction stage.

5.7 The methodology generally takes into account TGN 06/19 regarding the visual representation of development proposals. [Note detailed comments regarding lack of details for direction of view]

- 5.8 The LVIA methodology does not detail how cumulative effects would be assessed. However, we note that GLVIA3 suggests that an assessment of cumulative effects would typically be required for an EIA level of assessment.
- 5.9 The LVIA methodology is generally clear, proportionate and compliant with the best practice set out in GLVIA3.

6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - findings

Landscape effects

- 6.1 The study area has not been defined for the landscape assessment. It would appear to be approximately 2km radius from the Site, termed the '2km buffer' as illustrated on Figure 1. Given the nature of the proposed development and the surrounding landscape, this distance would be appropriate.
- 6.2 The site and its context are well described. The Environmental Designations Plan clearly illustrates the location of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and other landscape related designations and features. A Planning Policy section refer to the current NPPF and Local Plan; the key relevant policies are detailed in section 7.
- 6.3 The scaled plans clearly illustrate the relationship of the site to the National Character Areas and Shropshire Landscape Typology Landscape Types.
- 6.4 The LVIA also appropriately makes direct reference the 2018 Shropshire Landscape & Visual Sensitivity Study [LVSS] and confirms that the Site lies within Parcel 'Albrighton C' in the 2018 Study. We note that the LVIA provides the LVSS assessment for this parcel as '*medium*' for both landscape and visual sensitivity.
- 6.5 A range of landscape receptors is identified for assessment of effects:
- Land Cover
 - Topography
 - Trees and Hedges
 - Water Features
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Landscape Character of the site and its immediate context

- Landscape Character of the wider countryside [with reference to the Shropshire Landscape Typology Sandstone Estatelands LCT14]
- 6.6 The effects are defined as adverse or beneficial. The individual tables used to assess the overall significance are clear and well-presented.
- 6.7 The LVIA describes the effects on Land Cover and Topography with reference to both construction and operational stages; however, this is not the case for the remainder of the landscape effects, with just a single assessment.
- 6.8 It is considered that the landscape assessment results are not robust at present, and the assessment should be expanded as follows:
- Assessment of landscape effects during construction and completion [Year 1 and Year 15 to be consistent with visual effects] for the landscape receptors

Visual effects

- 6.9 The study area has not been defined for the visual assessment. It would appear to be the 2km buffer - approximately within 2km radius from the Site, as illustrated on Figure 5. Given the nature of the proposed development and the surrounding landscape, this distance would be appropriate.
- 6.10 The assessment of visual effects within this area was informed by preparation of a digital ZTV (Zone of Theoretical Visibility) and field study. The ZTV is based on a 12.3m Development Height, and *'includes the screening effect from vegetation and buildings, based on the assumptions [woodland and building heights] stated above'* which is helpful.
- 6.11 The site is located on the ZTV plan that gives a good general picture of the overall visibility of the site from its surroundings and has been used to inform the viewpoint selection.
- 6.12 The area from which there are potential views of the site is well described. A number of visual receptors are identified: residents, users of public rights of way, and roads. These are assessed using 20 representative viewpoints from a good range of orientations and distances throughout the study area from within the ZTV.

- 6.13 We have identified an alternative representative viewpoint to viewpoint 6 from residential receptors at 3 Patshull Road [Grid Ref: SJ807034] approximately 150m north of Viewpoint 6, that also lies within the ZTV. This is significantly closer to the proposed residential built form of the development that will lie adjacent to this length of Patshull Road and is from a highly sensitive visual receptor with double ground floor windows that face directly over the site; it is also still representative of views obtainable by road users. We note that the roadside hedgerow is very gappy at this location, with only partial screening provided by small hedgerow trees [less so in winter views]. We note that there will also be easterly views from the rear of the properties over the proposed Secondary School site. This should be used to help reassess the visual impact from the nearest high sensitivity residential receptors with clear views of the proposed development.
- 6.14 Views from the nearest part of the western boundary within the ZTV were also checked. An additional viewpoint on Cross Road adjacent to the residential property 'The Sheiling' [Grid Ref: SJ804034] would help to assess the visual effects of the site from high sensitivity receptors along the western site boundary. It is likely that the western extent of the proposed development - including residential built form and the Local Centre - would be visible from here in winter views; this is evident from the photosheet [Figure 7] for Viewpoint 6 where 'The Sheiling' is annotated and the ground floor windows are visible facing over the site to the southeast.
- 6.15 Generally, we consider that the assessment of receptor sensitivity [detailed in Tables 7 and 8, Appendix 1] is accurate and in line with GLVIA3, with the highest susceptibility assigned to residential receptors and users of PRoW; we agree with the differentiation made by the LVIA to assign '*medium visual susceptibility*' to users on minor roads as compared to the '*low visual susceptibility*' for travellers on major roads. The Magnitude of Change [detailed in Table 10, Appendix 1] is also well defined and in line with GLVIA3. However, we have some concerns that the magnitude of change is not being applied consistently in the assessment of visual effects from some viewpoints, resulting in a potential understatement of overall effect. For example, Viewpoint 1 on the junction with Cross Road and Patshull Road has views across the site to Lea Farm Barns yet is combined with Viewpoint 2 slightly further along Cross Road to give an '*overall magnitude of change would be low*'. We are concerned that the visual effect

from Viewpoint 1 does not correspond to the definition for 'Low' in Table 10; we note that a 'low' magnitude of change assessed for Viewpoint 5 some 190m further away from the site than Viewpoint 1 and with '*intermittent views*' through intervening mature vegetation. The visual effects from this residential visual receptor need to be re-assessed accordingly, and should they give rise to significant adverse visual effects, these will need to be mitigated accordingly.

- 6.16 Whilst the site extents and other information including OS Grid Reference, elevation, distance to site and key elements in the view are identified on the photographs, the direction of view is not, which is required for a Type 1 photograph in accordance with Technical Guidance Note 06/19 7.18. These details need to be provided.
- 6.17 Assessments are made of visual sensitivity and magnitude of change, with reference to the criteria set out in the methodology, and overall degree of effect. The tables used to assess the overall significance are clear and well-presented.
- 6.18 The visual effects are only assessed for the Year 1 and Year 15. There is no assessment of effects during construction. It is likely that the construction phase may give rise to major adverse visual impacts from some receptors.
- 6.19 There is no cumulative visual impact assessment [but refer to our previous comments at 5.8 above].
- 6.20 It is considered that the visual assessment results are not reliable at present, and the assessment should be expanded as follows:
- Include an additional representative viewpoint from the properties at No.3 Patshull Road.
 - Include an additional representative viewpoint from the residential property at 'The Sheiling' on Cross Road adjacent to the western site boundary.
 - Review the assessment of the magnitude of change for key viewpoints.
 - Add the direction of view to each of the viewpoint pages.
 - Revise the assessment to include visual effects at construction stage.

7 Mitigation Measures

7.1 Mitigation measures for landscape and visual effects are detailed in the LVIA at section 3 and illustrated on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan⁷. The landscape strategy has been developed in conjunction with the LVIA, and includes:

- A community orchard set within a wildflower meadow near the centre of the site within the principal area of public open space;
- A native woodland belt along the southern boundary of the site adjacent to Holyhead Road and the new access road and along New House Lane, including land to the east of New House Lane within the client ownership
- Proposed woodland belt to the eastern site boundary on alternate sides of Newhouse Lane and along the new access road to define a new Green Belt boundary and restrict longer range views of new built development from open countryside to the east of the Site
- To reinforce existing planting with a new woodland belt along the site boundary to the east of Lea Hall to reflect the setting of the listed building

7.2 The detail of the above may need to be amended following revisions to the LVIA, including reinforcement of the roadside hedge along the eastern boundary adjacent to No.3 Patshull Road.

7.3 The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan is a generally a well-considered scheme, the details of which may need to be amended following the revisions to the LVIA. We would require further detail to be submitted to expand on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan into a final Landscape Plan, as follows:

The details shall include plant species, sizes, numbers and densities, method of cultivation and planting, means of protection and programme for implementation. Species chosen should reflect the local landscape character. Planting works to the site perimeter should be undertaken within the first available planting season following grant of planning consent to integrate the site more rapidly into its surroundings. All the native woodland and woodland edge planting as defined within the Landscape Strategy could be planted as whips as this is a significant area of tree planting and

⁷ Illustrative Landscape Masterplan Drawing No. P24_0225_EN_009A by Pegasus Group

there is often a higher success rate with smaller stock. This would be balanced by the taller standards and selected standard proposed for the new native tree planting across the site

- 7.4 Provision should be made to ensure that no retained tree (as identified on the drawings accompanying this planning consent) would be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped, without the written approval of the local planning authority. Any tree work approved should be carried out in line with BS 3998:2010 (Recommendations for Tree Works).
- 7.5 The above details in paragraphs 7.4 could be secured through planning condition if preferred.

8 Policy Compliance

- 8.1 We have assessed the contents of the LVIA and the proposed development against Local Plan policy relevant to the scope of this review, as below;

Policy	Compliance
Core Strategy DPD 2006-2026	
<u>CS5 Countryside and Green Belt</u>	
In the open countryside, new development will be strictly controlled in accordance with national planning policies protecting the countryside and Green Belt from inappropriate development. Subject to the further controls over development that apply to the Green Belt, development proposals on appropriate sites which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character will be permitted where they improve the sustainability of rural communities by bringing local economic and community benefits, particularly where they relate to: Small-scale new economic development diversifying the rural economy, including farm diversification schemes; • dwellings to house agricultural, forestry or other essential countryside workers and other affordable housing or accommodation to meet a local need in accordance with national planning policies and Policies CS11 and CS12; With regard to the above two types of development, applicants will be required to demonstrate the need and benefit for the development proposed. Development will be expected to take place primarily in recognisable	<i>The assessment of landscape and visual effects fails to demonstrate that the unacceptable adverse environmental impacts will be adequately mitigated in land designated as Green Belt.</i> The proposals do not comply with policy CS5.

Policy	Compliance
named settlements or be linked to other existing development and business activity. • agricultural/horticultural/forestry/mineral related development, although proposals for large scale new development will be required to demonstrate that there are no unacceptable adverse environmental impacts; • the retention and appropriate expansion of an existing established business, unless relocation to a suitable site within a settlement would be more appropriate; • the conversion or replacement of suitably located buildings for small scale economic development / employment generating use; • sustainable rural tourism and countryside recreation proposals in accordance with Policies CS16 and CS17; • required community uses and infrastructure which cannot be accommodated within settlements; • conversion of rural buildings which take account of and make a positive contribution to the character of the buildings and the countryside. Proposals for conversions will be considered with regard to the principles of PPS7, giving equal priority to the following uses: - small scale economic development/employment generating use, including live-work proposals and tourism uses; - affordable housing to meet local need (including agricultural workers dwellings); - other uses appropriate to a countryside location. Open market residential conversions will only be considered where high standards of sustainability are achieved and, except where the buildings are listed, a financial contribution for the provision of affordable housing to be delivered off site is provided in accordance with Policy CS11. In all cases, development proposals should be consistent with the requirements of Policies CS6 and CS17	
<u>CS6 Sustainable Design & Development</u> To create sustainable places, development will be designed to a high quality using sustainable design principles, to achieve an inclusive and accessible environment which respects and enhances local distinctiveness and which mitigates and adapts to climate change. This will be achieved by.....ensuring that all development; • Protects, restores, conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment and is appropriate in scale, density, pattern and design taking into account the local	<i>The Shropshire Landscape Typology has been used to assess effects on landscape character and the mitigation proposed has the potential to contribute to local distinctiveness.</i> Further detail on landscape strategy is required to comply with Policy CS6

Policy	Compliance
context and character, and those features which contribute to local character, having regard to national and local design guidance, landscape character assessments and ecological strategies where appropriate; Is designed to a high quality, consistent with national good practice standards, including appropriate landscaping and car parking provision and taking account of site characteristics such as land stability and ground contamination;	
<u>CS17 Environmental Networks</u> Development will identify, protect, enhance, expand and connect Shropshire’s environmental assets, to create a multifunctional network of natural and historic resources. This will be achieved by ensuring that all development: - Protects and enhances the diversity, high quality and local character of Shropshire’s natural, built and historic environment, and does not adversely affect the visual, ecological, geological, heritage or recreational values and functions of these assets, their immediate surroundings or their connecting corridors; - Contributes to local distinctiveness, having regard to the quality of Shropshire’s environment, including landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets, such as the Shropshire Hills AONB, the Meres and Mosses and the World Heritage Sites at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal and Ironbridge Gorge; - Does not have a significant adverse impact on Shropshire’s environmental assets and does not create barriers or sever links between dependant sites	<i>The assessment of landscape and visual effects fails to demonstrate that the unacceptable adverse environmental impacts will be adequately mitigated.</i> <i>The proposals do not comply with policy CS17.</i>

Policy
SamDEV Plan 2006-2026

Compliance

MD2 Sustainable Design

Further to Policy CS6, for a development proposal to be considered acceptable it is required to:

1. Respond positively to local design aspirations, wherever possible, both in terms of visual appearance and how a place functions, as set out in Community Led Plans, Town or Village Design Statements, Neighbourhood Plans and Place Plans.
2. Contribute to and respect locally distinctive or valued character and existing amenity value by:
 - i. Responding appropriately to the form and layout of existing development and the way it functions, including mixture of uses, streetscape, building heights and lines, scale, density, plot sizes and local patterns of movement; and
 - ii. Reflecting locally characteristic architectural design and details, such as building materials, form, colour and texture of detailing, taking account of their scale and proportion; and
 - iii. Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic context and character of heritage assets, their significance and setting, in accordance with MD13; and
 - iv. Enhancing, incorporating or recreating natural assets in accordance with MD12.
3. Embrace opportunities for contemporary design solutions, which take reference from and reinforce distinctive local characteristics to create a positive sense of place, but avoid reproducing these characteristics in an incoherent and detrimental style.
5. Consider design of landscaping and open space holistically as part of the whole development to provide safe, useable and well-connected outdoor spaces which respond to and reinforce the character and

The proposals appear to have been prepared with regard to the landscape character of the site and its locality and the landscape mitigation will add to local distinctiveness in the long term. However, this needs to be reviewed once the additional detail is provided on landscape and visual effects.

Further detail on landscape & visual effects is required to comply with Policy MD2

Policy	Compliance
	context within which it is set, in accordance with Policy CS17 and MD12 and MD13

MD12 The Natural Environment

In accordance with Policies CS6, CS17 and through applying the guidance in the Natural Environment SPD, the avoidance of harm to Shropshire's natural assets and their conservation, enhancement and restoration will be achieved by:

2. Ensuring that proposals which are likely to have a significant adverse effect, directly, indirectly or cumulatively, on any of the following:
 - i. the special qualities of the Shropshire Hills AONB;
 - ii. locally designated biodiversity and geological sites;
 - iii. priority species;
 - iv. priority habitats
 - v. important woodlands, trees and hedges;
 - vi. ecological networks
 - vii. geological assets;
 - viii. visual amenity;
 - ix. landscape character and local distinctiveness.

will only be permitted if it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- a) there is no satisfactory alternative means of avoiding such impacts through re-design or by re-locating on an alternative site and;
- b) the social or economic benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm to the asset.

In all cases, a hierarchy of mitigation then compensation measures will be sought.

3. Encouraging development which appropriately conserves, enhances, connects, restores or recreates natural assets, particularly where this improves the extent or value of those assets which are recognised as being in poor condition.
4. Supporting proposals which contribute positively to the special characteristics and

The proposals may have potential to make a positive contribution to the natural environment and not have a significant adverse impact on Shropshire's designated landscape assets.

Further detail on landscape & visual effects and Landscape Strategy is required to assess whether the proposals comply with Policy MD12

Policy

Compliance

local distinctiveness of an area, particularly in the Shropshire Hills AONB, Nature Improvement Areas, Priority Areas for Action or areas and sites where development affects biodiversity or geodiversity interests at a landscape scale, including across administrative boundaries.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 The LVIA methodology is generally clear, proportionate, and compliant with the best practice set out in GLVIA3. However, the methodology does not take adequate account of '*Stages in the project life cycle*' [GLVIA3].

9.2 It is considered that the landscape assessment results are not adequate at present and should be expanded as follows:

- Assessment of construction and completion [Year 1 and Year 15 to be consistent with visual effects] for the landscape receptors

9.3 It is considered that the visual assessment results are not robust at present and should be expanded as follows:

- Include an additional representative viewpoint from the properties at No.3 Patshull Road.
- Include an additional representative viewpoint from the residential property at 'The Sheiling' on Cross Road adjacent to the western site boundary.
- Review the assessment of the magnitude of change for key viewpoints.
- Add the direction of view to each of the viewpoint pages.
- Revise the assessment to include visual effects at construction stage.

9.4 We recommend that the LVIA is amended as summarised above to help ensure that the proposals comply with Local Plan policies CS6, CS8, CS17, MD2 and MD12.

9.5 The Green Belt Assessment is strongly predicted on the findings of the LVIA, notably its assessment of visual effects, and will have to be updated to reflect any amendments accordingly.

9.6 The Landscape Mitigation Plan may need to be amended following the revisions to the LVIA.

9.7 We also recommend that the following further detail be submitted to expand on the Landscape Strategy, which may be secured through planning condition if preferred:

The details of proposed tree and hedge planting include plant species, sizes, numbers and densities are provided on the plan. However, they do not provide information on

method of cultivation and planting, means of protection and programme for implementation. We consider that generally the species chosen reflect the local landscape character. Planting works to the site perimeter should be undertaken within the first available planting season following grant of planning consent to integrate the site more rapidly into its surroundings.

Provision should be made to ensure that no retained tree (as identified on the drawings accompanying this planning consent) would be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped, without the written approval of the local planning authority. Any tree work approved should be carried out in line with BS 3998:2010 (Recommendations for Tree Works).